

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	251264
Site Address:	The Birches, Castle Road, Farley Hill, Wokingham, RG7 1UL
Expiry Date:	7 August 2025
Site Visit Date:	8 July 2025
Proposal: Householder application for proposed erection of porch canopy roof, changes to fenestration and conversion of first floor of existing detached garage to habitable accommodation.	

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

AWE: 12km Zone
Potentially Contaminated Land Consultation Zone
Area of Special Character – Farley Hill, Swallowfield
Landscape Character Area - Farley Hill Wooded Sand and Gravel Hills
Nitrate Vulnerable Zones 2021 Designations
SSSI Impact Risk Zone
Special Protection Area 5km Linear Mitigation Zone
Priority Habitat – Woodland: broadleaved, semi-natural
Scale and Location of Development Proposals: Countryside
Mineral Safeguarding Area – Sharp Sand and Gravel

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP3 – General Principles for Development CP8 – Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area CP11 – Proposals Outside Development Limits
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC02 – Development Limits CC07 – Parking TB26 – Buildings of Traditional Local Character and Areas of Special Character
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
091542	Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of one detached dwelling.	Refused 17/12/2009
100101	Proposed erection of 1 x 5 bedroom detached dwelling. (Demolition of existing dwelling)	Refused 10/09/2010

		Appeal Dismissed 30/03/2011
101632	Proposed erection of a replacement dwelling, following demolition of existing.	Refused 18/01/2011
111427	Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of a replacement dwelling.	Refused 18/08/2011
121594	Erection of a replacement dwelling following demolition and removal of existing dwelling.	Approve 09/07/2012 (Not implemented)
160059	Householder application for the proposed raising of roof to enlarge first floor accommodation to include a rear balcony area, single storey front & side extensions and erection of detached garage to front of dwelling	Approve 30/09/2016
170745	Householder application for the proposed raising of roof to provide additional first floor accommodation to include a rear balcony area, erection of single storey front extension, two storey side extension and erection of detached garage to front of dwelling with storage accommodation in roof space, insertion of 2 no rooflights and external staircase, following demolition of existing detached outbuilding plus temporary permission for siting of mobile home during construction period. (Part retrospective)	Approve 25/05/2017
172846	Application for a non-material amendment for raising of roof slope to add a 200 mm increase to ridge height plus changes to fenestration on side elevation.	Approve 10/10/2017

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Highways – No objection
WBC Landscape and Trees – No objection

External

N/A

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	No objection subject to a condition preventing future conversion of the outbuilding into a separate living unit.
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	No comments received

APPRAISAL

Site Description: The application site covers approximately 0.6 hectares and comprises a detached two-storey residential dwelling that underwent significant alterations in 2017. The dwelling is in a backland position to the rear of dwellings located along both Castle Road and Church Road. The dwelling is centrally located within the plot and is surrounded by garden land, which wraps around the rear and sides of the building.

To the west of the dwelling is a large hardstanding area used as a driveway, providing vehicular access and off-street parking. A detached one-and-a-half-storey garage is located to the north of the main dwelling and includes amenity space within the roof.

Access to the site is via a private drive situated on the eastern side of Castle Road, near its junction with Church Road. The site is bounded by mature woodland to the north and east, with a neighbouring residential property (St John's Croft) located to the west. To the south, the site adjoins the rear gardens of residential properties fronting Church Road.

The dwelling is located in the countryside, outside any recognised settlement. The surrounding area is characterised by low-density residential development and mature landscaping, with a mix of detached and semidetached dwellings and woodland features.

Proposal: The application proposes the erection of a new porch on the north elevation of the main dwellinghouse, amendments to fenestration and conversion of the existing roof space in the garage to ancillary accommodation comprising the introduction of a bathroom.

Principle of Development: The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy CC01 states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The site is located within the countryside, outside any defined settlement area. It is also located within the Farley Hill Area of Special Character; therefore, the principle of development is subject to an assessment of the impact of the proposal in the countryside and rural character of the area, and the amenity of the neighbouring occupiers.

Principally, Policy CP11 states that proposals outside the development limits will not normally be permitted except in the case of residential extensions does not result in inappropriate increases in the scale form or footprint of the original building.

Character of the Area: Farley Hill is a small rural settlement centred around Church Road, characterised by its parkland estates, open fields, and agricultural hinterland. The area comprises a village cluster with infill developments, alongside linear

groupings of small cottages and farmsteads, often set against wooded backdrops. At the time of its designation, it was noted that while there were a number of modern buildings, these did not detract from the overall character of the area.

The wooded estate boundaries, entrance gates, and lodges associated with the large, listed houses, Farley Hall to the northwest and Farley Court to the south, make a significant contribution to the area's distinctive character. Beyond these principal houses, the hamlet has evolved through a combination of infill development and new buildings, showcasing a variety of architectural styles and dwelling sizes.

Buildings in the immediate vicinity range from 16th and 17th-century brick and timber-framed cottages and farmhouses, through to 20th-century bungalows and Tudor-style pastiche, with typical examples of 18th and 19th-century rural houses in between. Despite this architectural diversity, Farley Hill retains a strong rural character, supported by the generous plot sizes, setback positioning of buildings, and the use of low red/brown brick walls, open timber fencing, or natural hedgerows as boundary treatments.

Impact on the Character of the Area: In accordance with Policy TB26, planning permission will only be granted for proposals affecting Areas of Special Character where it can be clearly demonstrated that the development will retain and enhance the traditional, historical, local, and special character of the building or area, including its setting.

The Borough Design Guide provides guidance on extensions and additions within the countryside, stating that such developments may be acceptable provided their scale, form, and footprint do not result in an unacceptable impact on the rural character.

The Guide also emphasises that residential development should be designed to positively contribute to the character and quality of the local area. It further advises that alterations and extensions should be well-designed, respond appropriately to the original building, enhance the local character, and relate well to neighbouring properties.

As previously noted, the application site is located in an area with limited visual or physical relationships to adjacent dwellings and is largely screened from public views. The existing building has already undergone substantial alterations, resulting in a dwelling that differs significantly from the original structure. The proposed works are considered to integrate well with the existing building, and any perceived impact on the character and quality of the area, including neighbouring properties, would be minimal.

Given the site's generous plot size, its setback from the public realm, and the modest scale of the proposed porch, any potential harm to the surrounding rural character or the Area of Special Character is considered to be limited. Consequently, the porch does not represent an inappropriate increase in the scale, form, or footprint of the original building and is therefore consistent with Policy CP11.

The proposed fenestration changes are sympathetic to the existing building and are not expected to result in any significant impact. Overall, the proposed porch and

fenestration alterations are considered acceptable in principle, aligning with both local and national planning policy.

In terms of the conversion of the roof space in the detached garage to habitable accommodation, the proposal does not seek any external alterations to the existing garage. It is not deemed that the proposed conversion of the first floor of the garage to habitable accommodation would be negatively impact upon the character of the area, subject to it being ancillary to the main dwelling and being retained as such.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Overlooking: The existing dwelling is positioned at a substantial distance from the nearest residential properties, including St John's Croft to the west and the dwellings fronting Church Road to the south. Given the separation distances and the orientation of the proposed development, it is not considered that the proposal would result in any unacceptable overlooking or loss of privacy to neighbouring occupiers

Loss of Light: The proposed porch is to be located on the northern elevation of the main dwelling, situated between the existing house and the detached garage. Due to its siting, scale, and orientation, the proposal would not affect the daylight or sunlight levels received by any neighbouring residential properties.

Overbearing: The proposed porch is modest in scale and located within an area of the site that is screened from neighbouring properties by existing built form and vegetation. Its position between the main dwelling and the detached garage ensures that it would not appear visually intrusive or overbearing and would not be afforded significant if any views from adjacent land or properties.

Highway Access and Parking Provision: The proposal retains the existing parking provision, both in the form of driveway parking and the ground floor of the garage. It is considered that the existing access, parking and turning area is considered acceptable to serve the dwelling with the addition of a habitable room.

Landscape and Trees: The site is located within the countryside and falls within the Proposed Valued Landscape Area of Farley Hill and the Farley Hill–Swallowfield Area of Special Character (ASC). According to the Landscape Character Assessment, the area is of high landscape quality, moderate sensitivity, and limited development capacity. The property is accessed via a single-track country lane and is set back from the highway, with no public views.

The proposed works are minor in scale and massing, with no external changes to the garage, which lies outside the ASC boundary (though its west wall abuts it). The design and materials are consistent with the existing dwelling. No trees are affected by the proposal, and there are no objections from a landscape or arboricultural perspective.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL): When planning permission is granted for a development that is CIL liable, the Council will issue a liability notice as soon as practicable after the day on which the planning permission first permits development. Completing the assumption of liability notice is a statutory requirement to be completed for all CIL liable applications.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010): In determining this application the Council is required to have due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that persons with protected characteristics as identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application and there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

RECOMMENDATION	
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Conditions agreed:	Not required
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Recommendation:	Approve
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Date:	6 August 2025
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Earliest date for decision:	3 July 2025
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Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
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Date:	06.08.25
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PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Insert where relevant