

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	243244
Site Address:	36 Pitts Lane, Earley, Wokingham, RG6 1BT
Expiry Date:	28 March 2025
Site Visit Date:	31 January 2025
Proposal: Householder application for the proposed loft conversion to create habitable accommodation including insertion of additional roof lights, amendments to the gate and boundary fence plus installation of 3no. air conditioning units. (part-retrospective)	

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Major Development Location – Earley
Landscape Character Assessment Area – Woodley-Earley Settled and Farmed Clay
SSSI Impact Risk Zones

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 CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP7 – Biodiversity CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC02 – Development Limits CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction CC05 – Renewable Energy and Decentralised Energy Networks CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking TB21 – Landscape Character TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
242559	Application to vary condition 2 of planning consent 231952 for the Householder application for the proposed erection of a part single part first floor side and two storey side and rear extension, a single storey rear extension and a porch	Conditionally Approved – 15/08/2024

	canopy roof, plus insertion of roof lights, modifications to the existing roof and changes to fenestration, following demolition of the existing garage and two storey front bay windows. Condition 2 refers to Approved Details and the variation is to the side extension roof height and the first- floor rear window.	
240484	Application for non-material amendment to planning consent 231952 to change the ground floor fenestration at the rear.	Approved – 06/03/2024
231952	Householder application for the proposed erection of a part single part first floor side and two storey side and rear extension, a single storey rear extension and a porch canopy roof, plus insertion of rooflights, modifications to the existing roof and changes to fenestration, following demolition of the existing garage and two storey front bay windows.	Conditionally Approved – 07/11/2023

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Environmental Health: No objection subject to condition
WBC Enforcement: No comment
WBC CIL: The proposal is not CIL Liable.

External

None consulted

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	Earley Town Council object on the following grounds: - No information on the noise generated by the proposed AC units has been submitted, not enabling proper consideration of impact on neighbouring amenities, contrary to policy CP3. <i>Officer's Comment: Following the consultation period, additional information including an Acoustic Report was submitted for consideration. This is discussed in the 'Neighbouring Amenity' section of the report.</i> - The proposed boundary treatment is sufficiently different in height to neighbouring examples, would cause harm to the character of the area contrary to policy CP3. Landscaping condition recommended if minded to approve. <i>Officer's Comment: This was addressed through the submission of revised plans. This is discussed in the 'Design and Character of the Area' section of the report.</i>
Ward Member(s)	No comments received

Neighbours	Two comments received objecting on the following grounds: - No information on the noise generated from the AC units submitted. <i>Following the consultation period, additional information including an Acoustic Report was submitted for consideration. This is discussed in the 'Neighbouring Amenity' section of the report.</i> - Unacceptable noise impact on the amenity of No.38 Pitts Lane, particularly at night. Noise related condition recommended if minded to approve. <i>Officer's Comment: This is discussed in the 'Neighbouring Amenity' section of the report.</i> - Two of the AC units are visible from the street and are unsightly. <i>Officer's Comment: This is discussed in the 'Design and Character of the Area' section of the report.</i> - The proposed rooflights were previously installed, and then later removed. This may have implications regarding Community Infrastructure Levy. <i>Officer's Comment: This matter has been discussed with the Council's Developer Contributions Team, who has advised that the development proposed under this application is not CIL liable.</i> - Adverse overlooking impact from the proposed rooflights on No.38 Pitts Lane. <i>Officer's Comment: This was addressed through the submission of revised plans. This is discussed in the 'Neighbouring Amenity' section of the report.</i> - The height and appearance of the proposed front boundary treatment would be out of keeping with the area. The proposed works may require the loss/pruning of adjacent trees and hedges. <i>Officer's Comment: This was addressed through the submission of revised plans. This is discussed in the 'Design and Character of the Area' section of the report.</i> - The height of the proposed front boundary treatment could cause visibility issues for vehicles exiting No.38 Pitts Lane and Hitch Hill Close onto Pitts Lane. <i>Officer's Comment: This was addressed through the submission of revised plans.</i> - Errors noted on the application form and submitted plans. <i>Officer's Comment: These have been reviewed and are either correct, been clarified by the applicant, or are not significant enough to prevent a full assessment of the submitted proposal.</i> 1 general comment received querying whether noise information had been submitted. <i>Following the consultation period, additional information including an Acoustic Report</i>
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	<i>was submitted for consideration. This is discussed in the 'Neighbouring Amenity' section of the report.</i> Following the submission of revised plans and additional information, three further comments were received which respond to the submitted noise information and raise the same objections.
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APPRAISAL

Site Description:

The application site is a 1930s detached dwellinghouse on Pitts Lane, Earley. The existing dwelling has been recently enlarged and altered following the implementation of planning consent ref 231952 for extensions to each side elevation, a single storey rear extension and other modifications. The site benefits from ample amenity space at the front and rear.

Proposal:

This application proposes the conversion of the existing loft space to create additional habitable accommodation, facilitated by the insertion of 3no. rooflights on the rear elevation, the erection of a front boundary wall and gate and the installation of 3no. air-condition (AC) units. The proposed AC units have already been installed, hence the part-retrospective nature of the proposal.

Following discussions with the applicant, revised plans and additional information was submitted which addressed the following:

- The proposed rooflights on the rear elevation were amended from clear glazing to obscure glazing.
- The total height of the proposed boundary wall and gate were reduced from circa. 2m to 1.8m.
- The revised boundary treatment plan shows the existing hedges adjacent to the front boundary being retained.
- An Acoustic Consultancy Report (Noise Impact Assessment) was submitted to demonstrate the noise impact of the AC units, an amended assessment was then submitted following discussions with the Council's Environmental Health Officer.

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 settlement limits and as such the development should be acceptable providing that it complies with the principles stated in the Core Strategy. Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development must be appropriate in terms

of its scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area in which it is located and must be of high quality design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land uses and occupiers.

Design and Character of the Area:

The surrounding area is characterised by predominantly detached dwelling although these vary considerably in architectural form and design, with various examples of later additions visible from the street scene. This is reflected in the variety of front boundary treatments that are visible, with examples of low boundary walls/fencing, taller brick piers with railings and open frontages.

There are several examples of vehicular gates fronting the street (Pitts Lane), including steel/metal gates. These typically do not exceed the height of their adjoining wall, mitigating the overall visual appearance of the boundary treatment. The proposed low brick wall with taller brick piers and metal railings above, and the metal gate, are in keeping with the mixed boundary treatments visible from the street scene. Indeed, the proposal is very similar to the height, form and appearance of the boundary treatments fronting Nos. 61 & 26 Pitts Lane.

Following the submission of revised plans, the total height of circa 1.8m is reflective of neighbouring examples and would not have a visually overbearing effect when traversing Pitts Lane. Moreover, the proposed boundary treatment would be set well back from the highway by approximately 5m, while the metal railings and gate would retain a sufficient degree of visual permeability. The applicant has also confirmed that the existing hedges, while trimmed, would be retained, further softening the appearance of the proposed development.

Loft conversions are a common form of development within a suburban residential area such as this, while there are several examples of rooflights visible from the street scene. The proposal would not be out of character in this respect. The proposed rooflights are proportionate in size to the existing fenestration and would not detract from the overall appearance of the host dwelling.

While the AC units installed on the north and south facing elevations are visible from the adjacent street scenes (Pitts Lane & Hitch Hill Close), the units are relatively small in terms of its size and scale, with an area size of approximately 0.27sqm, and are set well back from the site's boundaries. Moreover, external plant is increasingly becoming a more common addition to residential dwellings, and their size and colour would not adversely detract from the overall appearance of the host dwelling.

Overall, the proposal would have an acceptable impact on the visual amenity of the street scene and the character of the area in accordance with Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Loss of Light and Overbearing: Due to the nature of the proposal, there are no concerns in respect of additional overbearing/loss of light impact on the amenity of neighbouring properties.

Overlooking: Comments have been received concerning overlooking impact from the proposed rooflights on the rear elevation. Due to the siting of the existing dwelling, the outlook from the proposed rooflights would largely be onto the rear amenity space and oblique views of the neighbourhood, rather than introducing a direct view onto any neighbouring private amenity space. Nonetheless, revised plans were submitted which changed the rooflights to obscure glazing, removing any potential overlooking opportunities onto neighbouring properties. This is secured via the approved details condition.

Noise: Policy CC06 and Appendix 1 of the MDD Local Plan requires that development protect noise sensitive receptors from noise impact. Paragraph 187 of the NPPF states that LPAs should prevent new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of noise pollution.

The AC units on the east and north facing elevations have been installed in relatively close proximity to the shared side boundary with No.38 Pitts Lane adjacent, with a minimum separation distance of approximately 2m from the shared boundary. Following discussions with the impact, a Noise Impact Assessment (NIA) was submitted in support of the application to demonstrate noise impact on the closest neighbouring properties. The NIA was subsequently amended following discussions with the Council's Environmental Health Officer.

The assessment concludes that the AC units, when fully operational, would have no impact on the existing ambient noise level in the area, and a low impact on the nearest noise sensitive window (serving No.38 Pitts Lane), meaning a difference of less than 5dB compared to the existing noise level.

The submitted information has been scrutinised by the Council's Environmental Health Officer. Following the submission of the amended NIA, they are satisfied that the AC units would comply with the accepted guidelines for a residential property in terms of noise impact, and the development would not be a nuisance to neighbouring occupiers. The maximum noise levels would have a low impact over and above the existing ambient noise levels, preventing an adverse impact on the amenity of neighbouring properties.

The Environmental Health Officer has recommended a condition which requires the AC units to be operated and maintained in accordance with the mitigations outlined within the NIA. Section 4 of the assessment states that the units should be well maintained and operate in silent mode only. Once fully operational, if the units generate a higher noise level than agreed under this application, the approved mitigations can aid an investigation carried out by the Council's Environmental Health Team to establish whether the units are a statutory nuisance (which can be enforced against under the relevant Environmental Health legislation).

Overall, sufficient information has been submitted to demonstrate that the AC units would not introduce an adverse noise impact on the amenity of neighbouring amenities, and the recommended condition can be enforced alongside the relevant Environmental Health legislation if the units operate above the levels agreed under this application.

The proposal would therefore protect neighbouring occupiers from adverse noise impact in accordance with MDD Local Plan policy CC06 and the NPPF.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

Policy CP6 of the Core Strategy seeks to manage travel demand with sustainable travel modes, appropriate vehicle parking and minimisation of traffic impacts and highway safety concerns. Policy CC07 and Appendix 2 of the MDD Local Plan set out the minimum parking requirements for development proposals.

The proposal will retain sufficient parking for three vehicles on the front drive, in accordance with the Council's parking standards, while the proposed gate will be set back from the highway (including the footpath) by approximately 5m avoiding conflict with all users. Following the submission of revised plans, the total height of the boundary treatment has been reduced to 1.8m, minimising potential visibility issues with vehicles exiting No.38 Pitts Lane adjacent.

On the basis of the above and taking into consideration all comments received, the application is acceptable and is therefore recommended for **approval**, subject to conditions.

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	
Conditions agreed:	Not required
Recommendation:	Approve
Date:	27 March 2025
Earliest date for decision:	29 January 2025

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	<i>HMM</i>
Date:	27 March 2025