

## **DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT**



**WOKINGHAM**  
**BOROUGH COUNCIL**

|                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                              |
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| <b>Application Number:</b>                                                                                                                                                             | 253154                                       |
| <b>Site Address:</b>                                                                                                                                                                   | 15 Bythorn Close, Earley, Wokingham, RG6 3BH |
| <b>Expiry Date:</b>                                                                                                                                                                    | 4 March 2026                                 |
| <b>Site Visit Date:</b>                                                                                                                                                                | 18 February 2026                             |
| <b>Proposal:</b> Householder application for the proposed erection of a garage conversion, first floor side extension, single storey rear extension alongside changes to fenestration. |                                              |

### **PLANNING POLICY**

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|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>National Policy</b>                           | National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)<br>National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Core Strategy (CS)</b>                        | CP1 – Sustainable Development<br>CP3 – General Principles for Development<br>CP7 – Biodiversity                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>MDD Local Plan (MDD)</b>                      | CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development<br>CC02 – Development Limits<br>CC06 – Noise<br>CC07 – Parking<br>CC09 - Development and Flood Risk (from all sources)<br>CC10 – Sustainable Drainage<br>TB05 – Housing Mix<br>TB06 – Development of Private Residential Gardens |
| <b>Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update (LPU)</b> | SS1 – Sustainable development principles<br>H12 – Residential development of existing private gardens                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Other</b>                                     | Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document<br>CIL Guidance + 123 List                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

### **PLANNING HISTORY**

| Application No. | Description                                                                                                  | Decision & Date                |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 151941          | Proposed construction of new roof with increased ridge height plus erection of single storey side extension. | Application not proceeded with |

| CONSULTATION RESPONSES                               |  |
|------------------------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Internal</b>                                      |  |
| WBC Digital Solutions Scanning- No comments received |  |
| <b>External</b>                                      |  |
| None Consulted                                       |  |

| REPRESENTATIONS     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
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| Parish/Town Council | <p>Earley Town Council raises an objection for the following reasons;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>The proposed roof to the side extension will overhang the adjacent public footpath to the detriment of the public domain.</i></li> <li>- <i>The blank side elevation facing the road is in a prominent location and adds nothing to the character of the area, contrary to the principles in Sections R7, R8 and R11, in the Borough Design Guide, as supported by Policy CP3, in failing to adequately define the street space, failing to respond to its prominent landmark position and failing to create a well-designed street scene.</i></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Ward Member(s)      | No comments received                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Neighbours          | <p>Neighbour objections which are summarised as follows;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>It appears from the drawings that the roof to the staggered floor plan side extension is overhanging the public footpath</i></li> <li>- <i>Concerns of overbearing, and sense on enclosure. The proposed first-floor side extension sits very close to the shared boundary with 14 Bythorn Close, making it visually dominant and overbearing. The proposal also fails to meet guidance on maintaining an appropriate separation distance between extensions and neighbouring habitable room windows.</i></li> <li>- <i>Failure to Maintain Adequate Separation Distances The extension does not retain adequate spacing between dwellings, leading to a cramped appearance and loss of openness. The proposed extension to the rear of the property is less than 10 metres from our habitable rooms.</i></li> <li>- <i>Loss of Daylight and Increased Overshadowing Due to the height and siting of the extension, there would be a material loss of daylight to habitable room windows.</i></li> </ul> |

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Loss of privacy form new additional windows</i></li> <li>- <i>Harm to Character and Spacing of the Area</i><br/>The extension significantly reduces the visual gap between properties, creating a terracing effect that is out of keeping with the established character of Bythorn Close.</li> <li>- <i>Inadequate Drainage and Surface Water Management</i><br/>The application does not adequately explain how surface water from the increased roof area will be managed. Because the extension is positioned very close to the boundary with 14 Bythorn Close, there is a risk that uncontrolled run-off could affect neighbouring land. The plans also fail to show any guttering; if guttering were installed, it would likely overhang the neighbouring property, which is not permitted, and if omitted, rainwater would discharge directly into your garden. As a result, the proposal fails to address Core Strategy Policy CP4, which requires sustainable drainage measures, and does not meet national guidance in the NPPF relating to flood risk and surface water management.</li> <li>- <i>Building on Boundary</i><br/>The plans show that the proposed rear extension is to be built directly on the shared boundary with 14 Bythorn Close. Planning rules require the extension to be set back at least 50mm from the boundary unless permission is granted, and no such permission has been given. Additionally, the proposed eaves would overhang the boundary, which is not allowed.</li> <li>- <i>The planning application incorrectly states that no trees are within falling distance of the proposed first-floor extension above the garage, even though trees are present and could affect the structure. The plans also indicate that matching bricks will be used, but neighbours have previously been unable to source matching bricks for similar extensions. This is likely to result in a mismatched and uneven appearance unless the existing brickwork on the garage and rear walls is also replaced.</i></li> </ul> |
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## APPRAISAL

**Site Description:** This application site relates to a two-storey semi-detached dwelling with associated parking and landscaping in the residential area of Earley, Wokingham. The surrounding area is characterised by semi-detached and detached dwellings of

similar architectural style. The overall plot is small with the main garden located to the side of the dwelling. Due to the orientation of the property, both the side and front elevations are highly visible from Bythorn Close, as well as from the adjacent footpath and areas of public open space located to the front of the site. In addition, parts of the rear elevation are visible from sections of Bythorn Close, resulting in the dwelling being relatively prominent within the localised public realm.

**Proposal:** This application seeks the permission for the proposed first floor side extension, single storey front and rear extension, followed by a garage conversion and demolition of the existing shed.

**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.

**Character of the Area:** Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that developments should be of appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area together with a high quality of design without detriment to other adjoining land users. R23 of the Borough Design Guide SPD states that extensions should respond positively to the original building; contribute positively to the local character; and relate well to neighbouring properties.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the National Design Code places significant emphasis on the planning system securing good design. NPPF paragraph 131 states that *“the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development”*. Paragraph 139 states that *“Development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes.”*

The application site is small, and the scale of development proposed would result in a cramped overdevelopment on this limited plot. In particular, the addition of a two-storey element above the existing garage would create a near-continuous block of two-storey built form across a substantial proportion of the plot. This would remove the sense of spacing currently experienced and introduce a solid mass of development that appears tightly confined within the site. Although the garage presently occupies part of this position, the introduction of additional height and bulk above it and the extension towards the footpath to the north would materially increase the overall bulk and

massing, resulting in an incongruous and visually cramped form of development hard against the front and rear boundaries.

The front elevation of the proposed two-storey extension is shown abutting the footpath at the front of the property. This would appear unduly cramped within the public realm, presenting a dominant and oppressive feature to users of the footpath and eroding the existing sense of openness at the corner. When viewed from the side, the two-storey built section would extend the full depth of the plot and sit tight to both the northern and southern boundaries, reinforcing the perception of overdevelopment. Whilst the catslide

roof means that the development would not be two storeys high across its entirety, it still effectively creates a significant mass of continuous built form across the site. This cramped appearance is further compounded by the harmful impact on neighbouring amenity identified in the Neighbouring Amenity section of this report.

The proposed development would also detrimentally impact the simplicity and continuity of the existing dwelling and would be out of keeping with the other nearby houses which also have a simple form and vernacular, resulting in a contrived and incongruous design. There are several factors that cumulatively result in this conclusion which are set out below.

The existing front elevation benefits from four symmetrical windows that provide balance and continuity. The introduction of varying window sizes, differing sill and head heights, and a new central opening that does not reflect the established style would disrupt this unified appearance. The proposed ground floor windows in the new two storey extension would also be shorter in height than those at first floor level, contrary to traditional proportions where upper floor windows are typically of similar or smaller scale. Overall, there would be 5 different window types in the front elevation and this results in an inconsistent and unbalanced appearance that will be incongruous within both the host dwelling and the houses in the immediate locality.

The existing dwelling is approximately two-and-a-half bays wide and forms part of a group of properties characterised by consistent scale, proportion and simple vernacular design. The repetition of this modest and balanced built form makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area. The proposed extension would introduce two additional bays, resulting in a dwelling that is noticeably wider than its immediate neighbours. The proposed bay widths (approximately 2.5 metres) would not reflect the proportions of the original house and, when combined with the staggered setbacks, would create an awkward and piecemeal building form. These setbacks are neither small enough to go unnoticed, nor large enough to appear as a purposeful design features. Instead, they would appear as slight jolts in the building line that only serves to maximise the size of the extension within the confines of the site.

Overall, the form and variation in fenestration results in a contrived appearance, lacking the simple form that characterises both the host dwelling and the surrounding properties. Rather than appearing as a sympathetic addition, the extension would read as a visually discordant enlargement, harmful to the overall street scene.

Taking all these factors together, the excessive massing, cramped siting, erosion of openness, and contrived and incongruous design would result in a visually discordant

and overdeveloped form of development that fails to respect the character and appearance of the existing dwelling and the immediate area. The proposed development is contrary to policy CP1 and CP3 of the Core Strategy, the Borough Design Guide SPD and section 12 of the NPPF.

**Neighbouring Amenity:** Paragraph 135(f) of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires development to secure a “*high standard of amenity for existing and future users*”. This is reinforced by Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy, which requires development to be of an appropriate scale, mass, layout and height, and to achieve a high quality of design without detriment to the amenities or quality of life of adjoining occupiers.

The application site adjoins a neighbouring property to the south (14 Bythorn Close) which has a small rear garden, with the shared boundary positioned approximately 6–8 metres from the neighbouring rear elevation (not including the conservatory). A conservatory is also located at the rear of that dwelling, approximately 4.5 metres from the boundary. While the existing dwelling on the application site has been arranged so that its principal bulk does not sit directly in front of the neighbour’s rear windows and garden, the proposed development would materially alter this relationship.

The proposed extension would extend the two-storey element of the dwelling across the majority of the shared rear boundary, positioning substantial built form directly adjacent to the neighbouring garden and rear elevation. This would introduce a continuous two-storey elevation and roof form along the boundary. Given the limited depth and scale of the neighbouring garden, the significant increase in two-storey built form in such close proximity would give rise to a significant increase in a sense of enclosure and an overbearing relationship. The outlook from the neighbouring rear-facing windows would be dominated by the extended two-storey bulk and catslide roof form, materially reducing openness and resulting in a harmful loss of amenity. The same over-dominant sense of enclosure would be experienced within the garden itself, to the detriment of the occupiers’ enjoyment of that private amenity space.

The Borough Design Guide SPD recommends a minimum back-to-back separation distance of 22 metres between two-storey dwellings. In this case, the proposed extension would be positioned only approximately 12–13 metres from the neighbouring rear elevation. Although the existing dwelling does not fully comply with current guidance, this does not justify further intensification of built form that would materially worsen the relationship and create additional harm. The proposal would therefore fail to reflect the separation standards intended to safeguard residential amenity.

To further illustrate the proximity of the proposed development, page 47 of the Borough Design Guide SPD advises that rear gardens should have a minimum depth of 11 metres to limit a sense of enclosure and maintain privacy. Although the neighbouring property was constructed prior to the introduction of this standard, the guidance provides a useful benchmark for assessing the likely impact. In this context, the proposed extension would be positioned within a distance generally expected to form the minimum depth of a rear garden, emphasising how close and overbearing the development would appear to the adjoining property.

The impact would be compounded by the proposed single-storey rear extension. Whilst limited to one storey, its pitched roof would project closer to the shared boundary, reinforcing the perception of enclosure and further contributing to the overall overbearing effect when viewed from the neighbouring garden and dwelling.

Although the applicant has submitted a plan demonstrating compliance with the 25-degree daylight guideline set out in the BRE guidance and referenced in the Borough Design Guide, this assessment does not take account of the neighbouring conservatory. When assessed from this existing rear projection, the proposal would breach the 25-degree line, indicating an unacceptable impact on daylight to that part of the dwelling. In any event, compliance with the 25-degree test is only one indicator of impact and does not outweigh the clear harm identified in terms of overbearingness as explained above.

The proposed development includes the insertion of five new rooflights within the new rear roof slope. Although these openings are described as high-level and could be obscurely glazed, they would be positioned immediately opposite the private patio area and directly aligned with the rear elevation of 14 Bythorn Close. Given the limited separation distances and the already tight relationship between the properties, the introduction of multiple additional openings facing towards the neighbouring garden and rear elevation would materially and detrimentally increase the perception of overlooking. This would also compound the overbearing impact arising from the increased two-storey built form along the shared boundary. Taken together, the scale of development and the proliferation of rooflights would result in an unneighbourly form of development that would harm the living conditions of the adjoining occupiers, contrary to the requirement to secure a high standard of amenity as set out in the NPPF and Development Plan policies.

The proposed development would have a detrimental impact on the amenity of the occupants to the south at 14 Bythorn Close by reason of an over-dominant and overbearing impact; a detrimental sense of excessive enclosure; loss of light; and a perception of overlooking, contrary to policy CP1 and CP3 of the Core Strategy, the Borough Design Guide SPD and section 12 of the NPPF.

**Highway Access and Parking Provision:** The proposed development will result in the conversion of the garage and the creation of additional habitable rooms.

The proposed site plan indicates room for three parking spaces at least 2.4m wide. When measuring the site plan, the proposed driveway measures approximately 8 meters in width, which is adequate for three parked cars. Whilst space for turning and manoeuvring into these spaces is limited, the driveway is already in use and vehicle speed along this section of the Close are slow and visibility is sufficient. Overall adequate parking capacity is available on site.

**Flooding and Drainage:** The application site is situated within Fluvial Flood Zone 2 which means the application site is susceptible to flooding. The council's Strategic Flood Mapping also identified that the site is within an area where Groundwater levels are high and either at or very near (within 0.025m of) the ground surface.

NPPF Footnote 63 states that a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment should be provided for all development in Flood Zones 2 and 3. The Planning Practice Guidance states *“Applications for minor development involving extensions or additions should still meet the requirements to provide a site-specific flood risk assessment”*

The resolution of the flood map for planning means that the new rear extension would be located in both Flood Zone 1 and small section of Flood Zone 2. Given the resolution of the map, it cannot be ruled out that the area of the development is outside of Flood Zone 2. It is noted that there is paving in the location of the rear extension but an FRA would identify whether this is permeable and how the creation of foundations for the extension would impact flooding. Furthermore the front extension will be located within Flood Zone 2.

In the absence of a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment, it cannot be concluded that the proposed development would have an acceptable impact on flood risk and would not increase flooding elsewhere. This latter point is relevant as the rear extension would be hard up against the southern boundary and could displace flood water into the neighbouring garden.

Whilst further information could have been requested on this matter, given the concerns set out in this report it would not have been expedient to request.

**Impact on Trees:** There is a medium-sized tree within the adjacent public open space located in close proximity to the north east of the proposed extension. This tree makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the open space and is therefore considered to have high amenity value.

Given its position relative to the proposed development, the tree’s Root Protection Area (RPA), depending on site-specific ground conditions, is likely to extend into the north-west corner of the proposed extension footprint. In addition, the canopy would be positioned very close to the extended built form. This relationship raises concerns that future pressure to undertake pruning works in order to prevent contact with the building could constrain the tree’s natural growth and compromise its long-term health and amenity value.

In the absence of any arboricultural assessment or supporting technical information, the application fails to demonstrate that the proposal would not result in harm to this important tree. As such, insufficient information has been provided to conclude that the development would have an acceptable impact on a tree of high amenity value.

Whilst further information could have been requested on this matter, given the concerns set out in this report it would not have been expedient to request.

**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 reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. 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.

**Conclusion:** The proposed development is unacceptable, will result in material harm and is contrary to National and Development Plan policies for the following reasons:

1. The proposed development will result in a cramped, incongruous and contrived form of development that would fail to respect the simple character, appearance and spatial characteristics of the property and the neighbouring houses, by reason of its size, scale, massing, proximity to the boundaries and design. The proposed development is contrary to policy CP1 and CP3 of the Core Strategy, the Borough Design Guide SPD and section 12 of the NPPF.
2. The proposed development would have a detrimental impact on the amenity of the occupants to the south at 14 Bythorn Close by reason of an over-dominant and overbearing impact; a detrimental sense of excessive enclosure; loss of light; and a perception of overlooking, contrary to policy CP1 and CP3 of the Core Strategy, the Borough Design Guide SPD and section 12 of the NPPF.
3. The application site is within Flood Zone 2 and the development would introduce further built form and habitable accommodation into an area at risk of flooding. In the absence of a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment demonstrating an acceptable impact and that flooding won't be increased elsewhere, the proposed development is contrary to MDD Local Plan Policy CC09 and CC10, Core Strategy policy CP1(9), section 14 of the NPPF and PPG relating to Flood Risk and Coastal Change.
4. In the absence of any arboricultural assessment or supporting technical information, the application fails to demonstrate that the proposed development would not result in harm to a tree with high amenity value. The proposed development is contrary to Core Strategy policy CP1 and CP3, MDD Local Plan policy CC03, The Borough Design Guide SPD, The British Standard 5837:2012, sections 12 and 15 of the NPPF and section 197 of the Town and Country Planning Act.

## RECOMMENDATION

|                           |                  |
|---------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Conditions agreed:</b> | Not required     |
| <b>Recommendation:</b>    | Refused          |
| <b>Date:</b>              | 26 February 2026 |

|                                    |                 |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Earliest date for decision:</b> | 28 January 2026 |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|

|                                                           |                   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Recommendation agreed by:<br/>(Authorised Officer)</b> | <i>MC</i>         |
| <b>Date:</b>                                              | <b>04.03.2026</b> |

**PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS**  
*Insert where relevant*