

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	251503
Site Address:	71 Dorset Way, Wokingham, RG41 3AL
Expiry Date:	12 September 2025
Site Visit Date:	17 July 2025
Proposal: Householder application for the proposed demolition of existing single storey conservatory and side canopy, erection of two storey side and single storey rear extension of property with conversion of existing garage.	

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 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 CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB21 – Landscape Character TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update (LPU)	SS1 – Sustainable development principles SS2 – Spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy SS3 – Development within or adjacent to major and modest settlements C4 – Green and blue infrastructure and public rights of way NE1 – Biodiversity and geodiversity NE4 – Trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows NE5 – Landscape and design DH1 – Place making and quality design DH2 – Safeguarding amenity
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
22130	Detached House & Garage	C/A – 23/08/1984

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Highways: No objection

WBC Landscape and Trees: Object on the following grounds – potential harm that is likely to occur by significantly increasing built development in the 15m ancient woodland buffer zone & detrimental impact on the verdant character of the existing development by creating a hard edge to the settlement boundary.

WBC Ecology: No comments received

External

None consulted

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	No comments received
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	Four comments (not including duplicates) received objecting to the proposal on the following grounds: - Loss of light and overbearing impact from proposed two-storey extension on eastern side of property on Nos. 67 & 69 Dorset Way. <i>Officer's Comment: Revised plans were submitted which reduced the scale of this element of the proposal to single storey. See 'Proposal' section of the report below.</i> - Discrepancy between the submitted proposed floor plans and elevations regarding first floor fenestration on the front elevation. <i>Officer's Comment: Revised plans were submitted which corrected this discrepancy. See 'Proposal' section of the report below.</i> - Removal of the timber effect at the front of the property would be detrimental to the visual amenity of the cul-de-sac. <i>Officer's Comment: This is discussed in the 'Design and Character of the Area' section of the report.</i> - Submitted plans incorrectly show a potential extension to No.69 Dorset Way which has not been carried out. <i>Officer's Comment: This is noted but did not prevent a full assessment of the proposal.</i> Following the submission of revised plans on 18/08/2025, a two-week re-consultation period was carried out. No further comments were received.

APPRAISAL

Site Description:

The application site is a detached two storey dwellinghouse located within the 1980s Woosehill development in Wokingham. The site is located at the south-western end

of the cul-de-sac adjoining the settlement boundary with designated countryside and the woodland known as Fox Hill. Parts of Fox Hill, including the parcel adjacent to the site, are designated as Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland and protected under Tree Preservation Order No. 20/1973.

The site's north-western boundary adjoins a footpath which provides access to the woodland and a public footpath connecting the wider area with Barkham to the south-east. Except for the erection of a single garage and shed towards the south-eastern boundary, it does not appear that the main dwelling has been significantly altered since its construction.

Proposal:

This application proposes the erection of a two storey side extension and a single storey rear extension, and the conversion of the existing attached garage to create additional habitable accommodation following the demolition of the existing conservatory at the rear and the side canopy. Alterations to the rendering of the existing front façade of the building, including the removal of the decorative timber framing plus fenestration changes and the enlargement of the existing front drive to the north-eastern end of the property are also proposed.

The proposed two storey side extension would project beyond the south-western end of the property by approximately 4.35m with a front-ended gable design and a rear-ended gable projection. This extension would be built on existing hardstanding to the side of the dwelling. The proposed single storey rear extension would not project beyond the existing rear building line established by the conservatory it would replace, with a hipped roof form at a total ridge height of approximately 3.5m.

Following discussions with the applicant, revised plans have been submitted which comprise the following amendments to the proposed scheme:

- The proposed detached garage has been removed from the scheme. Existing outbuildings and hedgerow on site's north-eastern boundary retained.
- The proposed rear extension has been reduced from two storey to single storey in scale.
- The proposed patio area to the rear has been reduced in footprint and pulled back from the south-western boundary.
- The proposed elevations plan shows 2no. windows on the front elevation of the proposed side extension to match the proposed floor plans.
- The extension of the existing front drive towards the south-western boundary has been removed from the scheme.

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.

Alterations and additions to an existing residential dwelling within settlement limits is acceptable in principle, subject to impact on other material considerations including

the character of the area, trees & landscape and neighbouring amenity.

Design and Character of the Area:

Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale, mass, layout, built form, height and character of the area and must be of high quality design. R1 of the Borough Design Guide SPD requires that development contribute positively towards and be compatible with the historic or underlying character and quality of the local area.

Policy CC02 of the MDD states that development at the edge of settlements is acceptable where it is demonstrated that it is within development limits and respects the transition between the built-up area and the open countryside by taking account of the character of the adjacent countryside and landscape.

R23 of the Borough Design Guide SPD states that alterations or extensions should be clearly subservient to the form and scale of the original building in most situations, with a complementary design which either adopts the existing style or by a carefully considered contrast. The key considerations for all proposed additions to residential dwellings are they should be well designed, respond positively to the original dwelling, contribute positively to the local character and relate well to neighbouring properties.

Dorset Way and the surrounding estate predominantly comprises detached two storey dwellings which are considerably varied in terms of architectural styles and massing. There are various examples of later additions including side extensions visible from the street scene. Decorative timber framing is a common feature within the surrounding estate within the surrounding estate which creates cohesiveness despite the varied styles visible. On Dorset Way, all properties have retained their original timber effect while another key characteristic is detached and attached double garages sited forward of the main dwelling.

In respect of the proposed side extension, while the proposal would not be wholly set down from the main ridgeline or set back from the principal elevation at first floor level, contrary to guidance contained within the Borough Design Guide SPD, this element of the scheme would still appear as a subservient addition to the host dwelling due to its proportionate width. Moreover, its bulk would be sufficiently reduced by the incorporation of a front-ended gable which is in keeping with the style of some of the neighbouring properties on the cul-de-sac. Visual impact on the street scene would also be mitigated by its siting at the south-western end of the dwelling, set well back from the footpath, with no impact on the existing rhythm of gaps between properties on Dorset Way.

Concern has been raised regarding the removal of the decorative timber framing on the existing façades of the dwelling at first floor. The loss of this feature would disrupt a shared characteristic between all properties on the cul-de-sac which is unfortunate. However, it is considered that the harm to the character of the area resulting from this alteration would be limited.

While the timber framing contributes to a sense of cohesiveness, material palettes

still differ and the appearance of the dwellings on the cul-de-sac is not wholly consistent. The retention of white render at first floor level with exposed brickwork on the ground floor would still provide a visual break between the two storeys and retain the existing character of the dwelling. Moreover, as the dwelling sits at the end of, and well set back, from the cul-de-sac this alteration would not be highly noticeable when traversing the street scene. It should also be acknowledged that planning permission would likely not be required for this element of the proposal.

The proposed single storey rear extension is fairly modest in terms of its size and scale. With an appropriate ridge and eaves height it would respect the rear building line and would not add significant footprint to the host dwelling. Following the removal of the proposed double garage from the scheme, it is considered that the retained gap between the development and the adjoining woodland and supports the transition between the built-up area and the countryside in accordance with MDD Local Plan policy CC02.

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

Neighbouring Amenity:

Overlooking: No windows are proposed on the side (flank) elevation of the dwelling facing No.69 Dorset Way adjacent to the north-east. The proposed front facing windows on the side extension would have the same outlook as the existing fenestration and retain a sufficient separation distance of approximately 15.9m from the front boundary of No.62 Dorset Way which is acceptable.

Loss of Light and Overbearing: Following discussions with the applicant, the scale of the proposed rear extension has been reduced to single storey. The proposal would retain the existing gap between the dwelling and the shared side boundary with No.62 Dorset Way (circa. 1.1m) and would not result in a significant change in relationship when compared to the existing conservatory it would replace. The proposed side extension would be sited away from all shared boundaries with neighbouring properties. As such, there are no loss of light or overbearing concerns.

Overall, it is considered that any potential harm on neighbouring amenities has been sufficiently mitigated, prohibiting any additional harm over and above the existing level of amenity. The proposal is therefore compliant with Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy in this respect.

Landscape and Trees (Ancient and Semi Natural Woodland):

Policy CC03 of the MDD Local Plan aims to protect green infrastructure networks, promote linkages between public open space and the countryside, retain existing trees and establish appropriate landscaping. MDD Local Plan Policy TB21 requires consideration of the Council's Landscape Character Assessment. Proposals must retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape.

The application site borders Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland to the south-west which is also protected by a Tree Preservation Order. Ancient woodland is an irreplaceable habitat. Paragraph 193 of the NPPF states that development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists.

Advice on how to handle planning applications affecting ancient woodlands is set out in the Standing Advice on Ancient Woodlands and Veteran Trees. For ancient woodlands, there should have a buffer zone of at least 15 metres to avoid root damage. Where assessment shows other impacts are likely to extend beyond this distance, you're likely to need a larger buffer zone. Where possible, a buffer zone should:

- contribute to wider ecological networks
- be part of the green infrastructure of the area

It should consist of semi-natural habitats such as:

- woodland
- a mix of scrub, grassland, heathland and wetland planting

A buffer zone should be planted with local and appropriate native species. If appropriate, access can be allowed to buffer zones if the habitat is not harmed by trampling. Residential gardens should be avoided. Compensation measures are always a last resort. These measures can only partially compensate for loss or damage.

In this case, it is acknowledged that the housing development the site sits within was constructed prior to the standing guidance coming into effect. The existing dwelling is sited circa. 11.3m from the adjoining ancient woodland and therefore falls, in part, within the 15m buffer zone. It is also noted that 2no. existing outbuildings are sited in closer proximity to the ancient woodland and that the residential garden immediately adjoins the boundary.

An Arboricultural Report (Certhia Consulting, May 2025) was submitted in support of the application. The report, which includes a tree survey showing the relationship between the proposed development and the woodland, concludes that the proposal would not result in the loss or deterioration of the ancient woodland, or harm the TPO protected trees, as the built form would sit outside of the root protection areas of the adjacent trees. The Council's Trees and Landscape Officers do not dispute this, therefore there would not be any direct impact on the ancient woodland following the development.

However, indirect impacts must also be considered, including changing the landscape character of the area. The Officers raised objections to the cumulative impact of the proposed double garage, side extension and enlarged hardstanding at the front and rear (all sited within the 15m buffer zone) on the ancient woodland, with particular concern raised regarding the loss of the informal buffer between the dwelling and the woodland, the loss of a mature hedgerow to facilitate the double garage and enlarged front drive, and the siting of the double garage underneath the canopy of protected

trees.

Following discussions with the applicant, revised plans were submitted which removed the proposed double garage from the scheme as well as the extended patio area to the rear and the enlarged front drive to the south-west. Subsequently there would be no built form immediately adjacent to the boundary or under the canopy of the protected trees. This is a significant improvement to the scheme. However, the side extension would still result in additional built form within the 15m buffer zone and reduce the gap between the dwelling and the boundary to circa. 6.7m.

Following the site visit and a review of all submitted plans, it is clear that the proposed extension would be sited on existing hardstanding to the south-western side of the dwelling. As such, it would sit within the built environment and not result in the loss of a soft landscaped area. While the proposal would result in the partial visual loss of the informal buffer, it would remain well set back from the boundary and would not create a hard edge adjoining the ancient woodland.

The context of the site and its existing relationship with the adjoining ancient woodland must also be considered. As the estate was constructed prior to the standing guidance on buffer zones coming into effect, there is no planning restriction on the use of the plot within the 15m buffer zone as residential garden.

On balance, while the revised scheme would remain contrary to the standing guidance on buffer zones, the proposal would not result in the direct loss or deterioration of an irreplaceable habitat. The extension would be sited on existing hardstanding and retain a sufficient gap between the built form and the ancient woodland. As such, there would be limited impact on the landscape character with the potentially adverse elements of the scheme removed through negotiation with the applicant.

A condition is recommended which requires the works to be carried out in accordance with the Tree Protection Plan appended to the Arboricultural Report to ensure that there is no impact on the protected trees during the development.

Other:

The Council's Highways Officer has reviewed the proposal and raised no objection to the proposed parking provision. A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Roost Assessment (Arbtech, June 2025) was submitted in support of the application which concludes that the proposal would have negligible impact on bats. As such, no further surveys are required for the assessment of this application.

On the basis of the above, and taking into account all comments received, it is considered that the proposal would not result in adverse harm on any material consideration, with any indirect impact of the proposal on the adjoining woodland and landscape character significantly mitigated following the reduction of the scheme. The application 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:	11 September 2025
Earliest date for decision:	2 September 2025

Recommendation agreed by:	
(Authorised Officer)	
Date:	12 September 2025

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

- *Major Development Location (Wokingham)*
- *Adjacent to Countryside*
- *Bat Roost Habitat Suitability Area*
- *Adjacent to Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland*
- *Landscape Character Area – Wokingham-Winnersh Settled and Farmed Clay*