

MEMORANDUM

From:	Built Heritage Officer		
Service	Green Infrastructure	App No:	253103
Address:	Sonning Court, Thames Street, Sonning, Wokingham, RG4 6UR		
Proposal:	Householder application for the proposed conversion of existing loft to create habitable accommodation plus insertion of 5no. dormers and rooflights.		
Heritage Asset:	Sonning Conservation Area Setting of Grade II listed: • Red House/Falcon House • Sonning Bridge • The Deanery and Wall Listed building along with Conservation areas are classed as designated heritage assets under the NPPF (2024) and in the Council's Local Plan policies.		
Site Visit Made:	No, but familiar with building and area.		

Summary Of Recommendations

Holding objection - amendments required.

Comments On Proposal

The application proposes the insertion of 5no. dormer windows and rooflights as to facilitate the conversion of the roof space to habitable accommodation at Sonning Court, a large and prominent dwelling house located within the Sonning Conservation Area – a designated heritage asset. The building, designed in a free neo-Queen Anne manner is understood to have been constructed in 1970, although given some of the architectural detailing does have the spirit of an early 20th century dwelling. Whilst not particularly historic it does contribute to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and is prominently viewed from the Thames path when travelling to and from the village along the riverside.

Some architectural elements of the building's design are relatively successful – such as the fenestration form and rhythm, roof form including sprocket hips etc. others, such as the over-sized Grecian portico, are, less so. Whilst being modern, and the front of the building is not particularly appreciable, the rear is visible from the public domain, with this, combined with the house being a well-known building in the village mean that any proposed alteration should be not only sympathetic to

the host's original architectural form and 'spirit' but also the wider character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

With this in mind, there is no overall concern regarding the proposed creation of dormer windows nor rooflights – it is not uncommon for this style (be it historic or not) to have been originally designed with dormers. However, the design of the dormers to the rear pitch could better reflect the host's original architectural intent. Authentic Queen Anne (early 18th century) and more to the point, revival style (early to mid-20th century) would typically have dormers which either reflected the lower fenestration form with perhaps a pitched roof or, more appropriately in this instance, a flat roof. These dormers tend to also have greater horizontality, which may be appropriate given the scale of the roofscape at Sonning Court. Such examples would be:



The dormers, as proposed, are too large, too 'clunky' for lack of a better term, and would thus benefit from refinement. The depth of the cheeks is too great (insulation requirement can be dealt with by specification of a product with a greater value) – the window should extend to the full, or almost full width of the dormer (as shown above). In terms of the front pair, no issue is raised to having a

pitch roof – this works well given the triangular form of the pediment and window surrounds. However, the dormers to the rear (which as noted above would be visible from the Thames) should be reduced in scale with greater refinement. For clarity, it is not being advised to create an overlarge ‘box dormer’ such a design would be inappropriate, rather an architectural element which responds to the host – specifically the lower fenestration proportion and detail. Successful design(s) seek to enhance the building (such as above) as opposed to result in detriment.

However, it must also be noted proposed changes to the rear elevation under application 253104, such proposals include the alteration of the fenestration to a ‘Crittall’ style – any such proposals must be considered holistically with the dormer design informed by, and to reflect the function of the elevation below.

In terms of the rooflights, a ‘conservation’ type (being flush and having central glazing bar) should be specified as opposed to a regular rooflight product.

Provided amendment in line with the above commentary is forthcoming, no objection would be raised to the application (subject to condition for detailing).

Conditions

To be advised upon in due course.

Date:	08/01/2026	Signed:	Roderick McDonald Built Heritage Officer
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