

MEMORANDUM

From:	Built Heritage Officer		
Service	Green Infrastructure	App No:	253104
Address:	Sonning Court, Thames Street, Sonning, Wokingham, RG4 6UR		
Proposal:	Householder application for the proposed three storey rear extension to include 2no. balconies following demolition of existing conservatory plus changes to fenestration.		
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

Further details 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 extension to the building as to create larger accommodation and a more consistent aesthetic. The present rear elevation presents as slightly muddled with multiple forms and fenestration forms and types. Whilst the building would be enlarged, the overall composition is not inappropriate given the scale and form of building. As noted above, whilst built in the 70s, Sonning Court has very much the spirit of an early 20th century building, but in the architectural appearance and being a large 'riverside mansion' (many were constructed along the banks of the Thames in the early 20th century) – the proposed form and appearance, specifically the plain white and Crittall (style) fenestration with an overall horizontal character. This is very much reminiscent of the European Moderne movement – which filtered down in this country to the domestic Art Deco style of the 20s and 30s. As an aesthetic this is very pleasing, and provided appropriately detailed with high-specification materials would be successful, and not inappropriate for this setting. However, a few concerns arise:

- Clarification that the front fenestration is not changing. The drawings nor statements do not suggest such, but confirmation is sought. This is important, as the contrast between the 'Georgian' sashes at the front and the 'Deco' Crittall at the rear results in a slight 'Jekyll and Hyde' building – at least in the fenestration detail. Such divergence from front to back is not entirely uncommon, but needs to be understood and accommodated as such.
- Architectural detailing – specifically, the relationship between the existing 'Queen Anne' traditional form and 'moderne' proposed – such as the dentil cornice – a classical detail contrasts with the deco inspired aesthetic. Is this to be retained, removed, altered? What is the treatment for the extant weatherboarding (I believe it is actually plastic) – render to match?
- Relationship with the dormer windows as proposed under application 253103. As noted in commentary for this application, the dormer design requires revision, however it should be consistent with the fenestration form, proportion and detailing of the elevation below. If such is to change, the dormer design should reflect this – such proposals need to be considered holistically.

Finally, the drawings show a difference in the front door – is this correct or an error on the proposed elevation?

It would also be pointed out that the Heritage/DAS erroneously states the rear elevation cannot be seen from the public realm – it can, from the Thames Path.

Conditions

To be advised upon in due course.

Date:	08/01/2026	Signed:	Roderick McDonald
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