Planning, Design & Access Statement including Heritage Impact Assessment

For a householder Planning Application at

Herons Creek, Station Road, Wargrave. RG10 8EU

For the proposed conversion of the existing garage to ancillary habitable accommodation – (Home Gym)







Herons creek comprises a single-family dwelling of white painted brick and render under a clay tiled roof, within the ‘modest settlement boundary’ of Wargrave.

It lies in a very ‘tucked away’’ location and is not significantly visible from outside the site.

It lies to the north-east corner of its relatively level and generous rectangular plot with gardens extending west and south toward the creek which is an off-shoot of the nearby River Thames.

Whilst of some age, the property has been substantially altered over time, most especially pre-World War II when its current configuration was largely established.

It is neither locally or statutorily listed but does lie within the Wargrave Conservation Area. It adjoins Wargrave Court a similarly much altered manor House to the south-east. This property is grade II listed and the listing notes refer to alterations to the manor house made in the 18th , 19th and 20th centuries.

Herons Creek itself has a detached brick and tile garage/workshop (the subject of this application) and other outbuildings within its plot and lies within the residential enclave of large, detached dwellings to the west, north and east of Wargrave’s St Mary’s church. Nearby homes display a range of ages, architectural designs, detailing and finished materials.

Herons Creek enjoys access and driveway parking directly off the private lane to the south which extends north off Station Road. This access arrangement and all boundary treatments remain unaffected by the proposals.

The property is not of any particular noteworthy architectural interest having been significantly altered over time and is not recognised in its own right as either a statutory or non-designated heritage asset.

That said, the property does lie just within the Wargrave Conservation Area and as such the character of this area needs to be preserved. The property also lies within Flood Zone 2 (no new floor area is being proposed). There are no other pertinent planning constraints or site designations identified within the Wokingham Local plan policy documents that affect the current proposals.

Location plan (not to scale)



It is the applicant's intention to continue to occupy the property as their family's principal residence and the proposed works, as outlined below, reflect the desire to add sympathetic ancillary floorspace (home gym).

The modest related alteration as now proposed has been designed to preserve and enhance the character and external visual appearance of the existing building and wider property whilst maximising beneficial natural light to the newly created habitable space, thus improving the internal space and offering energy savings to provide for a more sustainable future, bringing it more into line with modern day expectations for such a family home.

Relevant Planning History

The changes as now proposed had been considered to comprise Permitted Development under allowances contained within the General Permitted Development Order (GPDO), however it is recognised that the property does not enjoy such rights to change as the property remained controlled by an earlier restrictive condition from a previous planning approval granted in 1979 under ref: 11356 for a single storey extension and erection of detached garage with garden room over, of which Condition 4 is reported to state:

"*Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1977, there shall be no structural alterations to the elevations of the dwelling as extended by this permission and no further additions or alterations (including windows) shall be constructed without prior written permission of the District Planning Authority".*

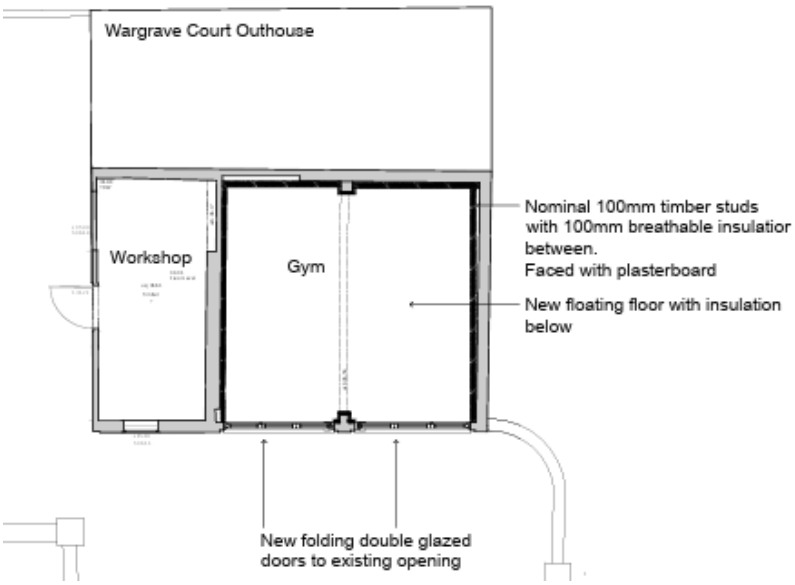
Available on-line records are not available to determine the reason for the addition of this condition.

Other planning applications granted on the property include;

- 43126 - Single Storey Extension to Form a Garden Room
- F/20043572 - Install solar panels on roof
- 252273 – replacement porch, windows and changes to fenestration

The Proposal

The proposed works comprise a simple change of use from the existing two small single garages within the garage / workshop block to form a home gym with the only alteration involving replacing the existing garage doors with fenestration of appropriate design, detailing, materials and finishes and adding new insulation internally within the space. (see below – not to scale)



The designated heritage asset to consider in this instance is the cottage's setting within the Wargave conservation area. The property itself is not designated as a heritage asset in its own right.

Notwithstanding that, special attention must nonetheless be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the historic assets affected (Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990).

The main issues in considering this proposal are therefore the 'principle' and the impact of the proposed changes on the wider conservation area setting.

The submitted revised proposals are modest and simple in extent but nonetheless have sought to address identified concerns with the property's current condition and seek to implement a high-quality alteration which embraces the opportunity to significantly uplift the quality of the home and the way it performs whilst preserving its existing character.

Proposed fenestration includes new double glazed timber framed casement doors infilling the existing openings. The new fenestration will be high quality and will complement the host dwelling.

Proposed changed elevation extract (not to scale)



Existing ***Proposed***

<u>Planning Policy considerations</u>

Reference to the following policy documents has been made in drawing up these proposals;

- The Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 Section 72: In determining applications that affect a conservation area.
- National Planning Policy Framework 2026 and related National Planning Practice Guidance
- Wokingham Local plan and Core Strategy,
- Local Plan Policy CC01
- Policy CP3 - Design
- Policy CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals
- MDD Local Plan (MDD)
- CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- CC02 – Development Limits
- CC07 – Parking
- TB24 – Conservation Areas
- Other - Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document

Local Plan Policy CC01 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.

Policy CP 3- 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.

Policy CP9 - 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.

Planning And Heritage Assessment, Planning Balance and Determining Issues

Principle of Development

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Overarching planning policy guidance and advice on such matters is set by the Government's 2026 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The NPPF attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design being a key aspect of sustainable development and should contribute positively to making places better for people.

It emphasises the importance to plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all development, including individual buildings and provides for a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

The presumption is therefore that planning permission should be granted unless there are good reasons in an up-to-date plan to resist such.

The proposed works fulfil an identifiable need and better meets the reasonable needs for family occupation of this dwelling. The new building works do not impinge upon the scale of the plot and are accommodated within an existing building within the home's curtilage.

The proposal consolidates the need to accommodate practical improvements through a logical upgrade to an existing structure that is finished in complementary architectural detailing.

In accordance with the requirements of the Council's Design Guide the changes are proportionate and in keeping with the homes character and appearance.

The proposed fenestration responds to the existing rhythm of windows, doors and openings. The proposals will not give rise to any unacceptable harm to neighbouring amenity by virtue of causing inappropriate overshadowing, a loss of privacy or by having an oppressive or overbearing impact on neighbouring properties.

The proposal therefore remains compliant with the Borough Design Guide in respect of residential amenity, design / character, garden depth, separation distances and adopted parking standards.

Section 71 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local authority to submit the proposals for the preservation and enhancement of a conservation area.

Historic England advice confirms that designating a conservation area should not be seen as an end in itself: "*we live in a changing world and for the historic environment to survive and continue to be cherished it needs to be positively managed*".

The purpose of designating a Conservation Area is not to prevent the improvement or upgrade of properties, especially where such are of no noteworthy historic or architectural interest and where visual improvements can be delivered, and sustainability and energy efficiency improvements secured.

There is no Conservation Area Appraisal that notifies the property itself as being Locally Listed, and it does not appear on the Council's list as being a 'Building of Traditional Character'.

There are no ‘Important Trees’ or other affected heritage assets identified within close proximity of the cottage nor ‘Important Views’ designated towards the property.

The affected parts of the existing structure are not of particular architectural merit or historic significance and the proposed change is not prominent within any street scene.

In this connection, the Council have Local Plan policies Policy TB24: Designated Heritage Assets (Listed Buildings, Historic Parks and Gardens, Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Conservation Areas) which states that the Council will conserve and seek the enhancement of designated heritage assets in the Borough and their settings by:

a. Requiring works to or affecting heritage assets or their setting to demonstrate that the proposals would at least conserve and, where possible enhance the important character and special architectural or historic interest of the Conservation Area, including its setting and views.

In this case the property itself can be said to be of at the lower end of the heritage significance spectrum given the age, design and materials and existing later additions as added to the original host building, the lack of recognised, listed or noteworthy features and the lack of public realm visibility from within the conservation area.

In the light of this and relative small scale of the proposed works it is contended that those practical and visual improvements presented by the new work and resultant lack of significant harm caused to the wider conservation area is sufficient to allow for the development to proceed.

The subtle changes as proposed will preserve the characteristics of the conservation area in the vicinity of the application site as required by policy.

Other Planning Matters;

CIL: As the proposal generates less than 100m2 of new space it is therefore exempt from CIL.

Parking & Access

The application would not have an undue impact upon the highways network and is considered acceptable in this regard. The existing access, and driveway parking areas remain adequate to accommodate sufficient off road parking and are to be maintained as existing.

Neighbouring amenity

Local Plan policy and design guidance also seeks to protect existing residential occupiers from inappropriate development. Issues to consider are the impact of a development proposal upon neighbouring properties by way of overshadowing, loss of light, overbearing impact, overlooking, loss of privacy and general noise and disturbance.

Having regard to the design and siting of the proposed change, there is no loss of amenity with particular regard to light, outlook, or privacy.

Impact on Trees

Local Plan policy suggests that new developments should protect and conserve trees important to the amenity of the area; ample space should also be provided for the future growth of these trees. Any loss or harm to such trees in some circumstances be mitigated by replanting but should always be justified by the applicant.

In this case there are no trees on site that will be impacted by the development.

Flood:

The site falls within Flood Zone 2 but no additional floor area is created. Accordingly no FRA is required.

Bats and Biodiversity & the impact on protected species;

Policies of the Local Plan sets out that development in the Borough that will conserve and where possible restore and/or enhance, biodiversity will be permitted.

The application property does not fall within a designated SPA, SAC, SNCI or SSSI. It is not within 200m of ancient woodland and is not an agricultural building or barn.

Site investigations of areas affected by the proposals do not identify the presence of bats on site or opportunities for roosting sites given the nature and construction of those elements of the property being affected.

Given the location and scale of the proposed works upon only one elevation of an existing structure it is not considered that the development proposed would be likely to have any adverse biodiversity or ecology impact.

Sustainability;

The new work will seek to exceed the standard of thermal and energy efficiency performance presently required by building regulations.

Opportunities for thermally efficient glazing and solar gain will be utilised wherever possible.

This will maximise thermal performance, air tightness and energy usage.

Other planning benefits

The proposed works would provide benefits of both an environmental, social and economic nature.

From a social perspective, this would be through the improvement in accommodation and in the flexibility of use of this particular housing stock.

From an economic perspective, the construction of the alterations would provide employment opportunities for local tradespeople.

From an environmental perspective the proposals enhances the visual appearance and sustainability of the existing building.

CONCLUSION

The proposals accord with the Council's residential extensions policy and guidance.

The proposals have been designed contextually using complementary detailing to secure the long-term future of the building in a beneficial use that enhances the host building and does not detract from its historic significance or its setting.

The proposal has no material adverse impact on any recognised historic fabric of the building nor its Conservation Area setting.

Planning policies and decisions should address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment

In the light of the above, it is considered that the proposals accord with planning policies, advice and guidance as contained within the National Planning Policy Framework 2026 and Adopted Local Plan Policies.

For all of these reasons the proposed development we would urge the Local Planning Authority to support the proposals.