

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	253103
Site Address:	Sonning Court, Thames Street, Sonning, Wokingham, RG4 6UR
Expiry Date:	13 February 2026
Site Visit Date:	9 January 2026
Proposal: Householder application for the proposed conversion of existing loft to create habitable accommodation plus insertion of 5no. dormers and rooflights.	

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 CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk TB21 – Landscape Character TB23 – Biodiversity and Development TB25 – Archaeology TB26 – Buildings of Traditional Local Character and Areas of Special Character
Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update (LPU)	C5 – Parking and electric vehicle charging
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document Sonning Parish Design Statement Sonning Design Appraisal

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
253104	Householder application for the proposed three storey rear extension to include 2no. balconies following demolition of existing conservatory plus changes to fenestration.	Live Application
253111	Householder application for the proposed erection of 1no. single storey detached outbuilding for use as gym plus formation of outdoor pool with associated works following demolition of existing pyramid building, pool structure and pool house.	Live Application
201358	Householder application for the erection of a single storey detached building for purposes ancillary to the dwelling.	Application Withdrawn 20/07/2020
142038	Proposed erection of single storey security accommodation for ancillary use.	Approved 02/04/2015
130757	Proposed erection of a glass extension to existing reception and study, following removal of existing external windows, doors and walls.	Approved 28/11/2013
120174	Proposed addition of a side facing glass room to dwelling.	Approved 07/09/2012
111014	Proposed two storey side extension, plus creation of a basement level to create additional habitable accommodation.	Approved 08/06/2011
091253	Proposed erection of two storey side extension to dwelling.	Approved 18/01/2010

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Highways – No objection.
WBC Built Heritage Officer – No objection, subject to condition.
WBC CIL – CIL liable.
WBC Ecology Newts – No comments received.
WBC Ecology – No comments received.
WBC Green Infrastructure – No comment to make.

External

None.

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	No objection, however raised concerns relating to noise during construction and overlooking from front dormer windows.
Ward Member(s)	No comments received.

Neighbours	No comments received.
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APPRAISAL

Site Description:

The application site comprises a large, detached dwelling set within a generous plot off a private track on the northern side of Thames Street, Sonning. The site is located within Sonning Conservation Area.

Running parallel to the rear site boundary is a public right of way footpath (SONN1) which runs along the southern bank of the River Thames.

Proposal:

This application seeks approval for the installation of two front dormers, three rear dormers and two rooflights in the roof of the front central gable.

Note:

Revised plans were accepted during the application process. The plans amended the design of the dormers in response to the council's Built Heritage comments.

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 principle of a residential extension in this location is acceptable providing that it complies with the wider policy objectives contained within the Core Strategy and Managing Development Delivery (MDD).

Character of the Area:

The application site is part of the Sonning Conservation Area. The Sonning Conservation Area Appraisal 2017 defines the special historic and architectural character of the area.

Page 22 of the appraisal summarises the Thames Street area as a place where architecturally, no single style dominates. There is a range of flat fronted and gable fronted red brick, timber-framed and rendered buildings spanning a broad period of time.

While the host dwelling is not visible from Thames Street due to its set back position (approximately 120m), there are views of the dwelling when traversing along the River Thames and public footpath that runs adjacent to the rear site boundary.

The proposed development includes two front dormers and three rear dormers. 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.

The host building itself is a substantial replica period property incorporating traditional architectural features such as sash windows and classical columns. While the building draws upon historic design cues, it is not a listed building and does not represent an original historic asset. As such, a degree of sensitively designed alterations can be accommodated without causing harm to the significance of the conservation area.

The proposed dormer windows would be subservient in scale and appearance. They would be set down from the ridge line, set in from the sides and set above the eaves, ensuring that the original roof form remains clearly legible and visually dominant. This approach accords with the guidance set out in the BDG to prevent dormers from appearing overly dominant or intrusive when viewed from the public realm.

MDD Local Plan policy TB24 states that works affecting heritage assets or their setting are required to demonstrate that the proposal 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 terms of design, the dormers would respect the proportions and rhythm of the existing fenestration, with their detailing reflecting the traditional character of the host property, including the use of sash-style windows in the front elevation. The inclusion of dormers in the front elevation is considered acceptable in this instance due to the generous scale of the roof, the balanced composition of the façade, and the varied architectural context of the surrounding area.

The council's Built Heritage officer was consulted and recommended changes to the original design of the dormers. Following the recommendation, revised plans were submitted to address the officer comments. The officer was re-consulted and raised no objection to the amended plans, subject to a condition relating to fenestration details. They concluded *"Whilst not particularly historic it [the dwelling] 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."*

Further to the submission of amended drawings following Built Heritage initial comments, the proposed alterations are now considered acceptable in design terms and thus impact upon the Conservation Area".

Overall, it is considered that the proposal would preserve the architectural integrity of the host building and would not harm the significance, character, or appearance of the conservation area. The development is therefore considered to comply with CS policies CP1, CP3 and MDD Local Plan policy TB24.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Overlooking:

The Local Parish raised concern about the potential of overlooking from the front dormers which would face towards the flank walls of 'Star Court' and 'Portland House'. Page 47 of the BDG provides recommended separation distances to be retained

between properties in order to maintain privacy and limit a sense of enclosure. While a recommended distance for front to side elevations is not provided, a 10m minimum separation distance is recommended between front-to-front elevations; The proposed dormers would be more than 53m from the flank walls of the neighbouring properties. In addition, the shared southern boundary between the host dwelling and adjoining neighbours' benefits from established trees and hedging which provides natural screening of the proposed development. Therefore, the proposed fenestration in the front elevation of the host dwelling would not cause any detrimental loss of privacy impact to the adjoining properties.

Loss of Light & Overbearing:

By virtue of the small-scale nature of the proposed development and the fenestration being contained within the existing roof form, there are no impacts of this nature that would arise from the proposed development.

Noise:

The Local Parish raised concern in relation to noise being generated during construction works and requested that working hours are conditioned. However, the proposal relates to a domestic extension within a residential curtilage and is of a scale and nature typical of household development. Construction activity associated with such development is generally temporary and is not considered to give rise to significant or sustained harm to residential amenity that would warrant control through a planning condition.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

The proposed conversion of the loft to create additional habitable accommodation would result in an increase in the number of habitable rooms. The council's Highways officer was consulted and raised no objection to the proposal. Car parking is to be provided in line with WBC Car Parking Standards and each parking space shall have the minimum dimensions of 5.0m x 2.5m. The Highways officer concludes that there is sufficient space along the existing driveway to accommodate the required level of parking.

Flooding and Drainage:

The application site is located on the southern edge of the River Thames. While the northern tip of the site is located in flood zone 2 and 3, the proposed development is located in flood zone 1 and more than 70m from the river. Therefore, a flood risk assessment is not required to support the application.

Ecology:

The application site is located in an area suitable for bat roosts. A preliminary bat roost assessment was submitted to support the application. The ecologist concludes that *"The identified roost features below slipped and lifted roof tiles on the front elevation will be unaffected by the proposals and retained long-term. The survey findings demonstrate that these proposals are highly unlikely to result in the death, injury or disturbance of bats, the damage or destruction of a bat roost, or the obstruction of access to a bat roost"*.

However, it will be necessary to condition Section 6.2. (recommendations) of the bat report and attach an informative that outlines what would be required in the unlikely event that bats were discovered during construction.

Conclusion:

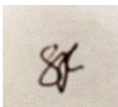
For the reasons set out above and subject to conditions, the proposal is acceptable as it accords with local plan policy and guidance.

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.

RECOMMENDATION

Conditions agreed:	Yes
Recommendation:	Approve
Date:	6 February 2026
Earliest date for decision:	2 February 2026

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	11.2.26

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Limited Development Location

Public Right of Way – Footpath

Flood zone 2 and 3

Bat Roost Habitat Suitability

Great Crested Newt Impact Risk Zone – Red

Landscape Character Assessment 2019 – Thames River Valley & Sonning Wooded Chalk Slopes

Sonning Conservation Area

Thames Ward

Sonning Parish