

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	253104
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 part single storey, part two storey rear extensions with balconies following the removal of the existing conservatory, erection of a basement extension and changes to fenestration.	

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
253103	Householder application for the proposed conversion of existing loft to create habitable accommodation plus insertion of 5no. dormers and rooflights.	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	Application Withdrawn 20/07/2020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 objection. WBC Ecology – No comments received. WBC Green Infrastructure – No comment to make.
External
None.

REPRESENTATIONS	
Parish/Town Council	No objection, however, concerns relating to noise during construction

Ward Member(s)	No comments received.
Neighbours	No comments received.

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 erection of a two-part single-storey, part two-storey rear extensions with two balconies following the removal of the existing conservatory. Also proposed is a single-storey rear extension to the existing basement, internal alterations which include the installation of a lift, and changes to fenestration.

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 run adjacent to the rear site boundary.

The proposed development includes the erection of two-part single-storey, part two-storey rear extensions with two balconies. 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 listed in structure 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.

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.

The existing building has been subject to a series of unsympathetic rear additions of varying scale and form which have resulted in a cluttered and visually incoherent elevation when viewed from the public footpath and the River Thames Path along the rear site boundary.

The proposed development would remove the existing conservatory and replace it with a more considered design that would result in a more proportionate and symmetrical rear elevation. The extensions have been carefully composed to create a more succinct and balanced appearance that better reflects the ordered and formal character associated with large period-style properties within the vicinity.

The inclusion of two balconies is limited to the rear elevation and would have clear glazed balustrades. This approach ensures visual lightness and transparency, avoiding the introduction of solid or visually intrusive elements that would detract from the host building or its setting. As a result, the balconies would read as recessive features and would not disrupt key views from the River Thames Path or wide public vantage points.

The proposed extension to the existing basement would protrude an approximate 2.63m to the rear. Due to the basement location, there would be no view of the extension from the public realm.

Given the property's substantial scale and the discreet siting of the extensions to the rear, the development would not undermine the overall character or appearance of the host dwelling or conservation area. On the contrary, by improving the rear elevation, the proposal would result in a visual enhancement when compared to the existing situation.

The walls of the extensions would be finished with painted render to match the main house, and the existing plastic weatherboarding at first floor level in the rear elevation would be removed and finished with painted render. The proposed new and replacement fenestration would be constructed from painted grey metal.

The Council's Built Heritage officer was consulted and requested further information to clarify that no changes are proposed to the fenestration in the front elevation, whether the proposal would retain the dentil cornice and clarity on the changes proposed to the front door. In response to the officer comments, plan BBP0730_203A was submitted.

The plan shows that the timber fenestration in the front and side elevations would be retained as part of the development, and the existing dentil cornice would also be retained and returned 90 degrees at junctions with gables. The plan also states that the existing raised plinth at the front entrance would be modified to reduce the level to allow a level entrance to the property. A new timber framed door would be installed to accommodate the lower threshold.

The officer commented *“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 where 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”*.

As such, it will be necessary and reasonable to provide further details of the proposed fenestration via a condition.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Overlooking:

As the proposed extensions and two balconies are limited to the rear elevation, views from the proposed fenestration would be towards the rear of the site and beyond. As there are no neighbouring properties to the rear, the proposed development would not generate any loss of privacy impact.

Loss of Light & Overbearing:

By virtue of the significant separation distances from neighbouring properties, there are no concerns 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 council’s Highways officer was consulted regarding the application. They raise no objection to the proposed development and conclude that there are no changes

proposed to the current parking arrangements which are considered acceptable to serve the proposed development.

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 zones 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:

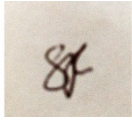
For the reasons set out above and subject to conditions, the proposal is acceptable as it accords with local plan policy and guidance.

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:	9 February 2026

Earliest date for decision:	2 February 2026
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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