

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	253111
Site Address:	Sonning Court, Thames Street, Sonning, Wokingham, RG4 6UR
Expiry Date:	13 February 2027
Site Visit Date:	9 January 2026
Proposal: 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.	

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
253103	Householder application for the proposed conversion of existing loft to create habitable accommodation plus insertion of 5no. dormers and rooflights.	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	Application Withdrawn 20/07/2020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 comments received.
WBC Built Heritage Officer – No objection.
WBC CIL – CIL liable.
WBC Ecology Newts – Holding Objection - condition required.
WBC Ecology – No comments received.
WBC Green Infrastructure – No objection.

External

None.

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	No objection, however raised concern 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 public right of way footpath (SONN1) which runs along the southern bank of the River Thames.

Proposal:

This application seeks approval for the removal of the existing pool house, pyramid structure and pool cover structure, and the erection of a single-storey detached outbuilding to serve a gymnasium/ spa suite.

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 removal of the existing pyramid building, pool house and pool cover structure would not result in the removal of built form that holds great historic significant value. The proposal includes the erection of an L-shaped detached outbuilding that would be sited in the location of the existing pool house and would wrap around the existing pool to the south and east.

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 dwelling and the surrounding properties are set back from the established building line along Thames Street. The established character for the host dwelling and surrounding properties is for large, detached dwellings sited centrally within generous plots. Vegetation cover and mature trees contribute significantly to the street scene and setting of the local area.

The proposed L-shaped outbuilding would have a flat roof form with an overall height of approximately 3.23m. The outbuilding would be sited centrally within the plot to the south east of the existing swimming pool. Although relatively large in size (maximum length of approximately 17m and maximum width 10m), to facilitate the proposed development, the existing pyramid structure, pool cover and pool house would be demolished which would remove some of the built form that as existing, spreads the urban sections of the site further into the garden. Following the removal of the structures, the proposed outbuilding is considered to be of a scale that is proportionate to the size of the host dwelling and generous garden, such that it would not be of such an excessive size that would compromise the existing open character of the garden.

It is also noted through aerial images that there are similar sized outbuildings associated with other properties on the street. Given this, and the proportionate scale of the proposed building, it is considered the scheme would not detrimentally impact the character of the host dwelling or Conservation Area.

The contemporary modern approach with a flat roof form proposes materials including vertical timber cladding, aluminium windows and painted render on the eastern flank wall. The material palette would be sympathetic to the host dwelling which also boasts painted render finished walls and flat roofed rear and side extensions. While there would be views of the proposed development from the Thames Path to the rear of the site, the structure would be more than 70m from the Thames Path, and the existing established trees and shrubs that would surround the outbuilding would provide a level of natural screening.

The Council's Built Heritage officer was consulted and raised no objection to the proposal. They commented: *"The glass pyramid structure is certainly unusual, designed and installed by a previous owner of the property. Whilst having some interest in itself by virtue of being uncommon, the structure does hold any great significance, and as such no concern is raised to its loss. Similarly, the pool covering structure is fairly rudimentary in appearance, and thus no concerns are raised to the proposed removal. The existing pool house does, to a degree, reflect the host building, designed in a traditional form with a 'tented' roof structure. This building does seek to compliment the host building, however, is not of any great age and thus no objection is raised to the proposed demolition."*

Following the removal of these structures, it is proposed to erect a single storey 'leisure suite' encompassing a gym, spa and wellness facilities. The building would be of an L shape plan with a flat roof and covered in vertical timber cladding. Such buildings of this type and design are en vogue, and much like the pyramid, may reflect changing owner's tastes and requirements. The proposed design is fairly tame, however does not seek to have adverse impact upon the setting of the host, and to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Some glimpses of the building may be glimpse

from the Thames Path, however due to the low-scale and singular material palette, the visual impact would not be so great as to cause harm to the significance of the Conservation Area”.

By virtue of the size of the outbuilding, it is necessary to condition the use, to ensure that it remains incidental accommodation to the main dwellinghouse.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Overlooking, Loss of Light & Overbearing:

The closest neighbouring property to the outbuilding would be Portland House which would be more than 48m from the development. As such, due to the significant separation distances to the adjoining properties, there are no concerns raised.

Noise:

The Local Parish Council 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:

As the existing pool house and pyramid outbuilding would be removed to facilitate the proposed development, there would be no increase in the overall number of habitable rooms. As such, the existing parking arrangements which are not proposed to change are considered acceptable to serve the 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 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 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”*.

The application site also falls within a red impact zone for Great Crested Newts. In the red impact zone, there is suitable habitat and a high likelihood of great crested newt presence. A GCN Assessment Report (JWEC GCN Habitat Assessment, Ref: R3096_GCN_a, December 2025) was submitted to support the application. The Council's GCN Ecologist raised a holding objection to the proposal due to the assessment not factoring in the demolition of the pyramid building directly adjacent to the on-site pond complex.

It is therefore necessary and reasonable to attach a condition to any grant of approval to ensure the applicant joins the NatureSpace district licencing scheme to demonstrate that the impacts of the proposed development can be addressed through the Council's District Licence.

Conclusion:

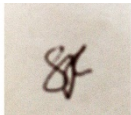
For the reasons set out above and subject to conditions, the proposal is acceptable as it accords with local plan policy and guidance.

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:	10 February 2026
Earliest date for decision:	26 January 2026

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	13.2.26

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