

## Wokingham Borough Council's Transport Network Review

### **Meeting of Bus Working Group held on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2025.**

Those present: Councillors Anne Bassett, Rosemary Cook and Andrew Long  
In attendance: Emma Carroll, Deputy Town Clerk

The Bus Working Group also received an email from Councillor Neal, Chair of Planning and Transport Committee which was fed into the discussion. Councillor Long also received an email from MERA which has fed into this draft response.

Notes and discussion from meeting captured as draft response to questions raised by WBC in relation to its Transport Network Review.

### **Local Bus Services**

#### **1. How well do you think the existing contracted routes of 19a, 19b and 19c meet local needs?**

- The loading on the 19b can be pretty good especially at rush-hour and on Saturday mornings. In the latter case, the bus pickups many University of Reading students heading into town. Many also use the service to visit Asda to do their shopping. In addition, the 19b collects school children near RBH in the afternoon at about 1540 when the bus can become overloaded.
- The 19a (which heads east down Silverdale Road before going to Woodley) involves catching a bus post morning rush-hour. Loading is very light from Earley to Woodley though it does pick-up passengers in Woodley. The same can be said for the 19c which runs from Woodley to Wokingham Road then along Mill Lane before heading up Silverdale Road. There is reasonable loading in Woodley but very few passengers going onto Earley at about 1645.
- The 19a & c services do not go to Asda, Chalfont Surgery or Lower Earley library.
- The 19a/b & c services do stop outside Royal Berks Hospital (RBH) unlike the 21 and 4/4a services.
- The 19a/b & c services do not run on a Sunday so getting to the RBH on that day from Earley is very difficult. All three services do not run late into the evening but this was not considered an issue until it was raised in the letter from WBC.

#### **2. Do you think any changes should be made to the existing routes to better help meet the needs of residents in Earley?**

- Both the 19a and 19c services do not go to Asda, Lower Earley library or Chalfont Surgery. From the Silverdale Road area you need to walk to Beech Lane to catch the 19b to get to the above destinations.
- The 19a and 19c services currently do not go to Rushey Way which is considered to be the start of Lower Earley. Currently if you wish to catch the 19a or 19c you need to walk from Lower Earley to Silverdale Road.

- To make the 19a and 19c more accessible to Lower Earley residents, it is suggested that the current route of the 19a is amended so that at the bottom of Silverdale Road the bus turns right onto Gipsy Lane and at the junction with Rushey Way goes left before turning left onto Toseland Way and then continuing up Mill Lane on the existing route. (Please see option 1 map).
- An alternative route would be to head from Gipsy Lane up Rushey Way before turning down Kilnsea Drive before looping back along Rushey Way and then onto Toseland Way/Mill Lane as previously suggested. (Please see option 2 map ).
- Both suggested routes provide more options for Lower Earley residents and more opportunities for the bus company to pick up more passengers. Although the second option would take longer to complete than now. The current 19a and 19c services are often early and have significant dwell-time at the Wokingham Road stops.
- The Kilnsea Drive option also gives eastern Lower Earley residents access to a service (19c) serving the Royal Berkshire Hospital as well as a service to central Woodley (19a). However, it does not resolve the problem of getting from Silverdale Road to Asda without a change onto a 21 bus.

### **3. Is the Town Council supportive of a new route between Earley and Wokingham Town?**

- The message often received from Earley residents is the lack of a bus service to Wokingham from Lower Earley.
- There is a frequent 4/4a bus service along the Wokingham Road for Earley residents but it is pretty inaccessible for those walking from Lower Earley in the Rushey Way area.
- One solution is to catch the 19b bus to Earley Gate and then walk to the Three Tuns to pick up a 4/4a service to Wokingham. This requires a fair degree of planning to minimise the delay between the hourly 19b and the more frequent 4/4a services. Also, you will be charged for two bus journeys each way and having to take two buses could deter people from bus travel.
- Another solution is to catch the 19a bus from Silverdale Road to the George pub bus stop on the Wokingham Road and then change onto a 4/4a service to Wokingham. The same issues with planning and bus fare charges will apply here too.
- It is possible to plan these journeys as well as keeping costs down by use of the Reading Buses app as well as by the use of fare capping, but this may be too complicated for the average casual bus user especially those without access to a smartphone.
- If getting to Wokingham from Lower Earley is too complicated, expensive and time consuming, residents will simply drive to Wokingham, not travel to the town or go to Reading where there are more direct bus options.

- A new bus service from Lower Earley to Wokingham would be beneficial to:
  - Young people going to WBC schools such as Holt, Forest, Emmbrook and St Crispins or to travel to Winnersh or Wokingham to meet up with friends It would also be an alternative to travelling to Reading.
  - Those visiting Wokingham Hospital, though the walk from the railway station where the bus would be expected to stop is a reasonable distance, so may not be an option for those less abled.
  - Those wanting to visit the WBC offices.
  - Those wanting to visit Wokingham town centre to shop/drink/have a meal as an alternative to going to Reading.
- Town Councillors may support a new bus service but would need to know more about the financial amounts which ETC would be asked to fund for all or part of the service There are also concerns that WBC may also come to ETC looking for a significant increase in the subsidy for the 19a/b/c services when it is up for renewal. The required subsidies would also need to be paid each year for a specified period.
- Town Councillors who may not live in Lower Earley may feel a business case for a Lower Earley to Wokingham bus service has not been made and the effort/funding should go into supporting existing 19a/b/c services.

**4. How well do you think the new Lower Earley to Wokingham link meets the needs of residents in Earley?**

- ETC have a number of suggestions to the proposed WSP route:
  - Route needs to stop outside ASDA where the 19b currently ends before heading up Elm Lane. The loop round Rushey Way feels unnecessary.
  - Route needs to go down Silverdale Road instead of Beech Lane to allow Silverdale Road residents access to ASDA. However, the problem with diverting the service down Silverdale Road is that it avoids a large part of western and central Lower Earley which is the point of having the bus service in the first place.

A diagram showing suggested changes to WBC's proposed option can be found at the end of this document.

**5. If a new service were to be introduced which of the following routing options is preferable and why:**

**a) a service via Lower Earley Way and Reading Road compared to a service via Lower Earley Way and Hatch Farm Way.**

- The option of routing the bus up Reading Road allows Lower Earley residents to get off on Wokingham Road and walk to Winnersh Triangle Railway Station. However

routing the service up Wokingham Road duplicates, the existing 4/4a services.

- Routing the bus service via Hatch Farm Way provides a service which does not exist today and provides a short-cut to heading round the cinema roundabout and then up the Reading Road. The downside is the service would not serve Winnersh Triangle station but could be diverted to pass by Sainsbury's at Winnersh crossroads as well as dropping off near Winnersh station.
- A bus service serving Winnersh Crossroads opens up the opportunity of a service to Twyford railway station passing by the entrance to Dinton Pastures. There is also an option here to catch a 4/4a service to Wokingham though there is still the problem of waiting and being charged for a second bus journey. Either way the bus would serve local schools.

**b) A service via Rushey Way compared to a service via Silverdale Road**

- A service via Rushey Way would be far more accessible for those living in Lower Earley but it would largely duplicate the already frequent 21 service. Perhaps the service ought to be routed down Kilnsea Drive to collect more passengers.
- A service via Silverdale Road would be useful for passengers wanting to visit ASDA and Chalfont Surgery but it would miss out on the Lower Earley passengers. Loading via Silverdale Road could be low.

**6. Given that there is only limited funding available, do you think the borough should prioritise funding the existing 19a, 19b, 19c as they currently operate over any new services?**

- Loading on 19b can be high especially on Saturday mornings and during school hours. It would be interesting to see how close 19b was to paying for itself and whether subsidy could be reduced.
- The 19a and 19c services often have low loading and need amendment as described previously. Do Silverdale Road residents really want a bus going to Woodley?

**7. If additional funding were to be found, which of the following enhancements do you think should be prioritised?**

**a) funding a new route to Wokingham Town**

Possibly but not at the expense of existing services. ETC may find it difficult to fund significant amounts to support 19a/b/c together and a new Lower Earley to Wokingham or Twyford service.

**b) enhancing the operating hours of the existing 19b service (8pm to 11pm)**

If a 19b bus user has to catch a later bus it is likely that they will get a 21 bus and walk. A late evening service is not something that immediately is considered needed.

**c) providing a Sunday service on the existing 19b service**

Given Sunday shopping in Reading and that the RBH is a 24/7 operation, it feels that there is a good business case for a bus service serving Lower Earley and the RBH. The 19b also serves ASDA and might be beneficial for University students (not to mention local residents living in the south of the town) wanting to do their weekly shops. On a Sunday there are no bus services in Earley to RBH.

**d) funding an increase in capacity for community transport for the Earley area**

Community transport groups can apply for grants from Earley Town Council and we would look on any application seriously. The issue is not with the age of vehicles they use but the shortage of volunteer drivers and the number able to drive these vehicles with an appropriate driving licence.

**8. Are there any other comments the Town Council wishes to make about the services or information provided?**

Many comments have been made about getting to Wokingham from Lower Earley by taking two buses which means paying two separate fares each way. Travelling from Earley/Lower Earley to Winnersh/Wokingham involves travelling through two bus zones (Reading and Wokingham) which inevitably results in higher fares. Reading buses needs to consider cross bus zone ticket to entice motorists to use the 19abc and 4/4a bus combinations.

**Funding**

**9. Please could you confirm which of the following, if any, Earley Town Council would be willing to fund, in principle:**

- a) a continuation of the current funding arrangement towards the 19a, 19b and 19c services, on a pro-rata basis, to enable the extension of the existing contracts until March 2026? The cost of this would be £754.37.

Yes

- b) to jointly fund a new service between Earley and Wokingham? Whilst costs will be subject to tender, we would expect the cost to be up to £120,000 per year, for a 5-year period, with the option to extend for one or two further years. Please note that this level of funding is likely to provide an hourly service to Wokingham Town but would be subject to all parties agreeing to funding.

There needs to be funding from other local Town/Parish Councils, such as Winnersh Parish Council and Wokingham Town Council, as a new service would be passing through both of those parish/towns, as well as Earley. This is something that would need more analysis and is not something to be rushed into.

- c) to fund additional evening journeys on the 19b service between 8pm and 11pm at a cost of up to £50,000 per year, for a 5-year period.

Not a priority. Bus services in the evening on the 19b from Reading are often empty.

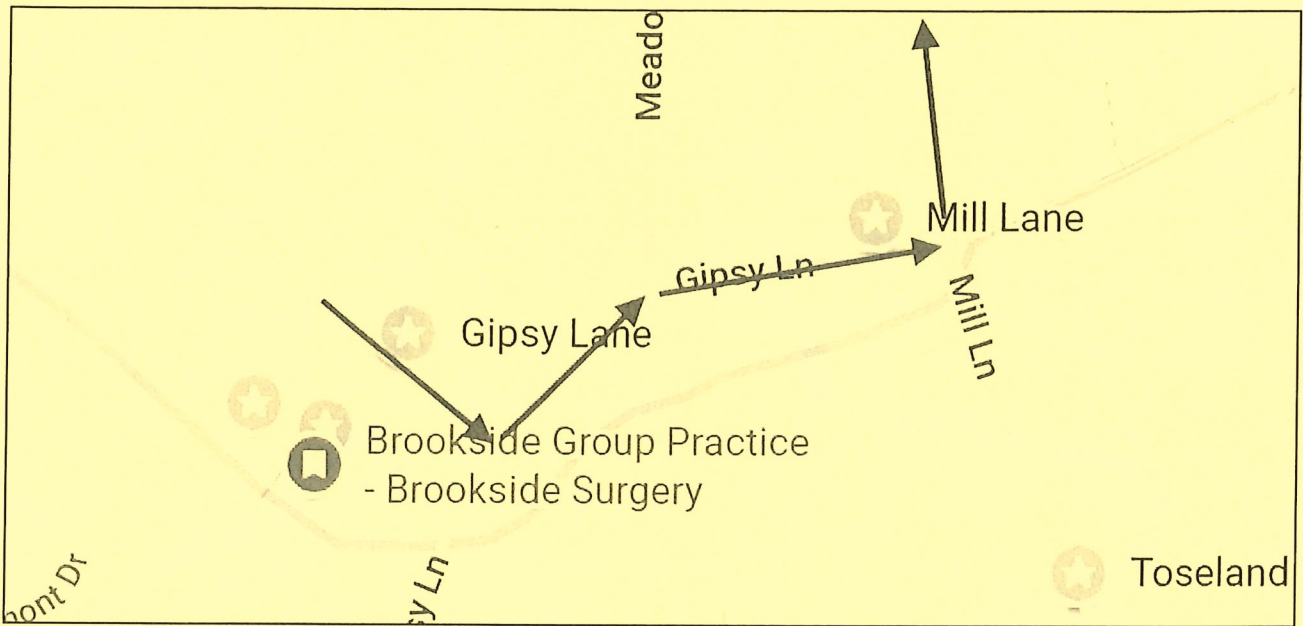
- d) to fund a Sunday service on the 19b service at a cost of up to £80,000 per year, for a 5-year period**

This needs careful consideration given the prevalence of Sunday shopping and the lack of alternative bus services to the Royal Berkshire hospital.

- e) to fund the purchase of a new minibus for the use by a community transport provider to help cater for trips originating in the Earley area. As a guide the cost of a vehicle like those used by Readibus is £85,000.**

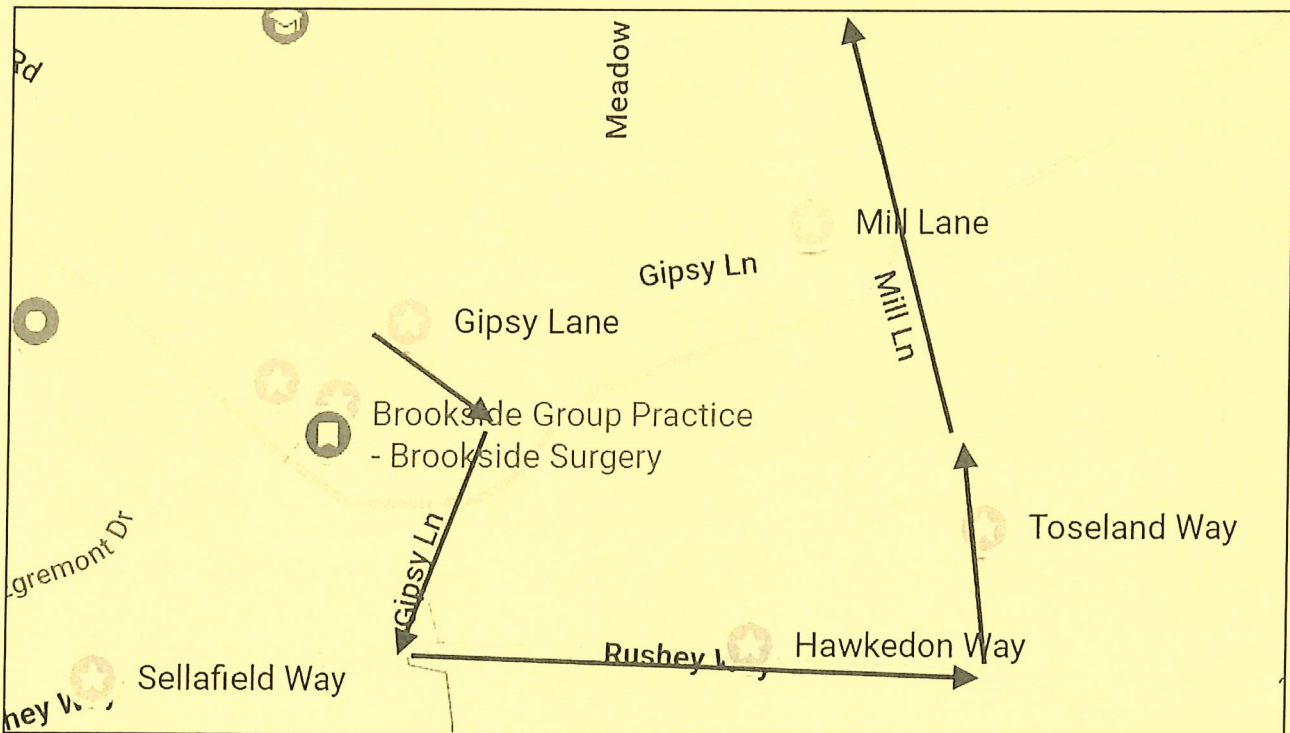
Community Transport providers are able to apply for grants.

Current 19 a/c route in Silverdale Road area



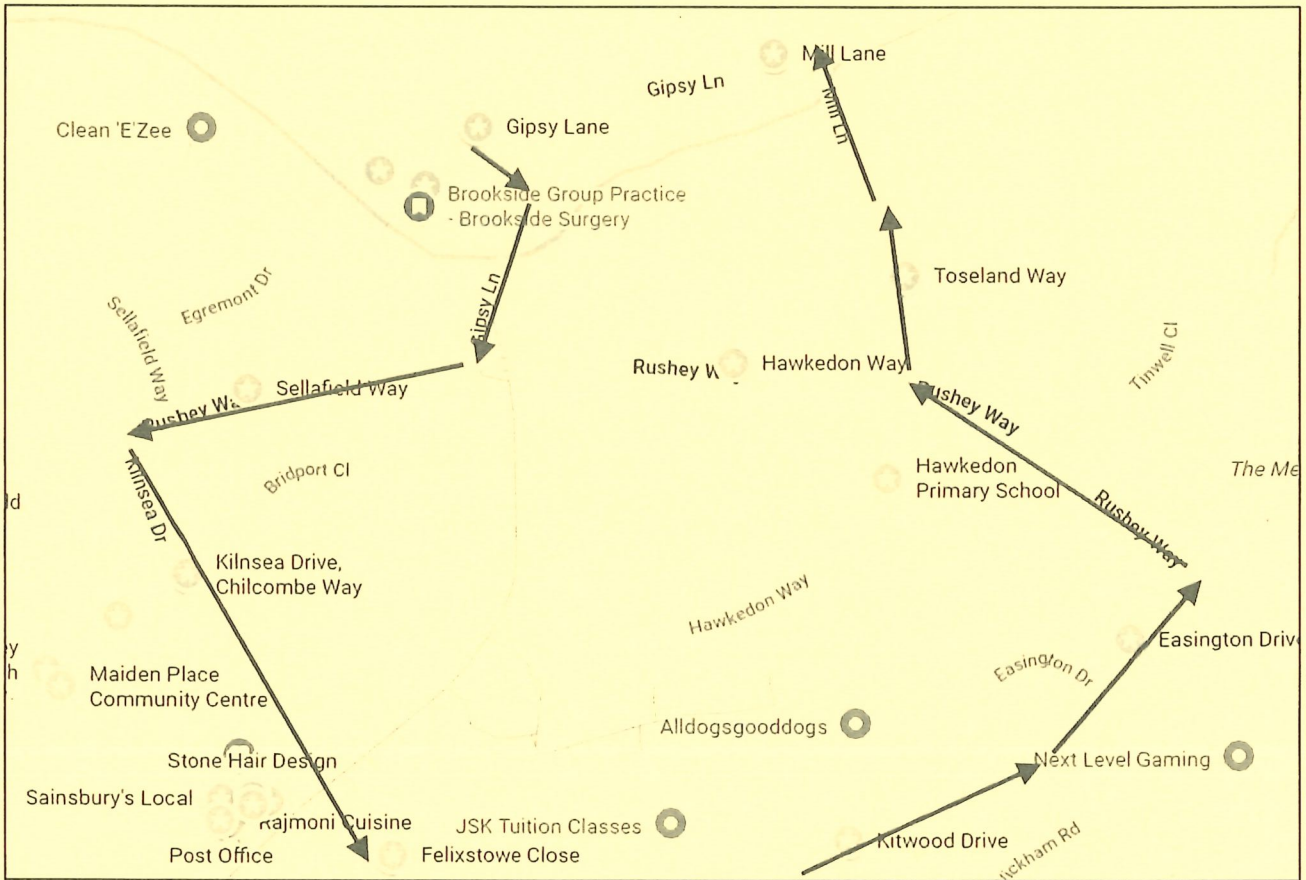
(Route shown is 19a – 19c goes in reverse direction).

Option 1 - Changing route of 19 a/c to go down Rushey Way/Toseland Way



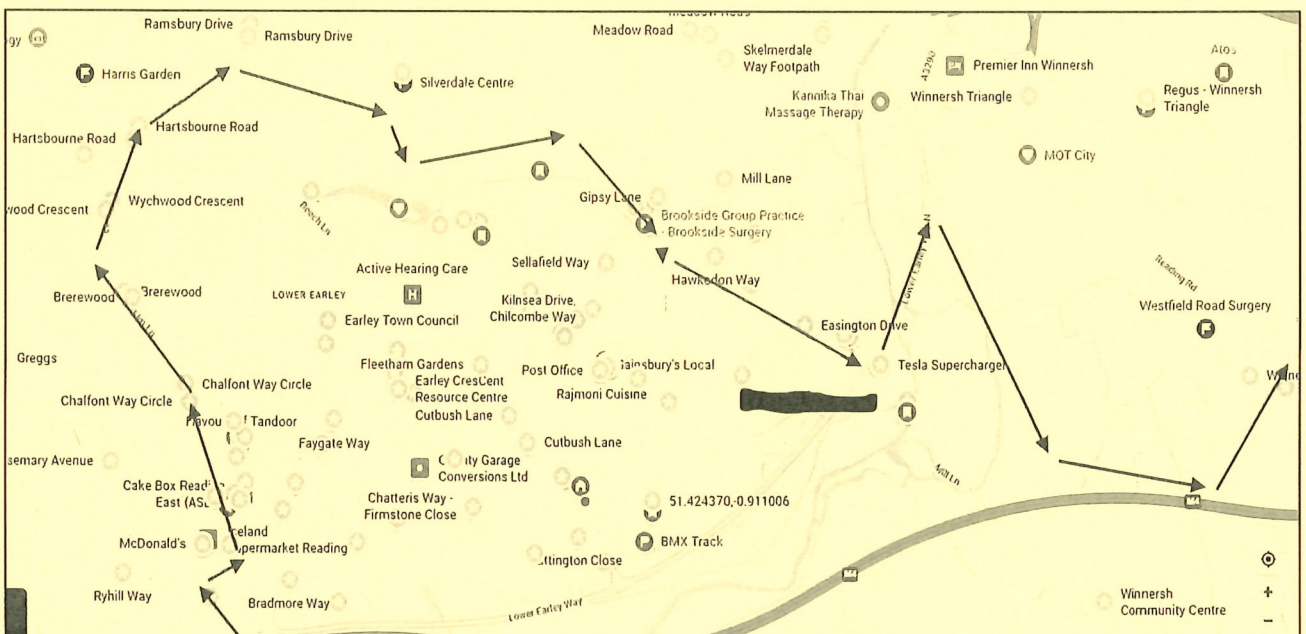
(Route shown is 19a – 19c would go in reverse direction).

Option 2 - Changing route of 19 a/c to go down Kilnsea Drive and Toseland Way



(Route shown is 19a – 19c would go in reverse direction)

Suggested changes to WBC's proposed Lower Earley to Wokingham route



Planning & Transport Committee Meeting – 13<sup>th</sup> January 2026

AGENDA ITEM 6.1

PLANNING DECISION NOTICES ISSUED BY WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL FROM 3<sup>rd</sup> DECEMBER 2025 TO 6<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2026

<b>Application Ref No</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Application Details</b>	<b>Town Council Recommendation</b>	<b>Planning Authority Decision</b>
252102	112 Silverdale Road	Householder application for the proposed alteration to the front porch roof.	N/O	A
252103	32 Sutcliffe Avenue	Householder application for the proposed erection of a part single, part two-storey side extension, single-storey rear extension, conversion of loft to habitable space with rear dormer, addition of 6 no. rooflights following demolition of existing detached garage, single-storey side extensions and rear extension.	N/O	A
252355	3 Adams Way	Householder application for the proposed installation of an Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP) to the side of the property, following demolition of an existing single storey structure.	R	A
252416	652 Wokingham Road	Application to vary condition 2 of planning consent 240839 for the proposed single storey rear extension, single storey side extension, first floor front extension, gable roof conversion to create habitable accommodation with a rear facing dormer with changes to the fenestration. Condition 2 refers to the approved details, and the variation is for changes to external materials and fenestration, plus removal of the single storey pitched roof at the side and rear and reduction in the width of the side / rear extension.	N/O	A
252463	4 Pimento Drive	Householder application for the proposed erection of a single storey front porch, a single storey rear extension following demolition of the existing conservatory, the installation of rooflights and a rear dormer to facilitate the conversion of the loft to habitable accommodation, plus the addition of raised decking at the rear, changes to fenestration, and partial conversion of the garage to habitable accommodation. (part retrospective)	N/O	A
252543	74 Church Road	Householder application for a replacement Shed and formation of hardstanding(retrospective)	N/O	A

**APPENDIX B**

252584	544 Wokingham Road	Householder application for the proposed erection of a single-storey side and rear extension with a dual-pitched tiled roof and rendered external walls to match the existing dwelling, incorporating new fenestration to the side and rear elevations, following the demolition of the existing garage.	R	R
252596	61 Culver Lane	Householder application for the proposed single-storey rear extension and garage conversion.	N/O	A
252669	6 Loxwood	Householder application for the proposed erection of a single storey rear and a single storey rear/side extensions, garage conversion to create habitable accommodation along with changes to fenestration and insertion of the roof lights.	C/A	A
252711	14 Rainworth Closes	Householder application for the proposed conversion of the garage to habitable accommodation with associated changes to fenestration.	N/O	A

N//O = No Objection. A = Approved. C/A = Conditional Approval. R= Refused. N/C = No Comment.  
WD =Withdrawn. N/P = No Plans. P/D = Permitted Development

Dated: 6<sup>th</sup> January 2026

Planning & Transport Committee Meeting – 13<sup>th</sup> January 2026AGENDA ITEM 6.2PLANNING APPLICATIONS RECEIVED SINCE THE LAST PLANNING MEETING UP TO THE DATE OF PUBLICATION OF THE PLANNING AGENDA ON 6<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2026

Planning Ref No:	Address	Application Details	Town Ward
251994	24 Falstaff Avenue RG6 5TQ	Householder application for the proposed erection of a rear orangery with glazed roof lantern.	Hillside
252831	23 Hilltop Road RG6 1BY	Householder application for the proposed erection of a single-storey side extension with associated alterations to fenestration to the side elevation.	Whitegates
252881	3 Buckhurst Way RG6 7RL	Householder application for the proposed erection of a part single/ part two storey front/side/rear extension following demolition of existing garage, rear extension, dormer and chimney.	Redhatch
252924	21 Wickham Road RG6 3TE	Householder application for the proposed erection of a single storey rear extension following demolition of existing conservatory.	Hawkedon
252966	84 Hilmanton RG6 4HN	Application to remove condition 3 of planning consent 251867 for the proposed loft conversion, including installation of 3 No. roof-lights to the front elevation, and 2 No. roof lights to the rear elevation to form additional habitable space (Part Retrospective). Condition 3 relates to obscured glazing of roof windows in the rear elevation, and the application is to remove this requirement.	Hillside
252977	10 Merrifield Close RG6 4BN	Householder application for the proposed single storey rear extension with roof lights.	Cutbush
252981	20 Kerris Way RG6 5UW	Application for works to protected tree/s TPO 197/1980, T55 T1, Oak (T55 on TPO) – Remove deadwood over 1m long and 50mm diameter; reduce 1 no. large dead branch on south side back to live spur at source; reduce tips of low branch on west side growing over neighbouring garden by 2.5m; reduce elongated branches on south side towards highway by 2-3m, back in line with surrounding canopy; reduce low branch on east side of canopy by 1-1.5m; reduce elongated limb on north side by 2m, back in line with surrounding canopy. <b>This type of application does not require consultation and is for information only.</b>	Radstock
253018	35 Chatteris Way RG6 4JA	Householder application for the proposed erection of a single storey front extension following removal of existing front canopy roof and bay window, plus erection of a single storey rear extension, changes to fenestration and conversion of the garage to habitable accommodation. (Part retrospective)	Cutbush
253060	22 Sibley Park Road, RG6 5UB	Householder application for the proposed erection of a single storey front extension to form enclosed porch, single storey side extension to form lean-to, garage conversion to create habitable accommodation, single storey rear extension, first floor side extension, plus changes to fenestration including the insertion of a Juliet balcony.	Radstock
253088	24 Doddington Close, RG6 4BJ	Householder application for the proposed conversion of the garage.	Cutbush

Dated: 6<sup>th</sup> January 2026