

Appeal No: APP/E0345/W/20/3247779

Planning Ref: 191312

Site: Land adjacent to 17 Berkshire Drive, Tilehurst, Reading, RG31 5JJ

Proposal: Demolition of existing garage block and construction of one bedroom dwelling

Case Officer: Ethne Humphreys

Decision level: Delegated. Refused

Method: Written representations.

Decision: Appeal Dismissed

Date Determined: 14th October 2020

Inspector: S. Rennie BSc (Hons), BA (Hons), MA, MRTPI

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 The appeal site comprises land to the rear of 15 and 17 Berkshire Drive comprising 3 garages towards the rearward site boundary. The site is set down from the neighbouring dwellings, whose rear gardens abut the garage site with their fencing appearing at a relative height in excess of 3m. To the rear of the site extends the Sheppard Court flatted development, with large trees located close to the shared boundary. The garages themselves are currently unused.

1.2 The 2019 application received 8 separate neighbour objections and the application was refused planning permission for the following reasons:

1. The proposed development, by reason of its overall scale relative to plot size, uncharacteristically small garden area and the relationship to existing properties, would be overly prominent within its context, result in a cramped arrangement of building and spaces and be an overdevelopment of the site that would not respect the prevailing pattern of development and would be out of keeping with the character and appearance of the street scene. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policy CS7 of the Reading Borough LDF Core Strategy 2008 (altered 2015) and Policies DM10 and DM11 of the Reading Borough LDF Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012 (altered 2015) and Policies CC7, H10 and H11 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (scheduled to be adopted November 2019).

2. The proposed development, by reason of its detailed design and use of materials, would appear as an inappropriate and development that would not be of a sufficient high quality design that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policy CS7 of the Reading Borough LDF Core Strategy 2008 (altered 2015), Policy DM11 of the Reading Borough LDF Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012 (altered 2015) and Policies CC7 and H11 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (scheduled to be adopted November 2019).

3. The proposed development, by reason of its scale, siting, and extent, number and close proximity of windows to No.15b Berkshire Drive and No.17 Berkshire Drive, would cause unacceptable perceived and actual loss of privacy to the occupiers of these properties, resulting in an overall significant detrimental impact to these occupiers residential amenity, contrary to Policies DM4 and DM11 of the Reading Borough Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012 (altered 2015) and Policies CC8 and H11 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (scheduled to be adopted November 2019).

4. The proposed development, by reason of its limited outlook (to the south) and inadequate provision of outdoor amenity space, will adversely impact upon the level of amenity and provide an unacceptable quality of living accommodation for future occupants, contrary to Policy DM4 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012 (altered 2015) and Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (scheduled to be adopted November 2019).

5. In the absence of a completed legal agreement to secure an acceptable contribution towards the provision of Affordable Housing, the proposal fails to contribute adequately to the housing needs of Reading Borough, contrary to policy CS9 (Infrastructure, Services, Resources and Amenities) of the Reading Borough LDF Core Strategy 2008 (altered 2015), policies DM3 (Infrastructure Planning) and DM6 (Affordable Housing) of the Reading Borough LDF Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012 (altered 2015), and the Council's Adopted Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document 2013 and Policies CC9 and H3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (scheduled to be adopted November 2019).

2 SUMMARY OF DECISION

2.1 The Inspector considered the main issues to be:

- The character and appearance of the area
- The living conditions of both neighbour and future occupiers
- The provision of affordable housing in the area

2.2 On the first issue, the Inspector considered that, due to a confined plot largely taken up by the access drive, combined with limited garden space (and no rear garden) that the proposals would appear cramped and out of keeping. The Inspector considered that whilst a modern design approach is not discouraged, this specific design would not relate to the surrounding area moreover that it would appear an incongruous and jarring feature. The Inspector considered the proposed dwelling included elements such as enclosed side balcony that would appear as unsympathetic and negative design features. Overall, the Inspector considered the proposal would be cramped and unsympathetically designed. However, the Inspector did not consider Policy H11 (Development of Private Residential Gardens).

2.3 On the second issue in respect of neighbour amenity, the Inspector considered that the proposal, with three first floor windows facing 15b Berkshire Drive, would result in a perception of overlooking to the occupiers of this property but was not convinced that they would result in actual overlooking to a significantly harmful degree. However, this, combined with an oriel window that would provide clear views to the rear of 15b Berkshire Drive was considered by the Inspector to result in a material loss of privacy. The Inspector did not consider that any material harm would arise to 17 Berkshire Drive.

2.4 On the second issue in respect of future occupiers, the Inspector considered that the small area of garden space proposed at the front of the site, which would be overlooked by 15b Berkshire Drive, would not provide a quality area of amenity space. Furthermore, the Inspector consider that the proposed balcony area, which would be fully enclosed with a glazed roof, would also not provide a good quality external area, given the limited outlook. Overall, the Inspector considered the proposal would lack quality amenity space.

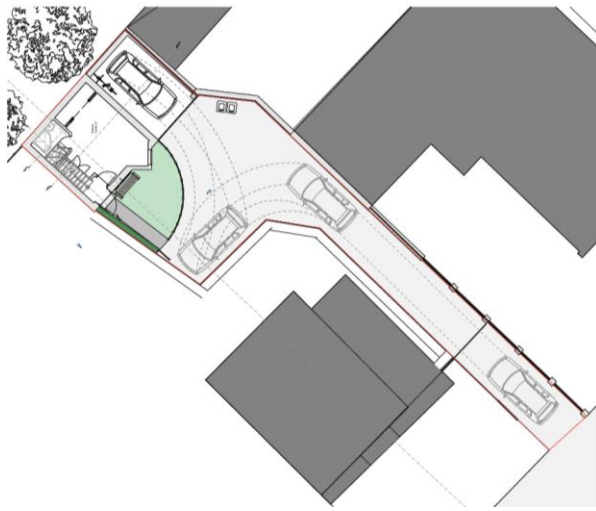
2.5 On the third issue, the Inspector was satisfied that the appellant would have made a financial contribution for affordable housing and considered that should the scheme have otherwise been considered acceptable that the remaining issues on the legal agreement could have been sufficiently addressed. However, on the basis of the above, the Inspector did not consider that a policy compliant financial contribution for affordable housing would have outweighed the harm identified in respect of character and appearance and neighbour and future occupier amenity.

2.6 In overall terms, whilst the Inspector acknowledged that the proposal would contribute a single dwelling towards local housing supply, as well as some economic contribution through construction, he found that the harmful impacts of the scheme outweighed the limited benefits.

Officer Comments:

This appeal decision is very welcome given that the Inspector endorsed all officers concerns in respect of the cramped appearance, unsympathetic design and adverse effect on neighbour amenity and future occupiers.

Site Plan



Proposed Elevations



Case officer: Ethne Humphreys