

## COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES  
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL  
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 2 February 2022

Ward: Church

App No.: 211760

Address: 153 Northcourt Avenue, Reading, RG2 7HG

Proposal: Two storey and single storey rear and side extension with flat roof rear dormer

Applicant: Mr Khan

Initial deadline: 22/12/2021

Extended deadline 04/02/22

### RECOMMENDATION:

#### REFUSE:

#### Reasons:

1. The application proposes extensions to the rear of the property at ground, first and second floor level which are all flat-roofed and extensive in nature, which would be harmful to the host property and the character of the suburban area through their size, scale and design. As such the application is considered to be harmful to the amenities of the area contrary to policies CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) H9 (House Extensions and Ancillary Accommodation) of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) and the Council's SPD, A Design Guide to House Extensions (2021).
2. The application would introduce a large, side-facing window for a new habitable bedroom which would borrow outlook and cause overlooking/privacy concerns to the adjacent property. Further, this property would suffer from a long, unrelenting side flank wall from the proposal. For reasons of harm to privacy, outlook and unneighbourliness the proposal is considered to be contrary to Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) and the Council's SPD, A Design Guide to House Extensions (2021).

#### Informatives:

- Plans refused
- Positive and proactive requirement
- No preapplication advice

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This part of Northcourt Avenue is characterised by mainly houses that have a mix of redbrick and render finished exterior walls with

distinct gaps between properties. The roofs are pitched with gable ends. The area comprises of detached and semi-detached houses of varying style and design with long narrow back gardens and detached garages located to the rear. Many properties have been extended with rear and side extensions of various sizes and designs.

- 1.2 The site is one of the houses on a row of semi-detached houses east of Northcourt Avenue with a uniform design and style. The site is a two storey semi-detached house with a converted loft floor. The original house has a tiled half-hipped roof. The property's front elevation has a first floor of white render and wood in a 'Tudor' effect and redbrick walls to ground floor, whereas the rest of the property is rendered white. The house has an existing single storey rear extension with a flat roof. The property is not listed and does not fall within a conservation area however part of the property is within an area classified as an Air Quality Management Area (due to garden being within the AQMA of the A327 Shinfield Road to the rear).
- 1.3 The application has been called in to be decided by Planning Applications Committee by Ward councillor Ashley Pearce due to concerns raised by the neighbours due to the design of the extensions.

## **2. PROPOSAL**

- 2.1 The proposed development includes a two storey side extension, single storey rear extension, first floor rear extension and rear dormer extension. Part of the proposed single storey rear extension would have a flat roof and the rest would have a pitched roof. The proposed first floor and rear dormer extensions would have a flat roof whereas the proposed two storey side extension would have a pitched roof. The proposed development would be set away from the side boundary by approximately 1m and set back from the front by approximately 0.6m. The proposed two storey side extension has a lower ridgeline than the existing house. The proposed front elevation would have a stepped profile and thus allowing the front elevation of the original house to retain its character. Exterior wall finishes would match the rest of the house.

### **2.2 Submitted Plans and Documentation:**

Drawing No: 34321-01 - Existing Ground Floor Plan

Drawing No: 34321-02 - Existing First Floor Plan

Drawing No: 34321-03 - Existing Loft Floor

Drawing No: 34321-04 - Existing Elevations

Drawing No: 34321-05 - Proposed Ground Floor Plan

Drawing No: 34321-06 - Proposed First Floor Plan

Drawing No: 34321-08 - Location Plan and Proposed Block Plan

Received 28<sup>th</sup> October 2021

Drawing No: 34321-07 - Rev A - Proposed Loft Floor Plan  
Drawing No: 34321-08 - Rev A - Proposed Elevations  
Received 16<sup>th</sup> December 2021

### 3. PLANNING HISTORY

121446 - Replacement of detached garage and home office/summer house - permitted - 10/10/2012

990790 - Erection of a single storey rear extension and side carport - permitted - 19/ 4/2000

### 4. CONSULTATIONS

Summary of objections raised by the occupants of neighbouring properties.

1. Detrimental impact on character and appearance due to the following:
  - Scale and location of proposed extension - as a result of the proposed extension, the footprint of the house would be more than doubled.
  - Architectural details of the proposed extension do not match the existing house
  - Proposed hip to gable end would affect the appearance of the original house
  - Potential to create a terracing effect
  
2. Harmful impact on residential amenity -
  - The proposed flat roof could be used as a terrace and/or to hold parties which could have a harmful impact on amenity
  - Overlooking and Loss of privacy as a result of the proposed second floor balcony
  
3. Lack of provision for off-road parking and Increased pressure on roadside parking.
4. Potential to turn the house into an HMO which could result in further cases of Anti-Social Behaviour currently experienced within the immediate neighbourhood **Not a material consideration to this planning application**
5. Impact on health of future occupants due to the proposed arrangement of rooms **Not a material consideration**
6. Increased generation of waste - no provision for bin storage included **This is a domestic residential proposal, not a concern**
7. No cycle storage provided **There is adequate room for domestic storage at this residential property**
8. Lack of information on matters such as working hours, noise reduction and waste management during construction **Not relevant/applicable to a householder level planning application**

9. Harmful impact on wildlife and diversity
10. Reduction in the amount of useable amenity space

*Planning Officer Comment: Please refer to 'Appraisal Section' to see assessment of the proposed development in relation to the above concerns, if not responded to in bold type above.*

## **5. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE**

5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which states at Paragraph 11 "Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development".

5.2 The development plan for this Local Planning Authority is the Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019). The relevant policies are:

CC7: Design and the Public Realm

CC8: Safeguarding Amenity

EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodland

H9: House Extensions and Ancillary Accommodation

H10: Private and Communal Outdoor Space

TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging

5.3 Relevant Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD):

A Design Guide to House Extensions SPD (Adopted 2021)

## **6. APPRAISAL**

### Character and appearance

6.1 The area is characterised by side and rear extensions including rear dormers of different types, designs and scales and thus there is no established design and pattern of extensions in the area. Nonetheless, single story rear and side extensions with flat roofs are common in the street.

6.2 The application includes a single storey rear extension, two story side extension, first floor extension and extension of the existing rear dormer. The proposed development would have a combination of flat and pitched roofs with exterior walls matching the existing house. As a result of the proposed development, the roof design of the original house would also change from half-hipped to gable end.

6.3 In order to assess the impact of the proposal on the character and appearance, the design and scale are the main elements to consider.

## Design and scale

- 6.4 From the front elevation, the proposal is considered to be suitable, proposing a two-storey extension which is sympathetic to the property, being set in, set back and set down and complies with policy and guidance. However, whilst the proposed front elevation is set down and back thus allowing the front elevation of the original house to retain its character, the proposed change in the roof design would detract from the character of the original house and that of the adjoining semi at 155 Northcourt Avenue. However, this alone is not considered likely to have a detrimental impact on the character of the wider street, as the street has a mix of roof styles and overall, a change from half-hip to full-gable will not be overly noticeable in the streetscene.
- 6.5 The use of a flat roof on the proposed first floor rear extension and dormer extension and part of the single-story rear extension is not sympathetic to the character and appearance of the existing house and would detract from the character and appearance of the original house contrary to Policy CC7 and the design guide to house extensions. To the first floor, use of flat roof at this height will be noticeable from surroundings and is a poor design solution. Box dormers need to be carefully handled and again, this is a poor and top-heavy design. The size and expanse of the ground floor flat-roof Furthermore, it would result in around 25m of unbroken development towards the neighbouring property and will be very unneighbourly.
- 6.6 The proposed extension would result in a notable increase in the size of the house and the footprint would be more than double that of the original house. The existing house covers an area of approximately 64 square metres whereas the floor space of the extension would be approximately 71 square metres. Overall the building would cover a total of 135 square metres of floor space. The existing dormer window would be significantly extended into a new reconstructed roof area which result in an over scaled dormer extension. This would significantly increase the size of the roof area and would alter the shape of the roof so as not to be in keeping with the surrounding properties. The proposed development is larger than the original house both in size and scale in relation to the original house and neighbouring properties, this is considered to have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the original house and neighbouring houses. The proposed extensions both singularly, but also cumulatively, would be harmful to the amenities of the area.
- 6.7 The proposed changes are not considered acceptable in terms of design quality and scale and thus would conflict with Policies CC7 and H9 of the Reading Borough Council Plan 2019 the Design Guide to House Extensions 2021. On this basis the first reason for refusal is being recommended.

### Residential amenity

- 6.8 To the ground floor, there would be a number of new side openings in the long extension into the garden, but these are not considered to adversely impact neighbour amenity, likewise, there are no concerns from the glazed side doors.
- 6.9 These properties already have bedroom windows which look directly across from each other at close range, about 6 metres. However, these appear to be secondary windows. The proposal would however, introduce a side bedroom window which relies solely on the side for outlook. This is a poor design solution and officers consider that this should form a secondary reason for refusal of the application.
- 6.10 The second floor Juliet balcony would provide a high-level vantage point which would allow considerable lateral overlooking and given the narrowness of the gardens, this is not advisable. However, given the fact that no standing out on a platform is possible, on balance, this should not form part of the reason for refusal.

### Other matters

- 6.11 Due to the orientation of existing buildings and the design of the proposed side extension, it is considered unlikely to cause any significant loss of sunlight, daylight or create an unacceptable level of overshadowing to the neighbouring occupants.
- 6.12 As extended, the continued use of the property as an extended residential dwelling would be unlikely to result in undue noise nuisance for the neighbours.
- 6.13 The proposal is for a householder extension therefore determination of this application is in line with relevant policies. However, should the applicant decide to convert this dwellinghouse to an HMO, a different planning application will be required to be submitted to and determined by the Local Planning Authority prior to changing the current use of the property. With regard to Anti-Social Behaviour, this is not a planning matter and therefore relevant departments will be required to deal with matter accordingly.
- 6.14 Policy H10 provides that useable private outdoor space should be no less than the gross floor area of the dwelling to which it relates (measured externally and including garage space). The site like many other properties in the area has a long, narrow and fair-sized back garden. Whilst the proposed extension would more than double the footprint of the existing, it would not result in a significant reduction in the amount of useable amenity space to the detriment of present and future occupants.

- 6.15 The site is located within zone 3 of the parking standards zones and would have more than 4 bedrooms. The Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD provides that a 4+ bedrooms dwellinghouse within zone 3 should have a minimum of 2 parking spaces and make provisions for x2 cycle storage spaces. The site has an existing off-road parking space enough to park two cars however the Highway Authority advises that no provision has been made for cycle storage. However, officers advise that this is not required for a householder planning application, where there are opportunities for cycle storage in various ways, which are up to the householder.
- 6.16 The proposed rear extension would result in the loss of a fruit tree in the back garden and the proposal has not made any provision for a replacement tree to be planted. Were the application otherwise acceptable, the applicant would have been advised to replace the tree. The loft area in this property is not likely to be used by bats given the loft area is in habitable use already. No conflict with the natural environment policies are advised.

#### Equalities Impact

- 6.17 When determining an application for planning permission the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups as identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this planning application. Therefore, in terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the proposed development.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 This proposal has been carefully considered in the context of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and supplementary planning documents. For reasons of harmful design on the rear elevation contrary to policy and guidance, the proposal is recommended for refusal.

Case Officer: Beatrice Malama