

COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 1st March 2023

Ward: Coley

App No.: 221576

Address: 4 Downshire Square, Reading, RG1 6NJ

Proposal: The demolition of the single storey side extension, relocation of the dwelling rear door, creation of a new vehicular access and parking area to the north part of the site, with vehicular turntable, existing vehicular access blocked up, replacement low brick wall and piers with metal railings and central front gate to house, including external and landscaping works.

Applicant: Finerain Developments

Deadline: 16/12/2022

extension of time yet to be agreed

RECOMMENDATION:

Grant

Conditions:

Time Limit (Standard)

Approved Plans

Materials (As Specified)

Landscaping Small Scale (To be approved)

Proposed turntable (to be retained)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The site relates to a detached bungalow located on the eastern side of Downshire Square. The site is within the Downshire Square Conservation Area and is also located within an Air Quality Management Area. The property has a large (wide) rear garden and detached garage to the south of the site. It is one of the widest plots in this part of the conservation area. The area is predominantly residential, featuring large detached and semi-detached properties and the Grade II listed All Saints Church and community hall is to the north at the top of Downshire Square. There is a wide variety of design styles, although most properties remain unaltered.
- 1.2 The application has been called in to be decided by Planning Applications Committee by Ward Councillor Ellie Emberson due to various concerns identified and the planning history of the site.

Site Location Plan



2. PROPOSAL

2.1 The proposal is for the demolition of the single storey side extension, relocation of the dwelling rear door, creation of a new vehicular access and parking area to the north part of the site, with vehicular turntable, existing vehicular access blocked up, replacement low brick wall and piers with metal railings and central front gate to house, including external and landscaping works.

2.2 Submitted Plans and Documentation:

Drawing No. 02-01 Proposed Plan (illustrating neighbouring dropped kerbs) dated 09/2022, received 03 February 2023

Drawing No. 02-01 Proposed Block Plan dated 09/2022, received 18 January 2023

Drawing No. 04-01 Existing and Proposed Elevations dated 09/2022, received 18 January 2023

Drawing No. 04-01 Proposed Elevations dated 09/2022, received 18 January 2023

Drawing No. 04-01 Proposed Elevations dated 09/2022, received 18 January 2023

Drawing No. 02-01 Existing Block Plan dated 08/2022, received 21 October 2022

Drawing No. 06-01 Existing Block Plan dated 08/2022, received 21 October 2022

Drawing No. 01-04 Existing Front and Rear Elevations dated 08/2022, received 21 October 2022

Drawing No. 01-05 Existing Site Section dated 08/2022, received 21 October 2022

Drawing No. 01-02 Existing First Floor Plan dated 08/2022, received 21 October 2022

Drawing No. 01-01 Existing Ground Floor Plan dated 08/2022, received 21 October 2022

Drawing No. 02-02 Existing Roof Plan dated 08/2022, received 21 October 2022

Drawing No. 01-01 Existing Ground Floor Plan dated 08/2022, received 21 October 2022

Drawing No. 01-07 Existing Section dated 08/2022, received 21 October 2022

Existing site location Plan 4 Downshire Square dated 08/2022, received 21 October 2022

Application Form dated, received 21 October 2022

3. PLANNING HISTORY

- 191358 Erection of new building comprising 9 flats following demolition of existing bungalow and detached garage. Refused
- 940401 2 metre boundary wall and single storey side extension for garage. Refused
- 940738 Erection of a garage. Permitted
- 200571/FUL - Demolition of existing dwelling house and large detached garage and erection of new building comprising of 3 townhouses and 2 flats. The application was refused 17th July 2020 under delegated powers and dismissed at appeal 27th April 2021.
- 211416 Erection of 1 x detached and 2 x semi-detached dwellings following demolition of the existing bungalow and detached garage. Refused. (Officer recommendation to grant overturned by PAC on 20 July 2022).

4. CONSULTATIONS

(i) Statutory
none

(ii) Non-Statutory

- RBC Transport Development Control - No objection subject to condition as indicated above.
- RBC Natural Environment - No objection subject to condition and informative as suggested above
- Conservation Area Advisory Committee - no comment received.
- Conservation and Urban Design Officer - comment awaited.

(iii) Public Comments

Notification letters were sent to nearby occupiers on Downshire Square. A site notice was displayed, and a press notice was published.

4.1 An objection was received with the primary concern being the plot that would be created to the south of the bungalow. Summary is as follows:

- The application splits the current site into two - no details of what will happen to the southern part of the site
- Building density will remain undetermined without detailed plans
- Development of the southern end of the site will result in increased traffic

***Officer note:* the design and access statement submitted with the application states that the southern part of the site will be subject to future development outside of this application. A separate planning application will be required to be submitted for any future developments and will be consulted on if submitted.**

- Plumbing works not shown and the proposed driveway will be located on the external stop cock & man hole
- ***Officer note:* for determination at Building Regulations stage.**

The proposal to block the existing driveway retaining the history cast iron railings are only temporary

- External alterations will change the character of the building and conservation area
- Using various applications to get around the planning rules and ultimately changing the character of the original house

Officer note - determination of any planning application will take into account any relevant planning history and the cumulative impact of such proposals on the original house.

- Removal of a street tree and proposal does not show a lot of trees
- Impact on wildlife because of the proposed patio and parking
- Inability to maintain the house
- Use of site as a garage
- House currently on the market

(iv) Local Ward Councillors

4.2 The following concerns were raised by the three Local Ward Councillors via email received from Cllr Ellie Emberson on 8 November 2022:

- Road safety and availability of parking
- Position of parking - the proposed change in position of parked cars will impact of the visual amenity for residents with abutting gardens;
- Lamppost relocation - concerned on the impact of light for the neighbourhood generally by the relocation of this;
- Southern part of the site fenced off - this is mentioned in the architect's notes. I am unclear on whether this forms part of the planning application, I assume not as it is not mentioned in the application form, but I would seek reassurance on this due to the visual impact on an important conservation area.
- Common parking strategy - this is noted in the architect's notes. I do not support this sentiment and cannot recall any property with parking effectively in the back garden nearby
- Landscape enhancements

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:

- CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction
- CC3: Adaptation to Climate Change
- CC7: Design and the Public Realm
- CC8: Safeguarding Amenity
- EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
- EN3: Enhancement of Conservation Areas
- EN4: Locally Important Heritage Assets
- EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodland
- EN15: Air Quality
- H9: House Extensions and Ancillary Accommodation
- H10: Private and Communal Outdoor Space

TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
TR4: Cycle Routes and Facilities
TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging

5.3 Relevant Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) are:

Design Guide to House Extensions SPD
The Sustainable Design and Construction SPD

Other documents
The Reading Borough Council adopted Tree Strategy
Downshire Square Conservation Area Appraisal

6. APPRAISAL

The main matters to be considered are as follows:

- Design considerations and effect on character
- Impact on residential amenity
- Transport
- Landscape/ecology
- Equalities impact

Design considerations and effect on character

- 6.1 The application site falls within the Downshire Square Conservation Area. The area is predominantly residential, featuring large detached and semi-detached properties and the Grade II listed All Saints Church is to the north at the top of the Downshire Square road. There is a wide variety of design styles, although most properties remain unaltered.
- 6.2 The proposed development includes the demolition of the existing side extension, new car park within the rear garden, new landscaping and new boundary fencing on the western boundary (property frontage). The proposal would also include a new dropped kerb, relocation of the existing lamp post and moving the existing cushion 3m north of the existing site.
- 6.3 The proposed demolition of the existing single storey side extension would not significantly alter the character and appearance of the existing building. Given that the existing side extension is set back from the front and subservient to the main house, the removal of the extension would not be very noticeable and thus the proposal is not considered to have any harmful impact on the character of the original building.
- 6.4 In addition, the proposed boundary fencing is not considered to harm the character and appearance of the host property, neighbouring properties and the street scene as there is no established type and

design of boundary fencing on the street. The proposal therefore would not be considered out of keeping with the character of the street.

- 6.5 Furthermore, the proposed tree planting and landscaping would add a soft touch and would allow the property to fit in with the existing character of the street and the wider conservation area.
- 6.6 A concern was raised by Cllr Emberson regarding the proposed car park within the rear garden of the property. There are a number of properties within the immediate surrounding area, including some of the adjoining properties, which have garages within their rear gardens. This type of car parking arrangement therefore is not uncommon in the area and thus would not appear out of keeping with the existing character of the area. In addition, two sides of the car park will be fully enclosed with new planting to obscure the parked cars and therefore the proposal is not considered to cause visual harm to the surrounding area.

Impact on residential amenity

- 6.7 Given that the proposal would not change the height of the building and no new upper floor openings are proposed as part of this application, the proposal is not considered to have any adverse impact on privacy, amount of natural light to the neighbouring properties nor would it overshadow any adjoining properties. The proposal therefore is considered to comply with policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

Transport

- 6.8 The applicant was asked to submit revised plans illustrating visibility splays of 2.4m x 43m, the lamp column, location of utility covers in the footways and the existing speed cushion. In addition, the new location of the lamp post was required to be shown on the plans. Revised plan (ref 02-01) illustrating visibility splays, the new location of the lamp post and the position of the existing was received by the local planning authority on 17 January 2023.
- 6.9 Transport was further consulted, and the following was a comment received on 20 January 2023.

“The proposed access is located too close to the speed cushion and would cause damage to vehicles, therefore it will need relocating.

Revised plans illustrating a relocated speed cushion that does not conflict with the accesses for other adjacent property on both sides of the road is required.

Relocation of the speed cushion and lamp column as well as the closure of unused access will require a S278”.

- 6.10 The proposed plan (ref 02-01) received on 3 February 2023 was updated to include the new position of the speed cushion and the dropped crossing for the surrounding properties. Transport was reconsulted and no further objections were received subject to a condition ensuring that the proposed turntable is retained.
- 6.11 A license will need to be applied for to undertake all works on the public highway this includes the relocation of the lamp column. All costs will need to be fully met by the applicant. All unused accesses will need to be reinstated in line with the footway to ensure that the application does not result in a reduction in on street parking. The applicant was informed and agreed to enter into a section 278 agreement to cover the works.
- 6.12 A concern was raised by Cllr Emberson regarding the impact of the proposed relocation of the lamp post on the amount of light to nearby properties. The lamp post would be located approximately 8.7m north of the existing location however the architect's note on the plan indicates that the actual position to be confirmed by highways authority. Given the proposed location of the lamp post in relation to the existing, it is considered unlikely that there would be a significant change in the amount of light to the surrounding properties to the detriment of the nearby residents.
- 6.13 The proposal therefore is considered acceptable on transport grounds and would comply with policies TR3, TR4 and TR5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019

Landscape/ecology

- 6.14 Concerns were raised regarding the level of detail provided by the applicant with respect to the retention of existing trees and the landscaping principles. To address the above concerns, the agent on 17 January 2023 submitted updated plans (ref 02-01) which included the proposed tree planting and landscaping schemes.
- 6.15 Natural Environment was reconsulted. No further concerns were received however the agent was requested to indicate on the plan the new street tree adjacent to the proposed access. Updated plans and elevations illustrating the new street tree were received by the Council on 24 January 2023 and no further objections were received from Natural Environment subject to a landscaping condition requiring the applicant to submit a detailed hard and soft landscaping scheme prior to first occupation/use of the permitted development. An informative advising the development to provide some form of physical protection for the street tree to avoid

accidental damage during the installation of the new access to be attached.

- 6.16 A concern was raised by the neighbour with respect to the impact of the proposed car parking within the rear side of the property and the rear patio on the amount of available garden space and consequently on wildlife habitation. Whilst the amount of space that would be taken up by the proposed car park and patio would appear to be large, it would not result in a significant reduction in the amount of garden space available for wildlife habitation. The property has a large rear garden and sizeable front garden and therefore the proposal is not considered to adversely impact on the amount of garden space.
- 6.17 In light of the above the proposal is considered to comply with policy CC3 and EN 14 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019

Equalities Impact

- 6.18 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.

CONCLUSION

- 7.1 This proposal has been carefully considered in the context of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and supplementary planning documents. The recommendation is shown above.

Case Officer: Beatrice Malama

Proposed Plans and Elevations

Figure 1: Proposed Block Plan



Figure 2: Proposed Front Elevation

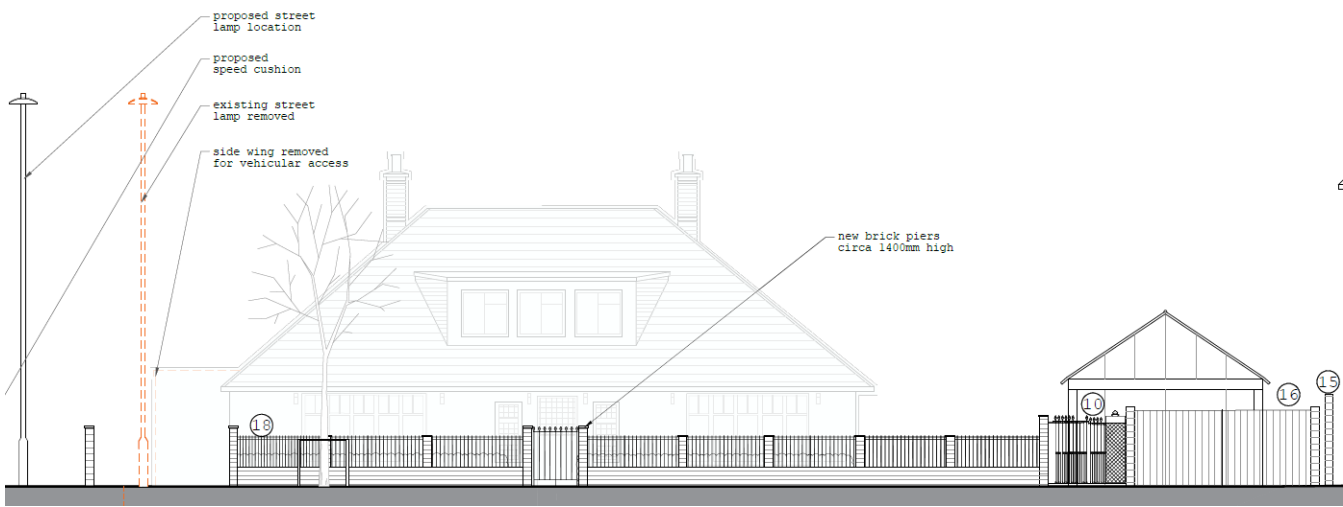


Figure 3: Existing Front Elevation

