

COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 17th July 2019

Ward: Thames

Application No: 190434/FUL

Address: Land to the rear of 27 - 43 Blenheim Road Caversham

Proposal: Erection of 3 dwellings with parking, landscaping and access from Blenheim Road

Applicant: First Avenue Estates Ltd

Date Valid: 25/03/2019

Application target decision date: 20/05/19 Extension of time date: 07/08/2019

RECOMMENDATION

Delegate to Head of Planning, Development and Regulatory Services to (i) GRANT full planning permission subject to satisfactory completion of a section 106 legal agreement or (ii) to REFUSE permission should the legal agreement not be completed by the 7th August 2019 (unless officers on behalf of the Head of Planning, Development and Regulatory Services agree to a later date for completion of the legal agreement). The legal agreement to secure the following:

- Highways works - A contribution of three thousand pounds (£3000) towards a section 278 traffic regulation order for highways works for alterations to the speed cushions on Blenheim Road to be payable prior to the commencement of development (Policies DM12 and CS20)
- Affordable housing- A policy compliant contribution towards off-site affordable housing provision within the Borough (equating to 5% of the GDV of the proposed 3 houses) to be payable prior to first occupation (Policy DM6)
- Biodiversity off-setting - A contribution of twenty five thousand four hundred and ninety five pounds (£25,495) towards off-site biodiversity compensation within the Borough, to be payable prior to the commencement of development (Policy CS36)

And the following conditions to include:

1. Time Limit - 3 years
2. Approved plans
3. Pre-commencement approval of details (samples and manufacturer details) of all external materials (including brickwork, roof slate, glazing, window frames/sills/surrounds/reveals, doors, guttering and downpipes)
4. Pre-commencement approval of a construction method statement (including noise & dust)
5. Pre-commencement approval of a scheme of on-site biodiversity enhancements
6. Pre-commencement approval of a soft/hard landscaping details
7. Pre-commencement approval of a scheme of archaeological investigation
8. Pre-occupation approval of a refuse management plan
9. Pre-occupation implementation of bin collection area
10. Pre-occupation implementation of cycle parking details provided
11. Pre-occupation implementation of vehicle parking
12. Pre-occupation implementation of visibility splays to access, retention thereafter
13. Pre-occupation implementation of vehicular access

14. Standard construction hours
15. Implementation of arboricultural method statement
16. Implementation of approved hard and soft landscaping details
17. Landscaping maintenance for five years
18. Protection of wildlife during site clearance
19. No burning of waste on site
20. Implementation and maintenance of specific windows as obscure glazed
21. Removal of permitted development rights for residential extensions (Classes A, B, C and E)

Informatives:

1. Positive and Proactive Statement
2. Highways works
3. Pre-commencement conditions relate
4. Section 278 agreement
5. Terms and conditions
6. Building Regulations approval required
7. Party Wall Act
8. CIL
9. Section 106 legal agreement

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The site is located to the rear of the gardens of no.s 27-43 Blenheim Road accessed between no.s 29 and 31 Blenheim Road. The site is largely overgrown and is part of a woodland area Tree Preservation Order (TPO) which covers land to the rear of no.s 27-53 Blenheim Road. The site contains the remains of a brick-built building to the north east corner together with the footings of other buildings but the site has been unattended and in a poor of repair for a number of years. The site has been subject to fly tipping. The land is separate from and does not form part of the rear gardens of the Blenheim Road properties. Blenheim Road contains a mix of housing styles.
- 1.2 The proposals are being considered at Planning Applications Committee following a call in by ward Councillor Stevens due to various concerns raised by local residents.

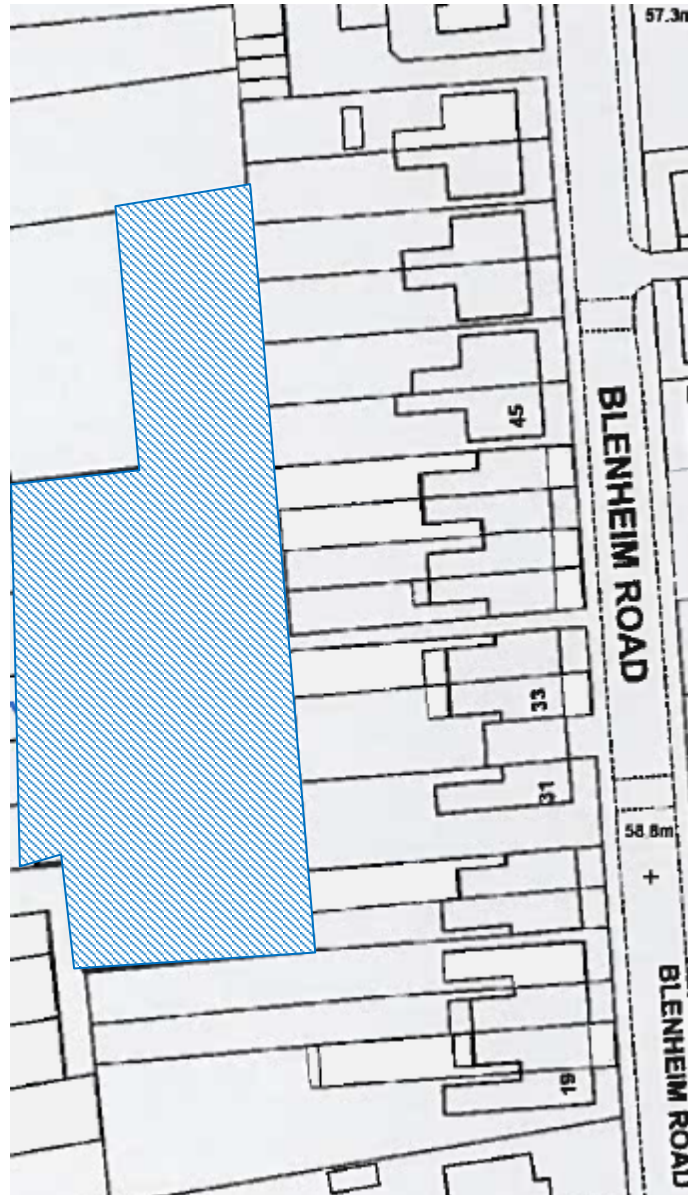
Site Location Plan (application site edged in red) (not to scale)



Aerial View (not to scale)



Extent of Woodland TPO (shaded area)



2. PROPOSALS

- 2.1 Full planning permission is sought for the erection of 3 dwellings with associated parking and landscaping with access from Blenheim Road.
- 2.2 The proposals are for a two storey semi-detached pair of 4 four bedroom dwellings with integral garages and driveway parking and a single two storey 3 bedroom detached dwelling with driveway parking. The three dwellings would each have their own rear gardens.
- 2.3 The development would be accessed from the existing vehicular entrance from Blenheim Road.

3. PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 00/0487 - Outline application for the erection of 5 houses with garages - Refused.

- 3.2 99/0482 - Erection of 10 mews-style terraced houses, four with garages. All with associated parking and amenity - Refused and dismissed on appeal.
- 3.3 180520/PREAPP - Pre-application advice for proposed development of 5 new dwellings - Advice given.
- 3.4 181471 - Erection of 5no. two storey dwellings (2 x pairs semi-detached dwellings and 1 x detached dwelling)with parking and landscaping and access form Blenheim Road - Withdrawn.

4. CONSULTATIONS

RBC Transport

- 4.1 No objections. Recommends conditions to secure submission and approval of a construction method statement prior to the commencement of any development, provision of the proposed vehicular parking spaces, vehicular access, cycle parking spaces, bin storage and visibility splays to Blenheim Road prior to first occupation of the dwellings. A contribution of £3000 is also sought to fund a Traffic Regulation Order to implement alterations to the speed cushions on Blenheim Road to be secured by way of a section 106 agreement.

RBC Environmental Protection

- 4.2 No objections, subject to conditions to secure submission and approval of a scheme for control of construction noise and dust prior to the commencement of development, control of construction hours (0800 to 1800 hrs Monday to Friday, 0900 to 1300 hrs Saturdays and no work on Sundays of Statutory Holidays) and also to prevent any burning of waste on site.

RBC Natural Environment (Trees)

- 4.3 The soft landscape planting proposed would help mitigate tree/habitat loss albeit the woodland habitat could not be replaced. Seek conditions to secure implementation of the submitted arboricultural method statement and tree protection measures as well as conditions to secure implementation and maintenance of the proposed landscaping scheme.

Ecology Consultant

- 4.4 The loss of habitats on this site (lowland mixed deciduous woodland) would be significant. Recommends on-site habitat replacement, but also recommends off-site biodiversity compensation to mitigate for the loss of Woodland and to ensure that there would be no net-loss of biodiversity within the Borough. To be secured by way of a section 106 agreement.

- 4.5 Berkshire Archaeology

Recommends a condition to secure implementation of a scheme of archaeological investigation in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which is to be submitted to and approved prior to the commencement of development.

Public consultation

4.6 Notification letters were sent to no.s 19-47 Blenheim Road and 10-28 Kidmore Road. Two site notices were also displayed, one outside the application site on Blenheim Road and one on Kidmore Road.

4.7 43 letters of objection have been received, raising the following issues:

Transport/Highway Issues

- Loss of parking to Blenheim Road
- Increased traffic congestion to Blenheim Road
- New access is unsafe
- Access is hazardous to pedestrians - Blenheim Road is the main pick up and drop off point for children attending Caversham Primary School
- The access is too narrow and it would be difficult for construction, delivery and emergency vehicles to access the site safely
- The swept path analysis of the access to the site is inaccurate
- There is a Public Right of Way in-front of the Woodland behind the gardens on no.s 19-25 Blenheim Road this would be blocked and lost as a result of the development (*Officer Comment: This is not a PROW but access to the pathway would be retained as part of the proposed development*)
- There are no footpaths to the new access way which is hazardous for pedestrians
- Insufficient parking for the new houses

Principle of development/Character Issues

- Negative impact on visual amenity of residents from loss of outlook over a wooded TPO area
- Inappropriate and unsuitable location for residential development
- Houses are of basic design and are out of keeping with the local area
- The proposal results in unacceptable tandem development contrary to Policy DM11
- Overdevelopment - the proposed garden areas are too small and out of keeping with the area
- The proposal would mark the beginning of the redevelopment of all the back gardens in this location for housing (*Officer comment: the application can only be considered on its own merits*)

Amenity Issues

- The development is on a higher level than the existing houses and therefore would result in loss of privacy, overlooking and would be overbearing
- The houses could be extended in future under permitted development rights resulting in increased overlooking and loss of privacy to neighbouring occupiers
- Loss of value to surrounding properties (*Officer Comment: Loss of value is not a material planning consideration*)
- Noise, vibration, air and light pollution from the houses, cars and security lighting associated with the development
- The higher ground level of the development could result in flooding from rainfall run off flowing down the access road onto Blenheim Road and adjacent houses (*Officer comment: The site is not located within an area at risk of flooding*)
- Caversham is already overpopulated with limited facilities and infrastructure-adding new houses is ridiculous
- Construction noise and disturbance to surrounding residents
- Noise and disturbance from use of the access way for to the occupiers of the adjacent dwellings would be unacceptable and no mitigation is proposed
- Noise, odour and disturbance from the proposed bin collection area on the new access way to the development
- Insufficient bin storage is proposed

Tree/Ecology Issues

- Loss of biodiversity habitat and protected species
- Harm to local landscape from loss of the Woodland TPO
- Loss of Woodland TPO is contrary to the Council's Tree Strategy
- Loss of mature trees
- Removal of the trees would result in loss of a distinctive woodland ridge to the Caversham skyline harmful to the character of the wider area
- The proposed replacement landscaping and planting is inadequate
- The land is a transitional site for wildlife accessing surrounding gardens
- The application does not propose sufficient mitigation/compensation for loss of the habitat
- Proposals are contrary to the NPPF as the application would not conserve or enhance biodiversity
- The ecological report submitted with the application significantly underestimates the biodiversity value of the site
- The existing trees to be removed help tackle poor air quality

Technical/Procedural Issues

- The applicant should not be allowed to submit repeated applications on the site (*Officer Comment: The Local Planning Authority must consider planning applications submitted on their individual planning merits-*
- Insufficient information submitted as part of the application - no daylight/sunlight assessment, no levels details, no parking details and no landscaping details (*Officer comment - Sectional drawings showing the site levels have been submitted as part of the application along with plans indicating space for on-site vehicle parking and hard and soft landscaping details. The separation to surrounding properties is such that a daylight/sunlight assessment is not considered necessary for this application. The Council's validation requirements for planning applications state that daylight/sunlight assessments in relation to impacts upon existing neighbouring properties are only required for buildings/extensions exceeding 4 storeys in height*)
- The proposals do not overcome the reasons for refusal of the previous applications on the site
- Insufficient consultation has been carried out for the application
- The application has been submitted at a time when many nearby residents will be away on holiday and therefore not able to comment (*Officer comment - the LPA cannot control when planning applications are submitted*)
- It has not been considered whether the existing sewerage system could cope with 3 new houses (*Officer comment - this would be a matter between the applicant and the utilities provider*)
- Re-consultation with neighbours should have been carried out on the updated tree survey submitted (*Officer comment - The planning system allows for updated/amended details to be submitted during the course of an planning application. There is no Statutory requirement to re-publicise a planning application if amended details are submitted. If significant amendments to the proposed development (i.e changes to the proposal/plans) are submitted by the applicant then this Council would re-notify neighbours; however in this instance the updated details relate to a supporting document in the form of the arboricultural report and the proposed development itself has not changed*)

Caversham and Districts Residents (CADRA) have also objected to the proposals raising the following issues:

- The proposed raised table to Blenheim Road would detract from the visual character of the public realm

- The proposed access is too narrow which will result in conflict between entering and existing vehicles and be dangerous to road safety on Blenheim Road which is already a busy road.
- Loss of existing on-street parking spaces for local residents
- Bin collection from the site would result in bin lorries blocking Blenheim Road
- The layout of the proposed houses indicates that future development proposals may be likely which would be unacceptable

5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

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) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. The application has been assessed against the following policies:

5.2 National

National Planning Policy Framework (2019)

National Planning Policy Guidance (2014 onwards)

5.3 RBC Local Development Framework - Core Strategy (2008) (Altered 2015)

CS1 Sustainable Construction and Design

CS2 Waste Minimisation

CS4 Accessibility and the Intensity of Development

CS7 Design and the Public Realm

CS9 Infrastructure, Services, Resources and Amenities

CS14 Provision of housing

CS15 Location, Accessibility, Density and Housing Mix

CS24 Car / Cycle Parking

CS34 Pollution and Water Resources

CS35 Flooding

CS36 Biodiversity and Geology

CS38 Trees, Hedges and Woodlands

5.4 Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012) (Altered 2015)

SD1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

DM1 Adaptation to Climate Change

DM4 Safeguarding Amenity

DM5 Housing Mix

DM6 Affordable Housing

DM10 Private and Communal Outdoor Space

DM11 Development of Private Residential Gardens

DM12 Access, Traffic and Highway Related Matters

DM18 Tree Planting

5.5 Reading Borough Council Supplementary Planning Documents

Affordable Housing SPD (2013)

Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011)

Revised SPD on Planning Obligations under Section 106 (2015)

Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2011)

Other docs:

Biodiversity Action Plan (2006)

Tree Strategy for Reading (2010)

6. APPRAISAL

6.1 The applicant sought pre-application advice prior to submitting the planning application. This advice - whilst supportive of the principle of a residential development - raised concerns regarding impact on the Woodland TPO, biodiversity impacts and impact of use of the proposed access upon adjoin dwellings to Blenheim Road.

6.2 Prior to the recent application for five dwellings on the site (ref. 181471) which was withdrawn (following officer concerns regarding loss of the Woodland TPO) there have been two previous applications on the site for residential development (as shown in the planning history) section above which have both been refused. The first application in 1999 for 10 dwellings was appealed and whilst dismissed the principle of the use of the site for residential purposes was nevertheless accepted. The appeal was dismissed on the basis of:

- Overdevelopment - harmful to the appearance of the area.
- Unacceptable impact on living conditions of no.s 29 and 31 Blenheim Road from use of the access road
- Unacceptable impact on the living conditions of no. 27 to 45 Blenheim Road from overshadowing and overlooking from the proposed dwellings
- Inadequate width and poor visibility of the proposed access - detrimental to highway safety

6.2 The second planning application from 2000 was for outline planning permission only for five dwellings was also refused but not appealed. This outline application was refused for the following reasons:

- Inadequate width and poor visibility of the proposed access - detrimental to highway safety
- Loss of on street parking spaces and unacceptable increased in parking congestion to Blenheim Road
- Inadequate footpath width resulting in pedestrian and vehicular conflict
- Overbearing and loss of daylight sunlight to no.s 37 to 43 Blenheim Road
- Loss of privacy and noise and disturbance from the proposed access road to no.s 29 and 31 Blenheim Road

6.3 These two previous applications which were refused are of some age (20 years ago). Both the site and National/Local Policy has changed in this period and these decisions whilst of some relevance are considered to carry full weight.

6.4 The main issues are considered to be:

- i) Principle of development
- ii) Trees, Landscaping and Ecology
- iii) Design considerations
- iv) Amenity
- v) Transport
- vi) Affordable Housing
- vii) Other matters

Principle of development

- 6.5 The NPPF states that the use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist. The NPPF definition of 'previously developed land' excludes private residential gardens. During consideration of the appeal on the site from 1999 for the development of 10 dwellings it was recognised that whilst the land may once have formed part of residential gardens this was a significant time ago (even then). OS maps dating back to 1932 show the land segregated from the adjacent gardens. It is again concluded that the application site is not residential garden land.
- 6.6 It is also noted that in consideration of the appeal in 1999 the principle of the use of the site for residential purposes was accepted by the LPA and this was not raised as an issue by the planning Inspector in dismissing the appeal, noting the presence of a number of outbuildings on the site, the remains of which are still present today. The location of the site within an existing residential area is considered acceptable in terms of its accessibility and in the context of Policy CS4 whilst in providing 3 additional dwellings to the Borough's housing stock the proposal would align with the broad objectives of Policy CS14, in assisting in meeting the Borough's annual housing targets. The proposed unit mix of 2 x 4 bedroom and 1 x 3 bedroom dwellings is considered to accord with Policy CS15 in providing an appropriate range of family housing.
- 6.7 The use of the site for residential purposes is again considered acceptable in principle, however, in the intervening time since 1999 the site has lain unchanged and the woodland become more overgrown and there is now an intrinsic value to this site in tree and ecological terms.
- 6.8 Whilst the site is not undeveloped garden land and therefore not directly relevant, the considerations of Policy DM11 (Development of Private Residential Gardens) are also considered to be helpful to assess the application. Policy DM11 seeks that proposals make a positive contribution to the wider area in terms of:
- a) It makes a positive contribution to the character of the area;
 - b) The site is of an adequate size to accommodate the development;
 - c) The proposal has a suitable access;
 - d) The proposal would not lead to an unacceptable tandem development;
 - e) The design minimises the exposure of existing private boundaries to public areas;
 - f) It does not cause detrimental impact on residential amenities;
 - g) The emphasis is on the provision of family housing;
 - h) There is no adverse impact on biodiversity, and
 - i) The proposal does not prejudice the development of a wider area.
- 6.9 These issues and other material planning considerations are discussed below

Trees, landscaping and ecology

- 6.10 Policy CS36 seeks that development should retain, protect and incorporate feature of biodiversity and Policies CS38 and DM18 seek that the Borough's vegetation cover be extended. Policy CS7 seeks that development is of high design quality and maintains and enhances the character of the area in which it is located including landscaping.
- 6.11 The site is subject to a Woodland TPO (ref. 19/15 which was confirmed on 11th November 2015) which whilst not based on the merits of individual trees, was

served and confirmed due to the amenity value of the site. The proposals have been reduced from the previously withdrawn scheme for 5 dwellings to the current proposal for 3 dwellings. This allows for a greater number of trees on site to be retained and also reduces pressure for future pruning of retained trees.

- 6.12 A tree survey and arboricultural impact and method statement have been submitted as part of the application. An updated (May 2019) tree survey has also been submitted during the course of the application on the basis that tree survey originally submitted was carried out in 2017. This identifies that of the 51 individual trees/tree groups on the site, all but 3 are identified as being either category U (trees of low quality and value considered to have little or no potential due to disease or defects) or category C (trees of low quality and value which might be expected to remain for around 10 years or less or with stems of less than 150mm in diameter). Nonetheless, as referred to above it is the value of the Woodland TPO as a whole rather than the merits of individual trees which warrants the TPO protection.
- 6.13 As part of this application it is proposed to remove two individual trees (T7 and T14 - category U trees), two small tree groups (T13 and T12 - category C trees) and two larger groups of trees (G2 and G5 - category C trees). The Council's Natural Environment (Tree) Officer acknowledges that it would not be possible to develop the site without losing trees and advises that whilst the replacement native landscape planting proposed would help mitigate the tree loss, the woodland habitat and character of the site would be lost.
- 6.14 An ecological appraisal of the site has also been submitted as part of the application. This identifies the site as a habitat of 'lowland mixed deciduous woodland' and that the site provides habitats which have moderate suitability for bats, badgers, breeding birds and a limited suitable habitat for reptiles and foraging and hibernating European hedgehog. The proposals have the potential to result in adverse impacts on these species through harm, loss of habitat and disturbance. The ecological appraisal concludes that the loss of the habitats could be partially compensated for through the provision of native species planting whilst further enhancements are considered to be necessary in the form of bat roosting and bird nesting boxes and reptile hibernacula (underground hibernation stations).
- 6.15 The Council's Ecological Consultant has reviewed the Ecological Appraisal and notes the loss of habitat and onsite mitigation/enhancement measures but does not consider that this would adequately compensate for the loss of the woodland, given the variety of habitats it currently provides. The consultant therefore advises that in accordance with Policy CS36 (Biodiversity and Geology) further biodiversity mitigation compensation would be required to ensure that there would be net loss of biodiversity within the Borough and that in this instance this would need to be secured off-site. Policy CS36 (which is also reflected in emerging Policy EN12 of the Councils New Local Plan) states that:

On sites with recognised biodiversity or geological value, development will not be permitted where there would be a direct or indirect adverse impact on the site, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that: -

- i. The need for development clearly outweighs the need to protect the value of the site; and*
- ii. Appropriate compensation, impact minimisation, mitigation and compensation are provided.*

- 6.16 Whilst the Woodland has biodiversity value the site is not designated as a wildlife site nor does it contain a level of ecological value to warrant designation as such with the habitat classified as being of moderate and low potential. There is a need for new housing to contribute towards the Borough's housing targets and in particular with respect towards family housing given the increasing prominence of smaller non-family units as a result of the prior approval conversions process. In this respect it is not considered that the site's ecological value would preclude its redevelopment, but that this must be subject to appropriate mitigation and compensation.
- 6.17 The applicant has used a bio-diversity off-setting calculation method in line with Natural England and DEFRA guidance to unitise potential loss of biodiversity on site as a result of the proposed development. This metric values lost 'biodiversity units' with the potential cost of replacing these units off-site. In this instance this had been calculated to equate to a financial contribution of twenty five thousand four hundred and ninety five pounds (£25,495). This contribution towards biodiversity improvements within the Borough is to be secured as part of the section 106 agreement to ensure that there would be no net loss of biodiversity within the Borough.
- 6.18 The amenity value of a Woodland TPO is related to its contribution to the local environment and enjoyment by the public where relevant factors to consider are the visibility and accessibility of the woodland and the collective impact of the woodland in terms of its contribution and relationship to the surrounding landscape. Whilst the site is not readily accessible to the general public, it is enjoyed by surrounding residents and the significant impact of the proposals on the Woodland TPO is acknowledged. However, officers are, on balance satisfied that the level of trees to be retained would mean that the site would still contribute positively to the local landscape. The proposed replacement native tree planting would mitigate for the trees to be lost whilst the on-site biodiversity mitigation and enhancements proposed together with the proposed off-site biodiversity compensation would ensure there was no net loss in biodiversity within the Borough.
- 6.19 Accordingly, officers are satisfied that the site is suitable for residential development and the impact on the environmental value of the site can be suitably mitigated in accordance with policies CS7, CS36, CS38 and DM18.

Design and Character

- 6.20 Policy CS7 seeks to preserve or enhance the character of the area in which a development is located. Policy DM10 seeks that the design of outdoor areas will respect the size and character or other similar spaces in the vicinity.
- 6.21 The site is located within a suburban residential area where there are a variety of styles of houses and Blenheim Road includes detached, semi-detached and terraced properties. But the characteristic feature of the dwellings to this side of Blenheim Road and Kidmore Road to the west is good sized rear gardens creating a green, spacious and open feel to rear parts of the site, although the grander houses on Kidmore Road tend to have more generous gardens. Other than the remains of the outbuildings on the application site there is no evidence of back land development between Blenheim Road and Kidmore Road. The overgrown nature of the site, although separate to the residential gardens, is such that it also retains a sense of spaciousness. Whilst the green character of the site is visible to those properties to Blenheim Road and Kidmore Road whose gardens directly adjoin the site, the site's location between the rear gardens of Blenheim Road and Kidmore Road properties,

on private land that is not publically accessible, is such that this green and wooded character does not obviously contribute to the character of the area and roads immediately surrounding the site. Nonetheless, trees on site and those within adjacent gardens are visible from longer range views towards Caversham.

- 6.22 The layout of the proposed development has been reduced to three dwellings from the five dwelling scheme which was withdrawn in 2018. It is considered that this results in a less cramped and more pleasing form of development within the site which retains good separation to the site boundaries and allows for a significant number of existing trees/tree groups to be retained around the north, south and western boundaries. The proposed plot sizes are considered to be reasonable and to provide for a suitable level of private garden amenity space for each of the units. Garden sizes vary significantly within the surrounding area and it is accepted that the gardens proposed would be towards the lower end of the local range.
- 6.23 Whilst reference to aims of Policy DM11 (as a guide only given the site is not residential garden land) the layout of the proposal is considered to be acceptable in the respect that it is considered to have been designed such that the site would not prejudice the satisfactory development of the wider area. Policy DM11 also seeks to avoid unacceptable tandem development (a dwelling built behind another, having no frontage and being accessed by a private roadway or track alongside the front building). The layout of the site does represent a tandem layout, albeit via an existing access and to a site which has not formed residential garden land for some time. The discussion within this report assesses the acceptability of the development layout proposed.
- 6.24 The level of hardstanding and car parking within the development has also been reduced from the previously withdrawn scheme in 2018. Notably this has allowed a greater number of trees/tree groups to be retained to the southern boundary of the site such that when looking up the existing access way from Blenheim Road views of the trees and green character of the site would be retained. The presence of the existing access is also such that significant works would not be required to provide to access the site and the character of this part of Blenheim Road would not change significantly.
- 6.25 The pair of semi-detached houses and single detached houses proposed would be in keeping with the nature of residential development in the surrounding area which contains detached, semi-detached and terraced properties. The proposed design of the dwellings is considered to be of good quality with red brick and white render finish, two storey bay windows, brick banding and detailing above windows and doors, arched and splayed brick headers, stone window sills and decorative gables features capping the bay windows. The proposed dwellings would only be visible to the rear of those properties to Blenheim Road and Kidmore Road in the close vicinity of the site and are considered to be suitably in-keeping with the prevailing residential character.
- 6.26 The site slopes down from west to east towards the rear of the existing dwellings to Blenheim Road such that the application site is raised up by around 2m above that of the Blenheim Road dwellings. Given the separation between these dwellings (28m) and such of shallow pitched roofs to reduce the prominence of the proposed dwellings it is not considered that the proposals would appear unduly dominant in relation to the dwellings on Blenheim Road. There would be over 50m separation to the rear of the dwellings to Kidmore Road and therefore no adverse impact in terms of visual/overlooking dominance to these properties.

- 6.27 It is considered that the proposal demonstrates a good level of design quality which would integrate well with the built form of surrounding dwellings. The layout and density of the development retains a suitable degree of spaciousness whilst the retention of a significant number of trees to the site boundaries combined with the proposed soft landscape planting and generous size of the rear amenity garden spaces to surrounding dwellings is such that the proposals are considered to successfully integrate with and preserve the green and spacious character of the site and surrounding area between Blenheim Road and Kidmore Road.
- 6.28 The proposed development is considered to accord with Policies CS7 and DM10.

Residential amenity

- 6.29 Policy DM4 seeks to protect the amenity of existing and future occupiers and Policy CS34 seeks to protect and mitigate development from pollution
- 6.30 The three proposed dwellings are considered to provide for a good standard of residential accommodation in terms of size, outlook, daylighting and access to private amenity space. The orientation of the dwellings and position of windows with non-habitable obscure glazed windows (to be secured by condition) to flank elevations is such that there are not considered to be any issues in terms of overlooking or loss of light to the dwellings within the proposed development.
- 6.31 In terms of the impact on surrounding properties the separation distance to the adjacent dwellings to both Blenheim Road and Kidmore Road would exceed the 20m recommended separation within Policy DM4 and is considered sufficient to ensure there would be no loss of privacy to neighbouring dwellings. A separation of 10m would also be maintained to the rear parts of the amenity spaces of these adjacent dwellings which are considered sufficient to prevent any undue overlooking in this respect. The significant separation to surrounding dwellings is also such that there are no concerns regarding any overbearing impact, loss of light or noise impacts to neighbouring occupiers. It is considered reasonable to remove permitted development rights for future alteration/extension of the new dwellings by way of condition to ensure that any proposed changes can be fully considered by the Local Planning Authority.
- 6.32 A noise assessment has been submitted to consider the impact of the proposed vehicular access way upon the adjacent dwellings either side of the driveway (no.s 29 and 31 Blenheim Road). This assessment concludes that use of the access by vehicles associated with the proposed three houses would be unlikely to result in loss of amenity to the occupiers of these dwellings during day time or night time hours. The application also proposes additional mitigation to the occupiers of these properties in the form of hedge planting and 1.8m high closed board timber fencing along the sides of the access way between the adjacent dwellings. The noise impact of the access was raised as a reason for refusal in both the refused applications for residential development on the site in 1999 and 2000. These previous schemes related to developments of 10 and 5 dwellings respectively. The current proposal for 3 dwellings would have a reduced number of associated vehicular movements and together with the proposed hedge and fence screening propose it is not considered that the use of the access way would result in any significant adverse harm to the amenity of the occupiers of the adjacent dwellings.

- 6.33 In terms of construction impacts upon neighbours conditions are recommended to secure a construction method statement and scheme for control of noise and dust to be submitted and approved prior to commencement of development.
- 6.34 The proposed development is considered to accord with Policies DM4 and CS34.

Transport

- 6.34 Policies DM12 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012, 2015 and CS20 and CS24 of the Core Strategy seek to address access, traffic, highway and parking relates matters relating to development.
- 6.35 The proposed site is located within Zone 3, Secondary Core Area, of the Council's adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD. Typically these areas are within 400m of a Reading Buses high frequency 'Premier Route', which provides high quality bus routes to and from Reading town centre and other local centre facilities.
- 6.36 In accordance with the adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD the proposed development is required to provide off road parking of 2 spaces per 3 and 4 bedroom dwelling. The proposals demonstrate that each dwelling will be allocated 2 off road parking spaces with the semi-detached dwellings being provided with a single garage as well as one parking space on the drive. The dimensions of the proposed integral garages comply with the Councils current standards of 3m x 7m. Forecourt depths to the driveway parking spaces of 6m have been provided which will allow adequate space to manoeuvre in and out of the spaces and exit the site in forward gear. The proposals for parking meet the Council's current standards and are considered acceptable.
- 6.37 Access to the new dwellings will be via an existing private drive from Blenheim Road between No.s 29 and 31. The width of the carriageway proposed is 4.1m for the first 10m then narrowing to 3.7m where the proposed bin storage is to be located and the width of the drive then increases to 4.1m. Plans showing visibility splays for the access point on to Blenheim Road have also been provided as well as a supporting speed survey. A turning head is also provided within the site to ensure vehicles, including small delivery vehicles can turn safely within the site and leave in a forward gear. The Council's Transport Development Control Manager has confirmed that the access arrangements are acceptable for vehicles to enter and leave the site safely.
- 6.38 The application also proposed to provide a bell mouth and raised table access at the junction of the access with Blenheim Road which would replace the existing speed bumps adjacent to the access point to mitigate against the increase in flow of traffic associated with the proposed additional dwellings over the current situation which is nil trips. The raised table would not reduce the existing on street parking along Blenheim Road as parking could take place on the raised table as it currently does on the speed cushions.
- 6.39 A Section 278 Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) agreement would be required to be obtained from the Council's Highways section before any works are carried-out on any footway, carriageway, verge, or other land forming part of the public highway to agree the access construction details proposed. It is recommended that a contribution of £3,000 towards the cost of the TRO for alterations to the speed bumps is secured as part of a section 106 legal agreement.

- 6.40 Secure cycle storage for 2 cycles per dwelling is proposed to be provided in garden sheds for all units which adheres to Council standards and is considered acceptable. Bin storage is proposed to be housed within the dwellings themselves with a collection point proposed along the access way where residents would be required to transfer bins to on collection day. It is proposed to secure a refuse management plan by way of condition ensure bins are not left within collection area outside of bin collection periods.
- 6.41 The Highway Authority has no objections to the proposal subject to the recommended conditions and s106 terms. Officers therefore advise that the proposed development is considered to accord with Policies DM12, CS20 and CS24.

Affordable Housing

- 6.42 West Berkshire District Council and Reading Borough Council applied for a judicial review of the Secretary of State's Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) to Parliament in 2014 on changes to national planning policy. Those changes sought to exempt developments of 10 or less dwellings from planning obligations for affordable housing and social infrastructure contributions and have now also been incorporated within the NPPF (2019).
- 6.43 The High Court handed down its judgment on the case on 31st July 2015. The High Court found in favour of the challenge by the local authorities and quashed the amendments to the NPPG. The Secretary of State appealed the judgment and the Court of Appeal has now quashed the decision of the High Court.
- 6.44 At its meeting of the Strategic Environment Planning and Transport Committee on 13th July 2016, the Council discussed the outcome of the Court of Appeal's decision on its challenge (the report can be found here: http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/5651/Item09-SEPT-C-Report-on-C-of-Appeal-judgement-05-16/pdf/Item09_SEPT_C_Report_on_C_of_Appeal_judgement_05_16.pdf).
- 6.45 The Committee agreed the following as the basis for determining planning applications where Policy DM6 of the SDPD is relevant:
- To implement Policy DM6 as currently adopted in the SDPD but excluding proposals that solely involve the conversion of an existing property, where the conversion involves the provision of 10 or less dwelling units (i.e. not HMOs), or the replacement of dwellings by the same number of replacement dwellings where there is no net increase.*
- 6.46 The Council's position on affordable housing has been supported by a significant number of appeal decisions which note the acute need for affordable housing within the Borough.
- 6.47 As per Policy DM6 an off-site financial contribution equating to 5% of the GDV is sought for schemes of between 1 and 4 new dwellings. In this respect the applicant has agreed to provide a policy compliant affordable housing contribution to be secured by way of the section 106 legal agreement. At the time of writing this report this sum is being established by officers and will be reported in an update report prior to the committee meeting.

Other matters

- 6.48 Sustainability - Policy DM1 seeks that proposal should incorporate measures to adapt to climate change. Policy CS1 seeks that proposals should incorporate sustainable design and construction techniques and energy efficiency measures. Following the Government's abolition of the Code for Sustainable Homes sustainability measures for minor new build housing schemes (less than 10 units) are now covered by Building Regulations' requirements. Notwithstanding this the applicant has provided details of the sustainability measures to be included within the development including energy efficient fittings, insulation and ventilation. The proposals are considered to accord with Policies CS1 and DM1.
- 6.49 Archaeology - whilst not in an identified Area of Archaeological Potential, Berkshire Archaeology have advised that there are records of archaeology in the surrounding area and therefore submission, approval and implementation of a scheme of archaeological investigation is to be secured by way of condition.
- 6.50 Community infrastructure levy (CIL) - the applicant has completed a CIL liability form with the submission. Based on the proposed floor area of 405.9m² the CIL liability of the development would be sixty thousand one hundred and seventy pounds (£60,170).
- 6.51 Equality - In determining this application the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation. It is considered that there is no indication or evidence that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular application.

Issues raised in Representations

- 6.52 Issues raised are considered to have been addressed either in the appraisal section of this report or by way of officer comments in the public consultation section of this report.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The application site is considered to have localised tree and ecological value, however, this value can be mitigated in accordance with the Council's Development Plan policies. The site is suitable for a residential development and the layout is suitable to the prevailing character of the area and the development can be achieved without unacceptable disturbance to neighbouring properties or transport impacts. Suitable contributions towards ecology, local transport improvements and affordable housing are agreed. The proposals are considered to be acceptable within the context of national and local planning policies, as detailed in the appraisal above. As such, full planning permission is recommended for approval, subject to the recommended conditions and completion of the Legal Agreement.

Drawings & Documents Considered:

Drawing nos.

0733.1.3 - Landscape Hardworks Plan dated August 2018

0733.1.4 - Proposed Planting Plan dated March 2019

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 5th April 2019

K1751-03-100 Rev A - Existing Site Layout dated 28th February 2019

K1751-03-104 Rev B - Plot 1 & Cycle Store Details dated 28th February 2019
K1751-03-105 Rev B - Plot 2 & 3 dated 28th February 2019
K1751-03-108 Rev B - First Floor Site Layout dated 28th February 2019
K1751-03-107 Rev B - Ground Floor Site Layout dated 28th February 2019
K1751-03-103 Rev D - Proposed Site Layout Plan dated 28th February 2019
K1751-03-106 Rev B - Proposed Sections & Street Elevations Rev B dated 28th February 2019
Received by the Local Planning Authority on 20th March 2019

ITB13566-GA-010 Rev B - Proposed Site Access - Visibility Splays dated 3rd August 2018
ITB13566-GA-001 Rev E - Proposed Site Layout - Swept Path Analysis - Fire Tender dated 24th July 2018
ITB13566-GA-002 Rev E - Proposed Site Layout - Swept Path Analysis - Delivery Vehicle dated 24th July 2018
ITB13566-GA-009 Rev C - Proposed Site Layout - Swept Path Analysis - Delivery/Removals Vehicle dated 24th July 2018
ITB13566-GA-008 Rev D - Proposed Site Layout - Swept Path Analysis - Fire Tender dated 24th July 2018
Received by the Local Planning Authority on 20th March 2019

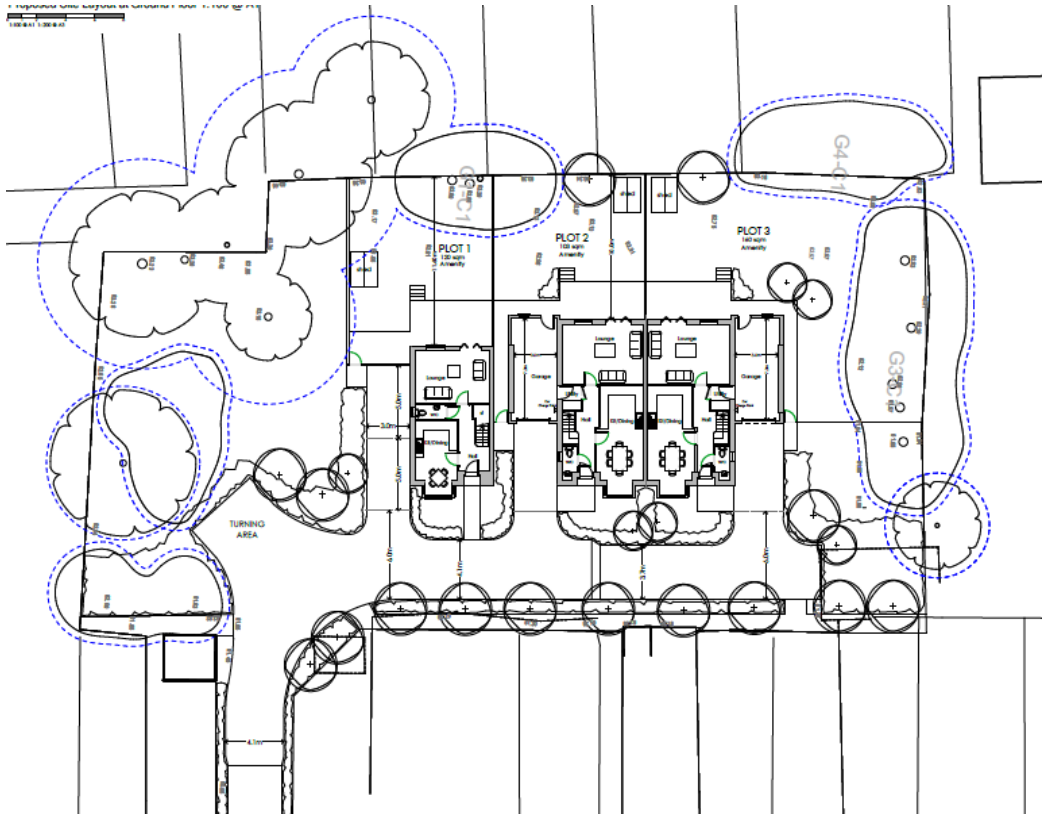
ECOSA Ecological Impact Assessment ref. 4513.F0 dated 15th March 2019
Key Land Estates Design and Access Statement dated February 2019
Paragon Vehicle Noise Assessment ref. 4266_VNA_1 dated 31st July 2018
Affordable Housing and Energy/Sustainability Statement
Received by the Local Planning Authority on 20th March 2019

Harrison Arboriculture Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Method Statement ref. 16012802/25/2019 dated 28th May 2019
Received by the Local Planning Authority on 31st May 2019

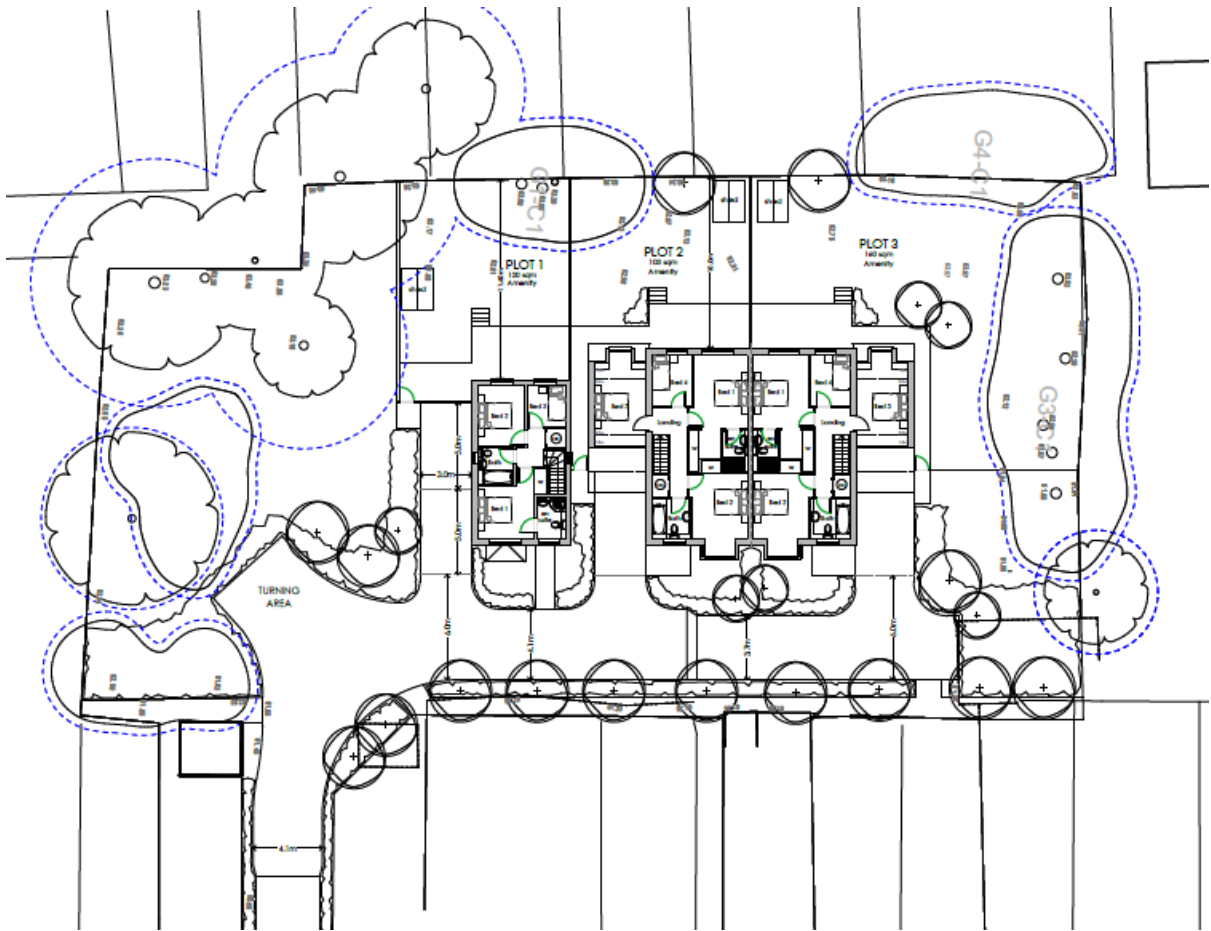
Case Officer: Matt Burns



Proposed Site Plan



Proposed Ground Floor Layout



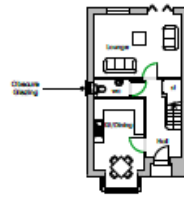
Proposed First Floor Layout



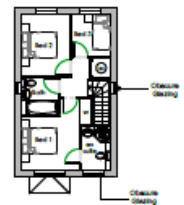
East Elevation
Plot 3



South Elevation
Plot 3



Plot 5
Ground Floor Plan



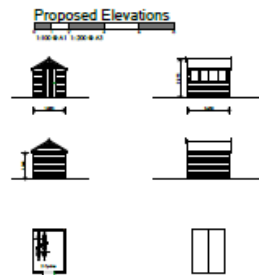
Plot 5
First Floor Plan



West Elevation
Plot 3



North Elevation
Plot 3



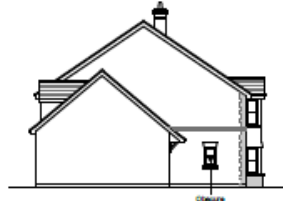
Proposed Plans

Cycle Storage Shed 1:100 @ A1

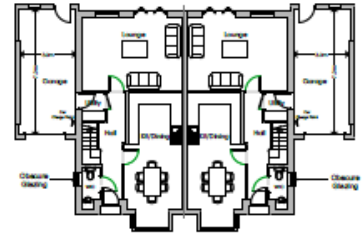
Plot 1 Elevations & Cycle Stores



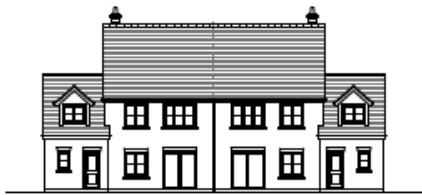
East Elevation
Plot 2 Plot 3



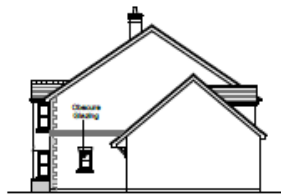
South Elevation
Plot 2



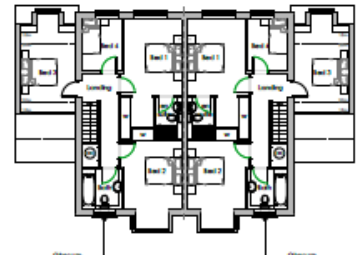
Plot 2 Plot 3
Ground Floor Plan



West Elevation
Plot 3 Plot 2



North Elevation
Plot 3



Plot 2 Plot 3
First Floor Plan

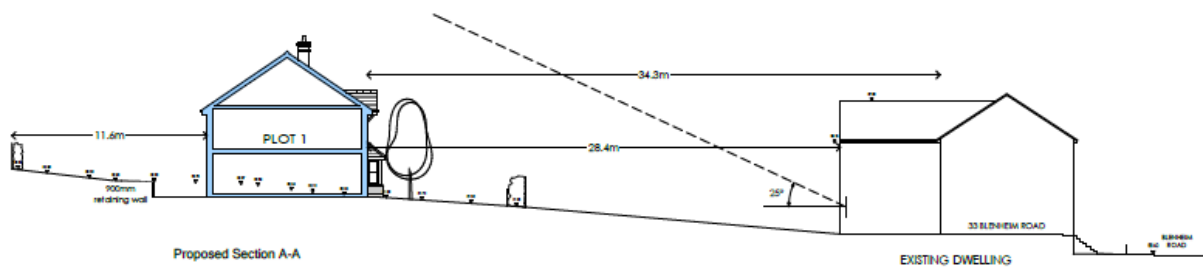
Plots 2 and 3 Proposed Elevations

Proposed Sections & Street Elevation 1:100 @ A1

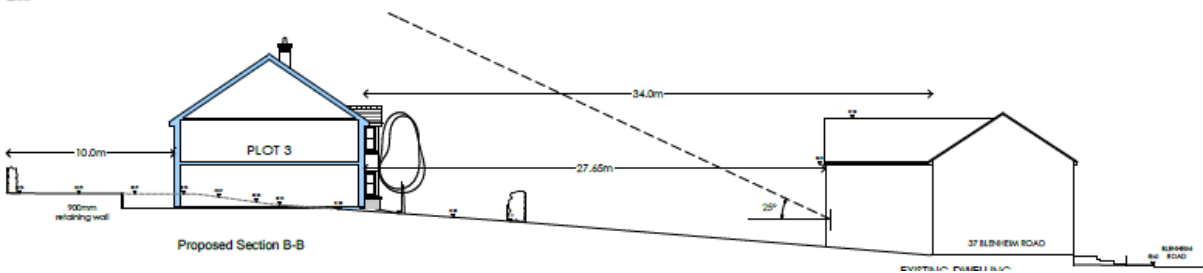
1:100 @ A1
 (Material materials shown are indicative
 Type, size and colour are to be agreed)



Plot 1 Plot 2 Plot 3
Proposed Street Elevation 1:100 @ A1

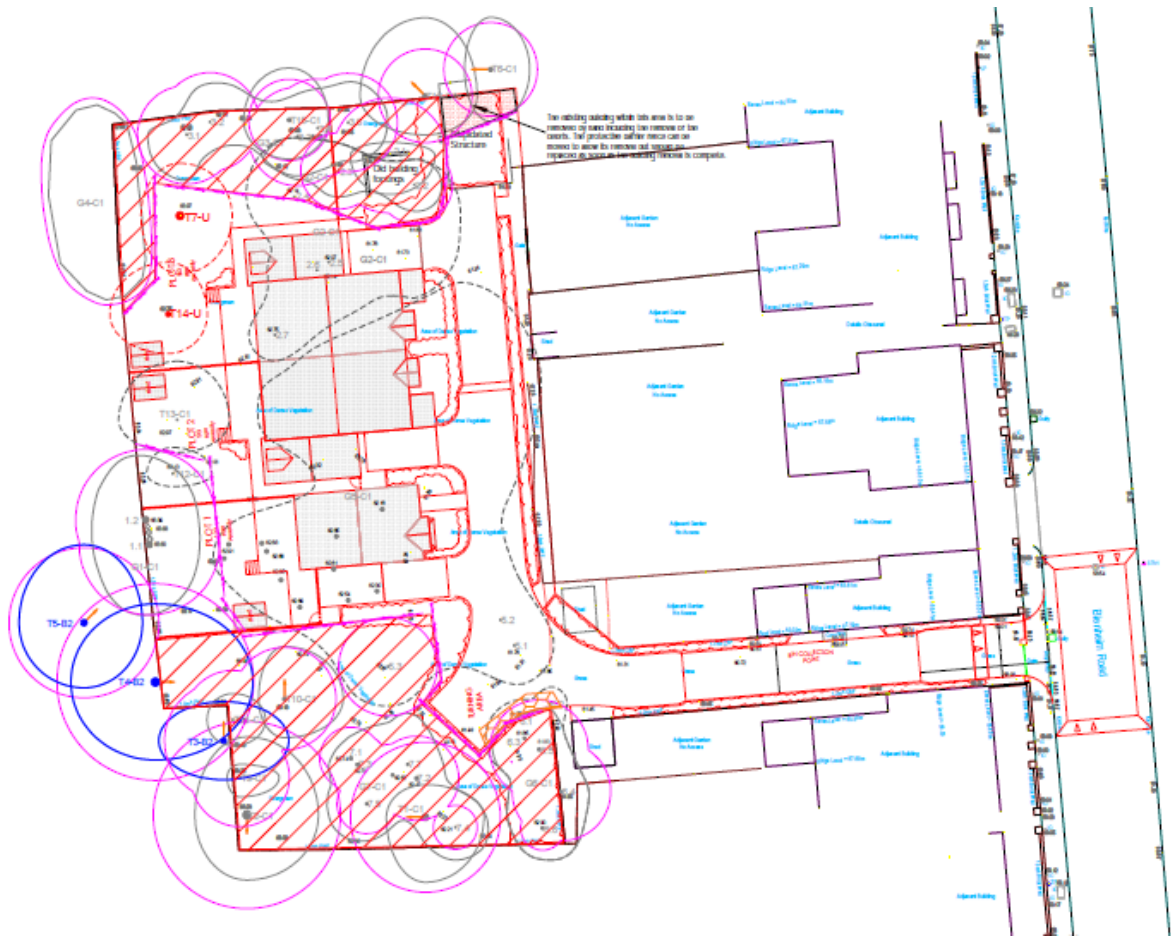


Proposed Section A-A



Proposed Section B-B

Proposed Street-Scene Elevation and Site Sections



Tree Removal/Retention Plan (dotted lines indicates those to be removed)