

DELEGATED PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Tilehurst

App Ref: 230455/OUT

Address: 59 Corwen Road, Reading, RG30 4ST

Proposals: Erection of two storey building to create 2 No. 1 Bedroom Maisonettes

Case Officer: Marcie Rejwerska

Date received (valid from): 18 April 2023 Target Decision date: 13 June 2023

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site comprises a garage block adjacent and associated with 57/59 Corwen Road. The garages are accessed through a Reading Borough Council owned carpark which neighbours the site on the west side. The surrounding area is residential. The site is not listed nor in a conservation area.

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Outline planning permission is sought for 2x 1-bedroom maisonettes. All matters reserved (appearance, scale, layout, access and landscaping).

The proposed access includes creation of a new car park in the existing garden of 57 Corwen Road to be accessed from Cadogan Close.

Plans considered:

101 Location plan, dated March 2023, received 6 April 2023

102 Block plan, dated March 2023, received 6 April 2023

103 Existing site plan, dated March 2023, received 6 April 2023

104 Rev. B Proposed site plan, dated March 2023, received 13 June 2023

Design and Access Statement, dated March 2023, received 6 April 2023

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

160010 - Demolition of existing residential dwellings and associated garaging and the erection of 7 no. 1 bedroom apartments with associated parking cycle storage and amenity space - Application Refused

160993 - Proposed demolition of existing garage block and the erection of 3no. new apartments with associated parking and amenity - Application Refused

221252 - Outline application for the erection of two storey building to create 2 No. 1 bedroom maisonettes (all matters reserved) - Application Refused

4. CONSULTATIONS

Internal consultations:

Ecology - no objection subject to applicant submitting biodiversity net gain calculations.

Transport - objection.

Environmental Health - no objections subject to conditions.

Natural Environment - no comments received.

External consultations:

The following addresses were consulted by letter.

80 Corwen Road, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 4SU
57 Corwen Road, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 4ST
8 Hursley Close, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 4SA
59 Corwen Road, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 4ST
61 Corwen Road, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 4ST
80A Corwen Road, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 4SU
7 Hursley Close, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 4SA
7 Cadogan Close, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 4DF
84 Corwen Road, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 4SU
6 Hursley Close, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 4SA

Letters of representation have been received as follows:

2 objections citing the following concerns,

- The neighbouring Council car park is not 'disused' as stated within the Design and Access Statement
- Concern of loss of privacy from overlooking
- Concern regarding worsening of parking on Corwen Road/Cadogan Close
- Removal of hedge to accommodate new parking will affect nesting birds
- The size of the rear gardens will be reduced and negatively impact residents at 57/59 Corwen Road

Officer note - the above is addressed within this report.

Equality Act 2010:

In determining this application the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. However, there is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular 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 development.

5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

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 following local and national planning policy and guidance is relevant to this application:

National Policy and Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework
National Planning Practice Guidance

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC1: PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

CC2: SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION
CC3: ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE
CC5: WASTE MINIMISATION AND STORAGE
CC6: ACCESSIBILITY AND THE INTENSITY OF DEVELOPMENT
CC7: DESIGN AND THE PUBLIC REALM
CC8: SAFEGUARDING AMENITY
CC9: SECURING INFRASTRUCTURE
EN12: BIODIVERSITY AND THE GREEN NETWORK
EN14: TREES, HEDGES AND WOODLAND
EN15: AIR QUALITY
EN16: POLLUTION AND WATER RESOURCES
H1: PROVISION OF HOUSING
H2: DENSITY AND MIX
H3: AFFORDABLE HOUSING
H5: STANDARDS FOR NEW HOUSING
H10: PRIVATE AND COMMUNAL OUTDOOR SPACE
TR1: ACHIEVING THE TRANSPORT STRATEGY
TR3: ACCESS, TRAFFIC AND HIGHWAY-RELATED MATTERS
TR5: CAR AND CYCLE PARKING AND ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING

SPG/SPD

Affordable Housing (2021)
Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)
Sustainable Design and Construction (2019)

APPRAISAL

Land use principles

The development site is located within the urban area of Reading. As established by Policy H1, there is a pressing need for additional housing in Reading and the surrounding area. This policy supports the principle of housing development within the borough on land which is not functional floodplain or open space and that which contributes towards social, economic and environmental wellbeing. There is an identified requirement to provide 15,847 dwellings and associated infrastructure over the plan period.

In meeting housing need, the NPPF states that LPAs should “*encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value*”. The NPPF definition of ‘previously developed land’ excludes private residential gardens in built up areas. The priority for development should be on previously developed land, in particular on vacant, under-utilised and derelict sites. As the site is currently occupied by garage blocks and associated access, it is considered the land is classified as ‘previously developed’ brownfield land and therefore in principle is supported by the NPPF.

The existing garage structures are also not listed, within a conservation area. Within this context, there is no in-principle objection to the garage structures being demolished, it does need to be established that the loss of the garages would not result in adverse impacts on parking provision and the highway network.

Therefore, the principle of residential development within a residential area is acceptable, subject to other material considerations which are discussed below.

Design and impact on the character of the area

Policy CC7: Design and the Public Realm is a strategic policy seeking high standards of design quality in new development. It sets out how various components of development including layout, urban structure and urban grain, and scale, make a positive contribution to their surroundings and respond positively to their local context.

In terms of layout this includes buildings, routes and open spaces within the development and the way they are laid out in relation to buildings and spaces outside the development.

Whilst the layout, scale and appearance of the building are to be determined, the indicative plans demonstrate a development that would be a two-storey development that would be set back slightly further than 57/59 Corwen Road. The general parameters of a two-storey building in this location is acceptable, given the surrounding context. The plot is considered of sufficient size to accommodate a development of this indicative size. The indication of positioning is also considered acceptable for the purposes of this outline application as it demonstrates that sufficient space around the building would be accommodated. It would be positioned further back than the front elevation

Whilst the proposed dwelling would not form part of the terrace itself, they would be positioned in a comparative layout in terms of building line and the general spacing to the existing terrace. The layout would allow for comparable amenity space, although insufficient parking space.

The proposed car parking layout includes a 4no. off-road car park on the east side of the existing maisonettes at 57/59 Corwen Road. The proposal would be accommodated by a significant reduction to the existing rear gardens of 57/59 Corwen Road and accessed from Cadogan Close. The excessive area to be converted to hardstanding and its cramped layout will pose a risk of visual harm to both the existing dwellings and the wider Cadogan Close.

Highway matters

Policy TR5 states that development should provide car parking and cycle parking that is appropriate to the accessibility of locations within the Borough to sustainable transport facilities, particularly public transport. Local parking standards are set out in the RBC, Revised Parking Standards and Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which takes into account the accessibility of the site. The site is located in Zone 3 and the parking requirement in this zone is 1 space. A car free scheme would not be acceptable as the site is located a sufficient distance away from Reading town centre.

Whilst access is reserved for future consideration, it needs to be established if in principle there is sufficient space on site for the parking space. The proposal includes plans for a 4-space car park within the current rear/side garden of 57 Corwen Road, to be access from Cadogan Close. While providing all required off road parking spaces, the proposed car park has a negative impact on the general layout of the site and appears cramped. The impact on amenity is discussed later in this report.

Policy TR5 requires for each new house to be provided with an electric charging point. The proposed plans indicate two EV charging points to be installed on site which is considered sufficient.

In accordance with the adopted Parking SPD, the development is required to provide a minimum of 1 cycle parking space for the development. In addition, details of refuse and waste storage are required. Should the proposal have been acceptable, these would have been secured via condition.

Impact on future and existing occupiers

Neighbouring occupiers

While the proposed dwelling itself poses little concern for the amenity of neighbouring properties, the proposed car park at the side/rear of 57 Corwen Road creates a risk of harm to the occupiers. The proximity of the car parking spaces would likely create an unacceptable level of noise disturbance and air pollution from car exhausts. There is a window at the ground floor elevation of 59 Corwen Road serving a habitable room - which would be impacted the most.

The proposal is therefore not considered acceptable. The proposed car park by way of its layout and close proximity to the side and rear elevation of 57 Corwen Road poses a risk of harm to the existing occupiers and is therefore contrary to Policy CC8.

Future occupiers

The dwellings would be expected to provide rooms of an adequate size in line with the Department for Communities and Local Government - Technical housing standards - nationally described space standards. Policy H5 (Standards for New Housing) of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) states that 'new build housing should be built to the following standards: a. All new build housing outside the Central Area as defined on the Proposals Map will comply with the nationally-described space standard'. Policy H5 also states that 'ensuring sufficient levels of internal space is essential to the quality of life of residents of the Borough, which is a key element of the vision of the Borough'. It is indicated that the dwellings would be 50 sqm which would comply with the space standards, but further detail on this would be required at reserved matters stage. However, in principle it is considered that the plot could accommodate dwellings that would meet the nationally prescribed space standards.

Policy H10: Private and Communal Outdoor Space sets out that 'Dwellings will be provided with functional private or communal open space... Houses will be provided with private outdoor space whereas flats may be provided with communal outdoor space, balconies and/or roof gardens.'

H10 also states that 'The design of outdoor areas will respect the size and character of other similar spaces in the vicinity, clearly identify whether they are private or communal spaces, ensure that they are appropriately related to main entrances, enhance safety and the perception of safety for future residents and the general public, and not be compromised by the relationship of other buildings which may be detrimental in terms of overlooking, overbearing or overshadowing.'

The proposed rear amenity space is appropriately sized and is comparable to those in the vicinity. It would measure approx. 119 sqm which exceeds the size outlined in Policy H10 which states that 1 bed flats should be provided with 25 sqm per dwelling. The proposal therefore complies with Policy H10 and a condition would be included to ensure the garden space is retained as communal space.

Impact on the natural environment

Whilst landscaping is reserved, it needs to be established that the layout and access of the development would allow for soft landscaping on site (as part of a reserved matters) and would not result in harm to any existing trees on site.

There are no trees within the site of the existing garages except for a dead tree to the rear and a young tree growing against the derelict garages. Two trees to the front of the site, one on either side of Hursley Close entrance, should be protected during development.

There are existing trees at the rear of 57/59 Corwen Close which are likely to be negatively impacted by the proposed car park, increasing pressure to prune or remove the trees. The proposed car parking layout is therefore not considered appropriate.

Although no landscaping details are provided, the proposed layout could accommodate soft landscaping and tree planting within the site. This would have been secured via condition.

Additionally, Policy EN12 states that *'On all sites, development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity and geodiversity, and should provide a net gain for biodiversity wherever possible'*.

The applicant has not supplied biodiversity net gain calculations.

Environmental protection matters

Policy EN16 states that *'Development will only be permitted on land affected by contamination where it is demonstrated that the contamination and land gas can be satisfactorily managed or remediated so that it is suitable for the proposed end use and will not impact on the groundwater environment, human health, buildings and the wider environment, during demolition and construction phases as well as during the future use of the site.'*

The development lies on the site of disused garages, which has the potential to have caused contaminated land (oil spillages, waste storage etc). The proposal may introduce new pollutant linkages between contaminated land and sensitive receptors at the site. The application site lies adjacent to the site of an historic brick works, which has the potential to have caused contaminated land and the proposed development is a sensitive land use. Therefore a condition will be applied to ensure that future occupants are not put at undue risk from contamination to comply with Policy EN16 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

Conditions would also be applied controlling the hours of construction for the benefit of neighbouring residents in accordance with Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

Sustainability

Policies CC1, TR5, and H5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 all include increased standards for sustainable homes. Should the proposal have been acceptable, conditions would apply to ensure high water efficiency and improved dwelling emission rates.

Affordable housing

The proposal seeks to create two new dwellings and, therefore, a contribution towards off-site affordable housing provision is required as part of the application in accordance with policy H3 and the Affordable Housing SPD under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. On sites of 1-4 dwellings, this equates to 10% of the GDV of the development. Whilst the principle of an affordable housing contribution has been agreed by the applicant, this was not progressed by the LPA due to outstanding concerns regarding the application meaning it would not be progressing with a recommendation of approval. An informative will be included to state that this reason for refusal may be able to be overcome at appeal.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) would be applicable to this proposal.

Conclusion

On the basis of the above and in light of any other material planning applications, the proposal is considered not to be in accordance with the development plan. Accordingly, recommendation is made to refuse outline planning permission.

RECOMMENDATION: REFUSE outline planning permission for the following reasons:

1. The proposed car park creates an area of excessive hard surface resulting in visual harm to the character of Cadogan Close and the host dwellings at 57/59 Corwen Road, in conflict with Policy CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).
2. The proposed car park by way of its positioning in close proximity to the side and rear elevations of 57 Corwen Road would result in noise and air pollution causing harm to the existing occupiers of 57 Corwen Road, in conflict with Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).
3. 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 H3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) and the Council's Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document 2021.

Informatives:

1. Plans considered
2. Pre-app
3. Positive and proactive
4. Reason for refusal 2 could be overcome at appeal