

DELEGATED PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Caversham Heights

App Ref: 230431/FUL

Address: 2 Conisboro Way, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7HT

Proposals: Demolition of existing dwelling house and construction of replacement dwelling house.

Case Officer: Marcie Rejwerska

Date received (valid from): 14 April 2023 Target Decision date: 31 July 2023 (ext.)

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site comprises a detached bungalow on the north side of Conisboro Way in Caversham. The existing bungalow is currently disused. The site comprises a number of mature trees, including three protected by TPOs. Conisboro Way is a private gravel road accessed from Geoffreyson Road. A private access drive runs alongside the western boundary of the site. The surrounding area is residential, characterised by detached and semi-detached two-storey properties in similar character to each other, with the exception of no. 1 Conisboro Way which is in identical character to the bungalow on the application site. The application site is not listed nor in a conservation area.



Application site location. Image taken from Google Maps on 1 August 2023. It is noted that vegetation as seen on Google Maps does not reflect the amount of vegetation on site at the time of the application.

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Planning permission is sought for demolition of the existing bungalow to be replaced with 1x replacement 5 bedroom, two storey residential dwelling, including a rear annex.

The replacement dwelling would be set back from the road to accommodate a new driveway. The proposal includes an integrated ground floor double garage. The property is divided between two 'wings' - westerly and easterly wings. The easterly wing measures 6.7m in depth and 7.2m in width. There is a balcony proposed on the first floor front elevation of the east wing. The west wing includes the garage and measures 25.3m in depth and approx. 6.5m in width and includes a courtyard with a tree, bringing the total depth to 28.6m. The two wings are connected via a central hallway with a rear elevation gallery wall with a void above. The proposed finish of the dwelling would be facing brickwork and timber cladding, with timber louvres over windows on the first floor west elevation windows.

The proposed annex is located at the rear of the plot and would be ancillary to the dwelling. The annex is proposed to measure 5m in depth and approx. 10m in width, with an area of 41m². Due to the sloping ground level, the front of the annex would be elevated. The roof of the annex would be pitched with a covered patio at the entrance to accommodate a sliding door entrance. The proposed finish is timber cladding.



2202(11)000 Rev. E Proposed Site Plan.

Plans considered:

- 2202 Design and Access Statement, dated March 2023, received 3 April 2023
- SCD 05849/2022 Arboricultural Report [Duckworths Arboriculture], dated July 2022, received 3 April 2023
- TREE PLAN 05849/2022 R1, Tree Constraints Plan, dated July 2022, received 3 April 2023
- SCD 06034/2023 R2, Arboricultural Report, dated July 2023, received 20 July 2023
- TPP PHASE 2 06034/2023 R1, Tree Protection Plan, dated May 2023, received 17 May 2023
- TPP PHASE 1 06034/2023 R1, Tree Protection Plan, dated May 2023, received 17 May 2023
- 1.3 Landscape Development Plan, dated 19 July 2023, received 20 July 2023
- 2202(81)016 Proposed Plan and Elevation 45 Degree Light Study, dated 13 March 2023, received 29 June 2023
- 5168 Bat Scoping Report and Preliminary Ecology Appraisal [The Ecology Co-Op], dated 26 July 2022, received 3 April 2023
- Bat Emergence Surveys [The Ecology Partnership], dated August 2022, received 3 April 2023
- 2202(31)000 Rev. D, Proposed Front Elevation (South), dated 23 June 2023, received 29 June 2023
- 2202(31)001 Rev. D, Proposed Side Elevation (West) dated 23 June 2023, received 29 June 2023
- 2202(31)002 Rev. D, Proposed Rear Elevation (North), dated 23 June 2023, received 29 June 2023
- 2202(31)003 Rev. D, Proposed Side Elevation (East), dated 23 June 2023, received 29 June 2023
- 2202(11)000 Rev. E, Proposed Site Plan, dated 23 June 2023, received 29 June 2023
- 2202(21)000 Rev F., Proposed Ground Floor General Arrangement Plan, dated 23 June 2023, received 29 June 2023
- 2202(21)001 Rev E., Proposed First Floor General Arrangement Plan, dated 23 June 2023, received 29 June 2023
- 2202(21)010 Rev. C, Proposed Annexe Plan & Elevations, dated 23 June 2023, received 29 June 2023
- 2202(21)020 Rev. C, Proposed Site Plan (Ground Floor Level), dated 23 June 2023, received 29 June 2023

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

None.

4. CONSULTATIONS

Non-statutory:

Transport - Water run-off from private property onto the public highway is not permitted, an appropriate method of drainage needs to be provided within the property curtilage including the use of suitable permeable surfacing materials. A new pedestrian and vehicle access is proposed to serve the site located along the southern boundary. The width of the access is excessive for the needs for a single dwelling and should be a maximum of 5m wide. Given the development is located at the end of a no through road, visibility splays are not required in this instance. Revised plans illustrating 5m vehicle cross over is required. A minimum of 2 cycle storage spaces which should be in a conveniently

located, lockable, covered store are required, in a development of this nature these can be located within a garage however given the size of the garage an alternative will need to be provided. In a development of this nature this can be a secure garden shed. Details and illustrations on revised plans will be required.

Bin storage should not be located further than 15m from the access point of the site to avoid the stationing of service vehicles on the carriageway for excessive periods and should comply with Manual for Streets and British Standard 5906: 2005 for Waste Management in Buildings to avoid the stationing of service vehicles on the carriageway. Given that it is unlikely that a refuse vehicle will enter the site, refuse storage and collection areas will need to be illustrated on plans that will allow for kerb side collection. Revised plans required.

The applicant should be made aware that this development will be subject to a Construction Management Statement.

Trees - Supported, subject to conditions.

Ecology - It has not been demonstrated that the proposals will result in a net gain for biodiversity. The application should not be determined until this issue has been resolved.

Waste Operations - No comments.

Public:

The following addresses were consulted by letter.

70 Woodcote Way Caversham, Reading, Berkshire
1 Conisboro Avenue, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire, RG4 7JB
32 Carlton Road, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire, RG4 7NT
36 Geoffreyson Road, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire, RG4 7HS
4 Conisboro Avenue, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire, RG4 7JB
38 Geoffreyson Road, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire, RG4 7HS
45 Hilltop Road, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire, RG4 7HR
31 Valentine Crescent, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire, RG4 5JL
43 Hilltop Road, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire, RG4 7HR
40 Geoffreyson Road, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7HS

Letters of representation have been received in two phases, in response to initial drawings and amended drawings as follows.

23 objections to initial plans and 3 support letters citing reasons as follows:

- Overbearing height, mass and scale
- Overlooking of the existing neighbouring properties resulting in loss of privacy
- Loss of access to sunlight to neighbours
- Non-conventional design
- Visually dominant due to excessive height
- The footprint of the proposed house is much larger than other properties on Conisboro Way
- Proposal is out of keeping with the surrounding area
- The footprint of the annexe is too large
- Overdevelopment of the site
- Loss of biodiversity
- Overlooking risk from the proposed balcony
- Proposed dwelling is not aligned with the prevailing building line on Conisboro Way
- Uneven ground level exacerbates the issue of already excessive height

- Proposed metal cladding is out of keeping with the character and has an industrial feel
- Several trees and hedges on site have already been removed by the applicant
- The applicant has already erected a fence outside of their own property boundary
- Concern that the proposed annexe is to be used as temporary living accommodation for construction workers
- Concern that the proposed annexe will be used as a separate dwelling or for use as short term let (eg. AirBnB)
- Submitted plans lack clarity and are misleading
- Proximity of the annexe to property boundaries with neighbouring properties
- The proposed decking of the annexe will result in overlooking due to raised ground level
- 'Boxed-in' feeling in neighbouring gardens
- Potential risk to RPA of TPO16
- Concern over access to service lane to the side of the application site
- Construction access to the site
- Increased noise from proposed balconies

17 objections received to amended plans citing similar reasons to above, including that the amendments have not adequately resolved the raised issues.

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

CC7: DESIGN AND THE PUBLIC REALM

CC8: SAFEGUARDING AMENITY

EN12: BIODIVERSITY AND THE GREEN NETWORK

EN14: TREES, HEDGES AND WOODLAND

EN15: AIR QUALITY

H1: PROVISION OF HOUSING

H2: DENSITY AND MIX

H5: STANDARDS FOR NEW HOUSING

H9: HOUSE EXTENSIONS AND ANCILLARY ACCOMMODATION

H10: PRIVATE AND COMMUNAL OUTDOOR SPACE

TR3: ACCESS, TRAFFIC AND HIGHWAY-RELATED MATTERS

TR5: CAR AND CYCLE PARKING AND ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING

SPG/SPD

Sustainable Design and Construction (2019)

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.

APPRAISAL

The main concerns to be addressed are:

- a) Character and appearance
- b) Amenity
- c) Natural environment
- d) Other matters

a) Character and appearance

Policy CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 states that *“All development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. The various components of development form, including:*

- *Layout: urban structure and urban grain;*
- *Landscape;*
- *Density and mix;*
- *Scale: height and massing; and*
- *Architectural detail and materials”*

The existing bungalow sits ‘quietly’ in its plot which is distinctly open and vegetated. It is acknowledged that there is scope for some enlargement to that dwelling, also that the plot has become somewhat overgrown in recent years. However it is considered that the proposal is excessive and would result in a stark change from open verdant character to a plot dominated by built form. The proposal appears as an overdevelopment of the site and reducing its verdant character significantly. The opportunities for further landscaping would be limited, particularly when viewed from public areas.

It is apparent that the proposed dwelling has been designed to fit around the Root Protection Areas of the various trees on site and this is reflected in the divided layout of the dwelling into east and west wings. This however has created an awkwardly designed dwelling with a disproportionately large west wing and serves as further indication of the overdeveloped nature of what is being proposed. The length of this dwelling and the addition of timber louvres to the windows present a long blank façade which would add to these concerns.

The proposal is considered contrary to the design principles outlined in Policy CC7.

While it has been noted that objections have been raised to the contemporary style of the dwelling, these factors are not considered harmful per se.

b) Amenity

Policy CC8 states *“Development will not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties, in terms of:*

- *Privacy and overlooking;*

- *Access to sunlight and daylight;*
- *Visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development;*
- *Harm to outlook;*
- *Noise and disturbance;*
- *Artificial lighting;*
- *Vibration;*
- *Dust and fumes;*
- *Smell;*
- *Crime and safety;”*

Future occupiers

The proposed fenestration layout and the addition of the courtyard to break up the west wing leaves two bedrooms which face onto the courtyard with potentially overshadowed rooms with limited access to sunlight and daylight. No sunlight/daylight assessment has been submitted to demonstrate otherwise and as such the fenestration layout of the bedrooms is considered unacceptable.

There are no other amenity concerns in terms of future occupiers. A full assessment would have been completed should the application have been found to be acceptable.

Neighbouring properties

A number of objections have been received with regards to amenity impact of the development on the neighbouring properties on all sides of the site. Although minimum distances between properties have been largely achieved, the slope of the ground and the presence of a two-storey gallery at the rear of the dwelling contribute to a perception of being overlooked to the residents on Carlton Road.

Although the west wing is considered excessive in scale, it does not have a negative impact on the amenity of properties on Geoffreyson Road, and the east wing is considerably smaller and therefore has limited impact on properties in Conisboro Way and Carlton Road. The proposed balcony at the front of the property in the east wing is similarly not considered harmful either by way of overlooking or noise.

The scale of the annex has also been raised as potentially overbearing. Although large, the proposed annex has been amended to be smaller in scale and set off the neighbouring boundaries. Its presence, however, contributes to an overdevelopment of the site. The Design and Access Statement also suggests that the annex is to be used as temporary accommodation for the applicant during the construction period. This raises concerns regarding amenity impact to the neighbouring properties on Carlton Road and Hilltop Road, as well as concerns regarding disruption to the Root Protection Areas of the surrounding trees due to installation of utilities which would be evidently needed to be able to provide a suitable living space. As such, the annex is not considered acceptable.

c) Natural Environment

Trees

The Natural Environment team has supported the protection measures for the trees to be retained on site. The application site is part of a green corridor which cuts across Conisboro Way. The proposal reduces the verdant character of this area and is therefore considered harmful.

Ecology

The submitted landscaping plans and ecology statement have not considered the clearance undertaken by the applicant, and therefore the submitted biodiversity net gain calculations

are not accurate. As such, the applicant has failed to demonstrate biodiversity net gain on site.

d) Other matters

Other matters raised in objections received:

- Potential use of the annex as accommodation or short-let holiday home.
 - The initial proposal suggested that the applicant would use the proposed annex as temporary accommodation while the main dwelling is being constructed. The applicant was advised against this to protect neighbouring amenity and prevent the need to install utilities to the annex. This proposal has now been removed from the application. The use of the annex as ancillary to the main dwelling would have been secured via condition.
- The applicant has erected a timber fence which encroaches onto the adjacent access drive.
 - Encroachment is considered a civil matter.
- Impact of internal lighting in the gallery on the neighbour amenity and the environment.
 - There is no identified risk caused by internal lighting of the gallery, although it is noted that the proposed gallery could present a risk of overlooking.

Conclusion

The submitted information has been assessed against the adopted policies as outlined and is found to be contrary to the Reading Local Plan 2019 for the reasons set out above, and therefore not acceptable.

RECOMMENDATION **REFUSE PERMISSION**

1. The proposed dwelling by reason of its excessive scale, extensive footprint and prominent siting, including a long blank façade to the western boundary and a loss of vegetation and space for soft landscaping, would result in a visually dominant, overdeveloped form of development which fails to respond positively to its local context with consequent harm to the character and appearance of the area. Contrary to Policy CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.
2. Due to their design and layout first floor bedrooms 1 and 4 lack an acceptable level of access to natural sunlight/daylight. No sunlight/daylight assessment has been submitted, therefore due to insufficient evidence submitted by the applicant, the proposal is contrary to Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.
3. The layout and proposed window design would result in a perception of overlooking to neighbouring dwellings in Carlton Road, harmful to the amenity of neighbours. In addition the use of the annex as temporary accommodation poses a risk of harm to amenity of neighbouring properties in terms of disturbance. This is contrary to Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

4. No revised Biodiversity Net Gain calculations have been submitted, and therefore there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate no biodiversity net loss. This is contrary to Policy EN12 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.