

## **PLANNING STATEMENT**

### **INCLUDING DESIGN AND ACCESS, AFFORDABLE HOUSING STATEMENT AND ARBORICULTURAL REPORT**

**Land at 19 Gayhurst Close, Caversham, RG4 6QW**

**April 2022**

## **INTRODCUTION**

This planning application proposes the erection of a small 3 bedroom detached house on land to the side of 19 Gayhurst Close in Caversham. The proposed dwelling would benefit from a new access and driveway parking to the front.

## **PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT**

The application site is located within the settlement boundary of Reading, wherein the principle of providing a new dwelling on excess garden land is considered to be acceptable as set out by the Council's development Plan, subject to design, access and amenity considerations.

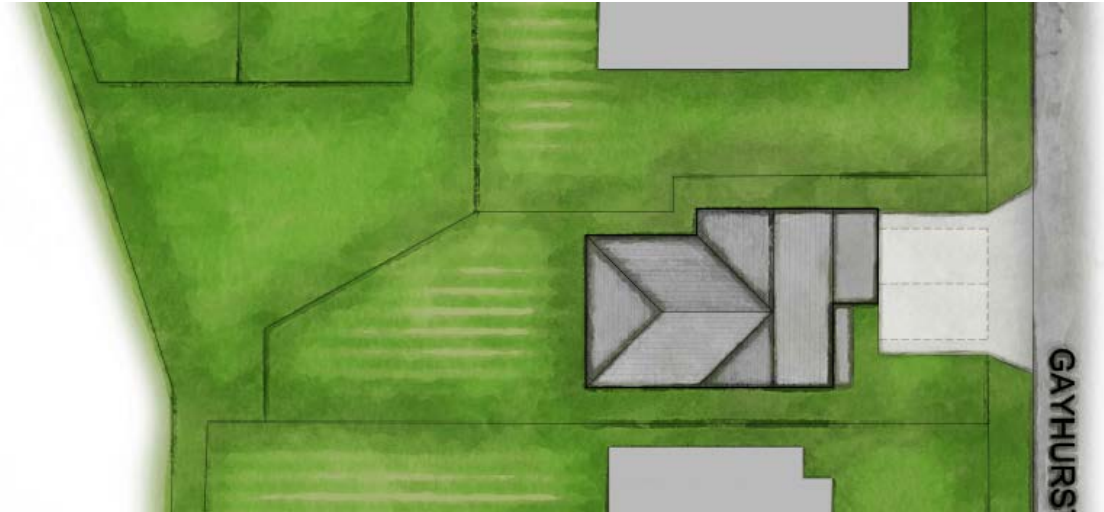
## **DESIGN**

The proposed dwelling features an uncomplicated and traditional approach which would be entirely conducive to the character of the surrounding area. Overall, the proposal would be sensitive to the existing character along Gayhurst Close and would not result in any harm in terms of visual character and appearance.



## LAYOUT

The proposed dwelling would front onto the highway, aligned with the existing dwellings (including the host property), effectively infilling a gap in the otherwise built up frontage. Private amenity space would be provided to the rear. Car parking would be provided via the front driveway.



## HOUSING STANDARDS

The proposed dwelling would have a floor area of approximately 140sqm with a total of 3 bedrooms which meets requisite standards.

The house would benefit from at least 140sqm in private rear garden area meeting the standards set out in Policy H10. When including the side passages this would be even greater, exceeding requisite requirements.

In accordance with Policy H5 the proposed dwelling will be built to the higher water efficiency standard under Regulation 36(3) of the Building Regulations.

The proposal is not for 'major new-build residential development' and so there is no requirement to achieve zero carbon homes. The new dwelling will, however, achieve at a minimum a 19% improvement in the dwelling emission rate over the target emission rate, as defined in the 2013 Building Regulations.

The proposed dwelling will be accessible and adaptable in line with M4(2) of the Building Regulations and will be 'wheelchair adaptable' as defined in part M.

## POLICY H11 – DEVELOPMENT OF RESIDENTIAL GARDENS

The policy confirm that Proposals for new residential development that includes land within the curtilage or the former curtilage of private residential gardens will be acceptable where it complies with policy H11. In this respect:

- The proposal would make a positive contribution to the character of the area in terms of the relationship of the existing built form and spaces around buildings within the surrounding area given that the proposal would infill a gap in the otherwise built-up frontage, therefore entirely conforming with the character of the area.
- The layout would integrate with the surrounding area with regard to the built up coverage of each plot, building line, rhythm of plot frontages, parking areas, and existing pattern
- The proposal would have appropriate hard and soft landscaping, whilst full details would be provided as part of a typical landscaping condition. This will include a variety of trees, hardstanding/lawns and hedges, etc.
- The proposal would accord with the general building heights within the surrounding area and materials and elevational detail would match with the surrounds.

Furthermore, the application site provides a site of adequate size and dimensions to accommodate the development proposed in terms of the setting and spacing around buildings, amenity space, landscaping and space for access roads and parking.

The proposal includes access onto a private driveway that would meet appropriate highway standards.

## **AMENITY**

Outlook would be to the front and rear. There would be no habitable room windows at first floor level in the side elevations. Accordingly, the proposal would not result in any harm to privacy or any other neighbouring amenity. The proposal would sit in a neighbourly position entirely conducive with the layout and neighbouring relationships that prevail in the area.

Sufficient and usable private amenity space would be provided which would be conducive for a small 3bed dwelling in this location.

## **PARKING AND BINS**

The front driveway would provide 2 spaces for the proposed 3bed dwelling which meets the Councils adopted standards. Cycle parking and bin storage would be within the rear garden. Bin collection would be provided kerbside to the front.

## **ECOLOGY**

No buildings would be demolished to facilitate the development. The only impact would be the loss of the existing tree. Due to the limited canopy, the species and the fact the tree is diseased and in a state of decline, the biodiversity offering of this tree is limited. Typically, an old tree such as this Oak would have relatively significant ecological merit, however, the fact that the tree is in decline must be considered.

The applicant would welcome a landscaping condition which requires a full soft landscaping scheme to be submitted. At least one specimen tree would be provided to the front and one to the rear, providing a 100% uplift in trees.

## **AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

It is recognised that the LPA operate a policy which requires affordable housing contributions for any proposal resulting in a net increase in dwellings. The application is supported by a draft Heads of Terms Proposal as required.

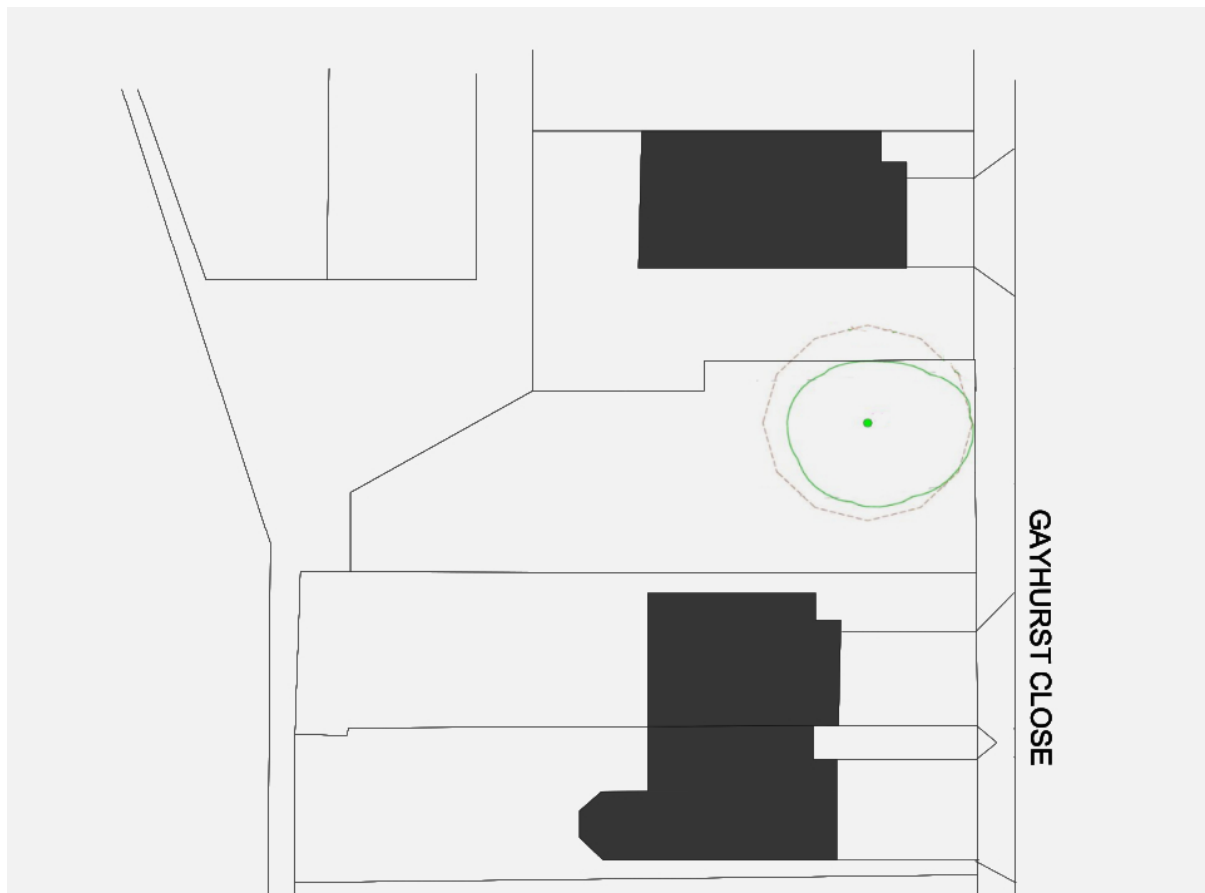
## **TREE SURVEY**

There is a single tree on the site, a large and somewhat unusual Oak (*Quercus robur*). This tree features a wide and stunted trunk with a 'halo' of branches forming the canopy, sited around the large wide trunk which has a largely domed top. The main trunk is only approximately 3m high.

Given the age of the tree, it is likely that the upper two-thirds / three-quarters of the tree missing, having likely fallen many decades ago.

Above the remaining trunk there is a remnant of the main arterial trunk that would have previously formed the majority of the tree.

The survey extract is provided below. The tree has been accurately plotted on the Existing Site Plan which supports this planning application.



## ARBORICULTURAL ASSESSMENT

The Oak tree, subject to Tree Preservation Order 129/06, was inspected in the Spring and Summer of 2022 and the Spring of 2023.

The Oak is clearly suffering from dieback, evident deterioration in the appearance of the leaves – a paler green than usual and many yellow / browning leaves. The canopy shows evidence of progressive death of fine twigs and branches. Hollows are evident in the trunk and basal rot including fungus growth is also present. There is a high likelihood that the main trunk had hollowed as had occurred with the upper dead remnant trunk.

First hand account of the rate of decline has been provided by the owners over the past 4 years who have witnessed severe decline in the health of the tree year on year. It has been reported that last year (2022) the tree had severely deteriorated, with large areas of the tree failing to leaf and leafed areas appearing very discoloured. Branch and twig dropping rates have also substantially increased over the last 2 years in particular.

It is our assessment, therefore, that the tree is in a severe state of decline and will die in the short-term.

A tree of this size, age and shape is not conducive to this residential location in any case, however, given the clear state of decline, it is considered that the tree is likely to become an immediate danger in the short-term. It is understood that the immediate neighbour has consistently expressed concern with regard to risks from falling branches and this concern is shared by the owners who fear being in their garden due to the risks.

Removal of the tree would therefore have been recommended irrespective of this planning application. Given the clear evidence of decline, it would be futile to seek the retention of the tree purely in the interests of preservation for a limited number of years, especially given the risk to lives and property due to falling branches.

The planning application presents further justification for the removal of the tree given the clear benefits of delivering a new dwelling. Mitigation is recommended in the form of replacement tree planting. It is suggested that a single semi-mature Oak tree (*Quercus robur*) is provided within the new front garden, adjacent to the parking bays. In addition, a more manageable and smaller growing species is recommended to be planted to the rear in the form of a Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*).

Overall, whilst the tree is clearly very old and quirky, due to the clear disease and decline, its loss is inevitable and so there is no overriding justification for why the tree should be retained.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

For the reasons above, it is considered that the proposal would accord with the NPPF and the Council's Development Plan.