

DELEGATED PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Norcot

App Ref: 221449/FUL

Address: 48 Osborne Road, Reading, RG30 2PG

Proposals: Conversion into two flats and single storey rear and side extension

Case Officer: Tom Bradfield

Date received (valid from): 5 December 2022 Target Decision date: 30 January 2023

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

Site visit date: 17/01/2023

The site contains a two storey, semi-detached single family house on the west side of Osborne Road. The property has a driveway with space for a single car to the front of the house and a long rear garden which slopes away from the property to the rear. There is a significant drop in level from the house to the end of the garden.

The neighbouring properties are numbers 46 (to the north) and 50 (to the south) Osborne Road. Number 46 has a single storey side extension and rear lean-to structure, and number 50 has a single storey rear extension. This part of Osborne Road and the immediate surrounding area are characterised by semi-detached single family houses.

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

This application seeks to erect a single storey side and rear extension to the house and convert the property into two self-contained flats. Flat 1 would be on the ground floor, accessed from the original front door. It would have two bedrooms, a kitchen, shower room and living room, with access to a terrace and the garden. Flat 2 would be upstairs, accessed from a second front door in the front elevation of the proposed side extension. It would have one bedroom, a living room, kitchen and bathroom. It is not clear whether it would have access to the garden.

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

The property has no planning history.

4. CONSULTATIONS

The following addresses were consulted by letter.

Strathy Close Day Centre, Strathy Close, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 2PP
46 Osborne Road, Reading, RG30 2PG
37 Brisbane Road, Reading, RG30 2PE
50 Osborne Road, Reading, RG30 2PG

Two letters of representation have been received and raised the following concerns:

- The application is factually inaccurate
- The proposal would result in an increase in parking demand in the area
- The house is not suitable for conversion to flats
- The proposal would result in overcrowding in the area

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

CC7: DESIGN AND THE PUBLIC REALM

CC8: SAFEGUARDING AMENITY

H3: AFFORDABLE HOUSING

H5: STANDARDS FOR NEW HOUSING

H8: RESIDENTIAL CONVERSIONS

H9: HOUSE EXTENSIONS AND ANCILLARY ACCOMMODATION

TR5: CAR AND CYCLE PARKING AND ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING

SPG/SPD

Affordable Housing (2021)

Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)

Residential Conversions (2013)

APPRAISAL

Conversion to flats

Policy H8 of the Local Plan addresses proposals for the conversion of existing houses into self-contained flats. In particular, the policy states that conversion of properties to self-contained flats will only be acceptable where:

- *The proposal respects the physical character of the area in terms of scale, location, materials and design, the arrangement of doors, windows and other principal architectural features;*
- *The proposal would not, either individually or cumulatively, unduly dilute or harm an existing mixed and sustainable community through the significant loss of single family housing;*
- *There are no unacceptable adverse impacts to residents of the scheme or surrounding properties arising from noise and disturbance in terms of the number and layout of units proposed and the proximity to other properties;*

- *There is no inappropriate stacking and location of rooms between units;*
- *Bin and cycle storage is of an appropriate size and standard for the units proposed and should be located at ground floor level with easy access; and*
- *The resulting property or properties would provide adequate internal floorspace and headroom for residents.*

Additionally, in the case of conversions of houses to self-contained flats:

- *The property to be converted measures more than 120 square metres gross;*
- *At least 25% of the units formed and, where there are 4 or fewer units at least one unit of accommodation, should be suitable for family occupation with a minimum of two bedrooms.*

There is a documented need for family-sized properties across the Borough, so the Local Plan restricts conversions of houses to flats to houses that are of an appropriate size and could therefore provide on-site family flats, i.e. to houses over 120sqm in area. The existing house has a floor area of 72sqm. This is significantly below the 120sqm threshold where the conversion of a house to flats is acceptable. Although the proposal would provide a two bedroom flat at ground floor, this unit would be significantly sub-standard in terms of its floor area, and so cannot be considered to be a family unit in the spirit of the policy. The proposal would therefore represent an unacceptable loss of family housing and would not be acceptable in principle.

The proposal would introduce a second front door on the front elevation of the property, which would result in harm to the character and rhythm of the street scene. This area is characterised by single family houses of a similar type, and the introduction of a property split into flats, both through the appearance and the change of arrangement, would begin to erode the character of the area as predominantly family housing. The proposal is therefore considered to result in significant harm to the character and appearance of the area.

The proposal would create a flat at ground floor level and a flat at first floor level. The living room of the first floor flat would be stacked directly above one of the ground floor flat's bedrooms. This arrangement would give rise to an inappropriate relationship that would cause harm to the living conditions of the future residents through the potential for increased noise and disturbance. The proposal fails to provide any arrangements for cycle storage or bin storage and collection, which is unacceptable.

Neither of the units would meet the Nationally Described Space Standards. The ground floor flat would have two bedrooms, so would need to provide at least 61sqm of floor space for a three person flat, or 70sqm for a four person flat. It would provide 55sqm of floorspace. The first floor flat would have one bedroom, and so would need to provide at least 50sqm of floorspace. It would provide 34sqm. These sub-standard floor space provisions, coupled with the inappropriate stacking arrangement and lack of storage for waste and recycling would result in an unacceptable standard of living conditions for future residents.

The proposal would not provide parking spaces for each new unit on site. The property has space for one parking space within the site. The applicant has indicated that the uplift in parking demand could be absorbed by the surrounding on-street parking, but has not provided any information to support this. Given the other issues with the proposal, further information was not requested.

Policy H3 (Affordable Housing) requires all residential development, including conversions of houses to flats where there is new floorspace, to provide a contribution to affordable housing. This application would result in an increase of one residential unit, so a financial contribution

that will enable the equivalent of 10% of the housing to be provided as affordable housing elsewhere in the Borough would be required. The applicant has indicated their willingness to pay this, however, given the other issues identified, a legal agreement has not been entered into to secure this.

Extension of the property

Design and appearance

The side and rear extension would be of a size and scale that would remain in keeping with the character and appearance of the area. There are a number of similar extensions at other properties nearby, including rear extension at number 50 and a side extension at number 46. As discussed in the previous section, the introduction of a second door on the front elevation would sit uncomfortably within the street scene and would begin to erode the character of the area. Other than the additional front door, it is considered that the extension would be acceptable in terms of its design and appearance.

Impact on neighbours

The extension would be of a size and scale that would ensure that there would be no harm to neighbour's living conditions. The adjoining property, number 50, has an existing single storey rear extension of a similar depth, and the proposed extension would be set off this boundary by 2.3m, and so there would be no unacceptable impact. The other neighbouring property, number 46, has an existing single storey side extension and rear lean-to. The proposal would be set off this boundary by 1m. The combination of the existing extensions and set-offs from the boundaries would ensure that there would be no harm to neighbour's living conditions.

Conclusion

The proposal would be unacceptable in principle as it would conflict directly with Policy H8 of the Local Plan as there would be a loss of family housing. The proposal would result in the erosion of the character of the area both in appearance and the nature of the area as predominantly family housing. Furthermore, the proposal would fail to provide acceptable living conditions for future residents due to the sub-standard accommodation and poor arrangement of the units. The application is therefore recommended for refusal.

RECOMMENDATION

REFUSAL - for the following reasons:

1. The proposal would result in the loss of family housing as a result of the conversion of a property less than 120sqm in area and the failure to replace the family housing on site. The proposal would therefore fail to comply with Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 Policy H8 (Residential Conversions) and the NPPF.
2. The proposal would result in an unacceptable impact on the character and appearance of the area through the introduction of an additional front door and the erosion of the character of Osborne Road and the surrounding area through the loss of single family housing. The proposal would therefore fail to comply with Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 Policies H8 (Residential Conversions), H9 (House Extensions and Ancillary Accommodation) and CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) and the NPPF.
3. The proposal would fail to provide an acceptable standard of living accommodation for future residents due to the sub-standard floorspace provision for the new flats,

inappropriate stacking arrangements resulting in unacceptable noise and disturbance and the lack of bin or cycle storage. The proposal would therefore fail to comply with Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 Policy H5 (Standards for New Housing) and H8 (Residential Conversions) and the NPPF.

4. In the absence of a completed legal agreement to secure provision of a financial contribution in lieu of on-site affordable housing, the proposals fails to adequately contribute to the housing needs of the Reading Borough thereby failing to comply with policy H3 (Affordable Housing) of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019, Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document 2021, Planning Obligations Under Section 106 Supplementary Planning Document 2015 and the NPPF.

Informatives:

1. In determining this application, the Local Planning Authority took into consideration the following plans and documents:

Planning Statement
Location Plan
220801-2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

2. The Local Planning Authority has worked positively and proactively with the applicant to see if relevant concerns could be resolved to allow permission to be granted. However, that has not been possible within the prescribed target or agreed extended timescale and therefore the decision to refuse planning permission has been taken. No pre-application advice was sought on this proposal. Using the Council's advice service can result in the avoidance of refusal of planning applications.