

DESIGN and ACCESS STATEMENT
for
EXTENSIONS and ALTERATIONS
to create a
NEW DWELLING
at
4, ALFORD CLOSE, TILEHURST, READING, BERKS.
for
STAFFORD DEVELOPMENTS



Herbert J. Stribling & Partners
Chartered Architects
Rev A: February 2023

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1. Scope

This statement accompanies a Full Planning application by Stafford Developments who are proposing Alterations and Extensions to the existing end of terrace house to create a New Dwelling.

This is a re-application following withdrawal of a planning application for a similar proposal; planning reference 221131/FUL. This reapplication addresses the comments made by the case officer which led to the withdrawal of the application.

1.2. Need

In principle, the proposal responds to Clause 4.4.1. of the Reading Borough Local Plan (RBLP) which states:

“There is a pressing need for additional housing in Reading and the surrounding area.” Also, Clause 4.4.3. which goes on to state:

“However, Reading is a very tightly defined urban area, and sites for new development are limited. The undeveloped land that does exist is mainly either in the functional floodplain or is important public open space. Provision of new housing therefore involves a heavy reliance on previously developed land, and the supply of such sites constrains the amount of housing that can be delivered in the Borough.”

It is considered that this site constitutes a windfall opportunity, albeit small, to improve and expand housing in the Reading Area.

1.3. Outline Proposals

In essence the proposals are to construct side and rear extensions to the existing property, creating two separate dwellings. The existing dwelling would remain 3-bedroomed but would have an extended ground floor; the newly formed dwelling would be 2-bedroomed. The existing property would retain its integral garage; the new dwelling would have a covered carport and parking space. The large rear garden will be divided accordingly.

1.4. Policies

1.4.1. A pre-application submission to Reading Borough Council was made to establish the likelihood of a successful application, and a formal response received on 22 April 2021 - see appendix. The applicants requested advice on two options, 1. for extension and creation of 3 flats and 2. A new 2-bedroom starter home. Owing to space limitations, only the second option was considered feasible. As set out in the response, the relevant planning policies and guidance are:

- **National Planning Policy Framework (February 2019)**
- **Reading Borough Local Plan (Nov 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)
 - EN14 (Trees, Hedges and Woodland)
 - EN15 (Air Quality)
 - EN16 (Pollution and Water Resources)
 - H1 (Provision of Housing) H2 (Location, Accessibility, Density and Housing Mix)
 - H3 (Affordable Housing)
 - H5 (Standards for New Housing)
 - H8 (Residential Conversions)
 - H10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space)

H11 (Development of Private Residential Gardens)
TR3 (Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters)
TR5 (Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging)

- **Supplementary planning documents/guidance**
Sustainable Design & Construction SPD (Dec 2019)
Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (Oct 2011)
Planning Obligations under Section 106 (2015)
Affordable Housing SPD (March 2021)
Residential Conversions (Nov 2013)
Tree Strategy (2021)

1.4.2. The Appraisal highlighted the following main considerations:

- A. Principle of development
- B. Impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area
- C. Living conditions of future residents and neighbouring properties
- D. Amenity of proposed dwelling
- E. Transport Implications
- F. Landscaping
- G. Sustainability
- H. Other considerations

1.4.3. Notwithstanding the attempt in application 221131/FUL to address the concerns and issues raised in that appraisal, the case officer and consultees considered the proposals did not fully meet with their standards and general approval. On the 18th January 2023, the case officer set out those additional concerns (see Appendix 1). In summary, the main issues at large were:

- The new integral garage did not meet the new standard requirement of 7x3m in plan area.
- The inadequacy of the liveable space for a 3-bedroomed house in respect of the new dwelling.
- The design and appearance of the rear projection.

The application was duly withdrawn on 27th January 2023.

The revised drawings show how these concerns have been addressed, and this statement provides a commentary on same.

1.5. Drawings

This statement should be read in conjunction with the submitted architect's plans:

- 01 – Site Location Plan as Existing – 1:1250
- 02 – Site Block Plan as Existing – 1:500
- 03 – Existing Plans and Elevations – 1:100
- 04C – Proposed Plans and Elevations – 1:100
- 05A – Site Block Plan as Proposed – 1:500
- 06B – Site Plan Landscaping Proposals – 1:200

1.6. Application Content

The application is submitted with the following information:

- Application Form
- Statutory Planning Application Fee
- This Statement
- Architectural Drawings as above.
- Traffic Statement by Messrs. Sanderson Associates (Consulting Engineers) Ltd.

2 THE SITE

2.1. Generally

2.1.1. The site is located fairly centrally in Tilehurst, west of Reading. It is one of 10 properties in a cul-de-sac off a secondary residential road.

No 4 is the end of a terrace of 4 of similar properties, but No 1 has been substantially enlarged in the past with a two-storey side extension (planning ref 930169; 11.02.93).

2.1.2. Vehicular access is from Alford Close only, via the secondary Conwen Road.

2.1.3. Pedestrian access is similarly gained.

2.1.4. The front garden is open plan; the rear garden is enclosed and bounded by timber panel fencing.

2.1.5. The site area is approximately 342 m².

2.2. Surrounding Development

2.2.1. The surrounding area is predominately residential with terraces and semi-detached houses of similar style and scale. Houses are mainly two-storey with open plan frontages and enclosed rear gardens. The overall appearance is urban, the area having been heavily developed from the 1950s onward.

External finishes of the developments are a mixture of facing brick, tile hanging and render to walls; various types of interlocking concrete tiles to roofs.

2.2.2. Roads are adopted and conventionally laid out and incorporate cycle routes. Some green verges have mature trees.

2.2.3. To the south-east of the site is a large wood which has green connections to other woods and common areas.

3 EXISTING BUILDINGS

3.1 As mentioned previously, the application property forms the end of a terrace of four. It is 2-storeys high and has an internal area of 94m² including the integral garage, 81.4m² without. Ground floor accommodation comprises: Lounge, TV Room, Kitchen, Inner Hall, and Garage; first floor has three bedrooms, a family bathroom and separate WC.

3.2 The front garden is open plan, which extends to the side of the house. It has concrete paths and a drive with lawned areas between. A dropped kerb to the pavement edge serves the drive.

The rear garden is mainly laid to lawn and has a concrete path and paving slab terrace.

A brick wall divides the garden from the open-plan side garden, and the rear garden is enclosed with timber panel fencing.

There is a small garden shed.

3.3. Construction of the house is as follows: -

Walls Mainly light multi orange, sand-faced, fletton brickwork, but light grey panel to TV Room and bedroom over.

Roofs Timber framed, pitched roof with gable end, finished with grey-brown, interlocking concrete tile. Felted flat roof to garage projection.

Windows white upvc

Doors white upvc entrance door to side elevation and painted metal garage door.

3.4. Given the modern form of construction and minimal alteration to the existing fabric, it is not considered necessary to carry out a bat survey on the existing property prior to construction. Nevertheless, care will be taken in any construction work to ensure there will be no disturbance of bats or nesting birds.

4 PROPOSALS

4.1. Original House.

4.1.1. The main alteration to the existing house is the construction of a single-storey rear extension. This provides a large kitchen/breakfast room opening off the existing lounge. As a result, the ground floor layout is a significant improvement over the existing; the first floor remains much as it is at present.

4.1.2. The existing front door will be moved from the side to the front of the property, in line with adjoining terrace properties. Further minor internal alterations follow from this rearrangement.

4.1.3. Construction of the new extension walls will match the existing, and the roof will be flat, felted with a rooflight to cast daylight into the body of the existing house. UPVC doors and windows giving onto the rear terrace will match the existing.

4.1.4. The modest scale of the rear extension ensures that there is no encroachment beyond the 60° angle measured from the centre of the rear window to number 3.

4.1.5. The gross internal floor area of the resulting house, excluding the garage, is 102m² compared with 84.1m² for the original. It should be noted the existing property does not meet current minimum space standards as set out in the DCLG's "**Technical Housing Standards- nationally described space standard**" for two-storey, 3-bedroomed dwellings where the absolute minimum is 84m² for 4 bed spaces (persons).

4.1.6. Resulting bedroom areas are:

Bedroom 1 - 13.8m²; double room with minimum width of 2.8 m
Bedroom 2 – 11.1m²; double room with a minimum width of 2.77 m
Bedroom 3 – 8m²; single room with a width of 2.12 m

4.1.7. Built-in Storage areas total 4 m², included within the gross floor area mentioned above. In addition, there is attic space, accessed by a loft ladder.

4.2. New House

4.2.1. The proposed new end of terrace house will follow existing patterns but will be set back from the main terrace frontage in response to the curving boundary. This also helps round off the terrace comfortably.

4.2.2. The house has an integral car port with parking space and a large living room with separate kitchen to the rear, the living room giving onto a paved terrace and rear garden. The first floor has 2 bedrooms with a family bathroom. **Note:** the reduction from 3 bedrooms in the previously submitted scheme to 2 bedrooms in the current scheme is a direct response to the concerns expressed over the inadequacy of the liveable space for a property with 3 bedrooms.

4.2.3. Again, construction will follow the existing, all as described above, to ensure an harmonious development. **Note:** In the withdrawn scheme (221131/FUL) the roof to the rear was shown as hipped, but the planning department considered this was alien to the local pattern of development. The current submission addresses this concern by reverting to gable ends to the two-storey elements of the new building.

4.2.4. The projection of the rear wing of the new house ensures that there is no encroachment beyond the 45° angle measured from the centre of the rear window of Bedroom 1 of the existing property.

4.2.5. The gross internal floor area of the new house, excluding the car port, is 91.9m², comfortably meeting the Nationally Described Space Standard for a 4-bed space (persons), two-storey, 2-bedroomed dwelling where the absolute minimum is 79m². The car port and covered porch together cover 20.6m².

4.2.6. Bedroom areas are: Bedroom 1 - 13.4m²; double room with minimum width of 2.89m
Bedroom 2 – 12.1m²; double room with a minimum width of 2.91m

4.2.7. Built-in Storage areas included within the gross floor area mentioned above and including wardrobes, total 6 m². In addition, there is attic space, accessed by a loft ladder.

4.3. Externally

4.3.1 Boundaries to the rear gardens will be in 2m high close-boarded fencing to match the existing.

4.3.2. The existing cobble stone margin adjoining the property will be retained.

4.3.3. The gardens will be partially paved to create terraces and the main area will be laid to lawn with planted beds to maintain a softness for the house gardens. Planting will be chosen to attract birds, butterflies and pollinating insects.

4.3.4. The frontage will remain open, and a new drive formed for the garage, the paving being in concrete blocks to maintain a permeable, free-draining surface. A dropped kerb will be formed at the highway edge.

4.3.5. The area of the rear garden to the proposed new dwelling is 65.6m², which compares well with the rear gardens of other properties in the vicinity.

5 ACCESS

5.1. Please refer to separate Transport Statement by Messrs. Sanderson Associates (Consulting Engineers) Ltd.

5.2. Paved surfaces link the parking bays with the entrance doors for safe wheelchair access.

5.3. The proposed new entrance doors will have level thresholds, providing in accordance with the disabled under Doc M of the Building Regulations. It is also proposed that the cloakrooms provided by this development will meet the same regulation.

6 PLANNING POLICIES

6.1. Pre-Application Advice – See Appendix 2 for full text. As mentioned previously, the pre-application advice highlighted the following areas. The commentary indicates how the previously submitted application addressed the concerns and queries raised at the time:

A. Principle of development

The advice concludes that the principle of a proposed new dwelling is considered acceptable “....*subject to the matters above being satisfied particularly whether the proposal meets the nationally-described space standards, whether the proposal as shown on the plans fits within the site of 4 Alford Close and whether there is access across the side driveway to 5/6 Alford Close*”

Firstly, clauses 4.1 and 4.2 provide evidence that the proposals meet nationally described space standards.

Secondly, the landownership has been checked and the proposed new house fits within the site.

Thirdly, access across the side driveway to 5/6 Alford Close will remain as existing without being interrupted by the development.

B. Impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area

The proposals have been developed to ensure there is no encroachment onto neighbouring land.

The advice accepted that the original design was similar to that of neighbouring properties and, as such would complement the existing character and appearance of the surrounding area. Concern was expressed over the lack of soft landscape to the frontage, however, a number of properties in the vicinity have frontages completely paved to accommodate vehicles. Although this would result in the loss of a small, sterile quadrant of grass, the additional hardstanding would relieve the pressure on local roadside parking. As compensation for this relatively minor loss, the rear gardens, which are relatively generous compared with similar, adjoining properties, will be properly landscaped as part of the development. As a consequence, the amount of soft landscape for each unit will still be greater than many similar-sized properties in the vicinity.

C. Living conditions of future residents and neighbouring properties

The advice concluded that the proposed new dwelling would not be harmful to the living environment of 5/6 Alford Close.

Concerns over encroachment and access over land not owned by the applicant have been addressed in the currently submitted design.

The advice stresses the need to comply with nationally described space standards and, as has been described above, this has been addressed in the submitted design.

D. Amenity of proposed dwelling

The advice acknowledges the resulting rear gardens for both properties will in fact compare favourably with those in the area and is, therefore, in accordance with policy H 10.

E. Transport Implications

Please refer to the Transport Statement prepared by Messrs. Sanderson Associates (Consulting Engineers) Ltd., which addresses, inter alia, the concerns mentioned in the advice, i.e the proximity of the dropped curb to the junction radii and implications for the access to 5/6 Alford Close.

F. Landscaping

The applicants have prepared a detailed landscaping scheme in line with the Council's Tree Strategy 2021, and this is submitted with the application.

G. Sustainability

The Applicants are committed to providing properties with high levels of sustainability commensurate with the type and scale of development. The following is a (not exhaustive) list of measures to be taken to ensure a sustainable development:

- Installation of a gas-fired Combi boiler which will be future proofed to be capable of being converted to green hydrogen fuel once that comes on stream.
- Installation of photo-voltaic panels on the south-west facing (garden side) roofs.
- Triple-glazed windows with low-E glass.
- Ready-mixed concrete with up to 15% recycled crushed aggregate.
- Construction with Thermalite blockwork which have high insulating qualities, are lighter for transporting and use 80% recycled content (PFA).
- The internal blockwork will be treated with Gyproc Soundcoat or similar parging coat to seal the finish and prevent leakage of heat and sound through the fabric.
- Insulation within wall cavities and in roof voids will be Knauf Earthwool, manufactured from up to 80% recycled glass.
- Installation of a heat recovery system which transfers the heat from warm, exhausted air (extracts etc.) to the incoming fresh air for ventilation.
- All light fittings will be low-energy LED.
- All sanitary fittings will be selected for their low water usage, e.g. dual flush toilets and Eco-heads to showers.
- All white goods will have A-ratings for energy usage.
- Paints will be low-VOC.
- All timber will be FSC (Forestry Stewardship Council) certified to ensure it is supplied from sustainable forests.
- All unpainted timber will be recycled for pellet fuel.
- Water butts to both properties to harvest rainwater for the garden.
- Bases for drives and patios will be formed using waste masonry hardcore, where possible, that material will be from the site itself (through demolitions and alterations).
- Skipped waste will be taken to Waste Transfer sites for sorting, batching and recycling.

In principle, the new property would be designed not to exceed the target fabric energy efficiency rate as defined in the 2022 Building Regulations, Part L1.

Being located close to public transport connections, the town centre and public open spaces, the site itself is highly sustainable. There is also a good cycle network.

The main habitable rooms of both properties face south-west taking advantage of the sun path. Not only will this assist with energy efficiency, but also the good quality daylighting will boost health and wellbeing.

As mentioned previously, garden planting has been designed to attract birds, butterflies and pollinating insects. In addition, incorporated in the gable end of the new property will be: 2No. bee bricks for solitary bees; a nest brick for swifts; two universal bird nest boxes; one bat box. With the main work being new build, it is believed there is no requirement for a bat survey. Still on matters of ecology, the new rear fences will have gaps in their bases for hedgehogs to migrate between gardens, although it is recognised this requires adjoining neighbours to be similarly minded.

H. Other considerations

CIL - The relevant forms will be submitted with the application.

Affordable Housing – being a development of fewer than 10 units, a financial contribution will be made for off-site affordable housing. The applicants confirm that the financial contribution will be in accordance with the provisions of Clause 5.10 of the Affordable Housing SPD, adopted March 2021. Two independent valuations will be submitted with the planning application as prescribed by the Case Officer in the response to application 221131/FUL.

6.2. Response to Planning Application 221131/FUL – See Appendix 1 for full text.

6.2.1. As mentioned previously, the three main concerns prompting withdrawal of planning application 221131/FUL were:

- The new integral garage did not meet the new standard requirement of 7x3m in plan area.
- The inadequacy of the liveable space for a 3-bedroomed house in respect of the new dwelling.
- The design and appearance of the rear projection.

It should be noted in the response to, the case officer confirmed there was no objection to the extension and alterations to 4 Alford Close. This element of the proposal remains the same in the current application.

6.2.2. Garage – to provide the size of integral garage required by the current standard was not practicable for this scale of terraced property. In order to provide the requisite 1.5 car parking spaces for a 2-bed property in Zone 3, a car port has been incorporated within the new proposal, in addition to the single bay on the frontage. The car port meets the dimensional requirement of 5000x3000mm. This is contiguous with a covered entrance which contains space for recycling and waste bins, and also has provision for electric charging of vehicles.

6.2.3. Liveable Space – given the comments received, the proposal for the new property has been reduced to 2 bedrooms. Notwithstanding that, the ground floor has been rearranged to provide a separate kitchen from the generous living/dining area.

6.2.4. Design of rear projection – this focussed upon the proposed hipped roof being out of keeping with the surrounding area. The new design reverts to gable ends for all 2-storey elements to maintain harmony.

9 SUMMARY

9.1. The principle of this development has been established through the pre-application process.

9.2. All concerns raised in the Case Officer's Pre-Planning Application Enquiry Response and in the response to the subsequent planning application 221131/FUL have been addressed in the design.

9.3. The new property and improvements to the existing house combine to provide two very good dwellings which meet DCLG's technical housing standards, enhancing the housing stock in Reading Borough.

9.4. Given the attention to amenity and detail, and the fact that the principle has already been established, it is contended that the proposal is worthy of consent.

10 APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 - Response to Planning Application 221131/FUL – (withdrawn)

Dear Tim

I have now assessed the above application and apologies again for the delay in this matter.

There are no objections to the extension and alterations at 4 Alford Close.

In regards to the proposed dwelling and following the updated Transport Statement, our Transport team have advised they remain of the opinion that the application fails to provide 2 off road parking spaces (the garage is not of the required 7m x 3m size) and object to the proposal. They have reviewed the car ownership data for the surrounding area and this data shows that 1,171 (66%) of the dwellings within the vicinity of the site are 3 bed houses or larger and that 626 (35%) of dwellings have more than one vehicle, this number of vehicles equates to 1,433. It is highly likely that the higher car ownership dwellings correlate to the larger bed units with some owning just one vehicle. As such 53% of the 3 bed dwellings or larger will have two or more cars equating to a provision of 1.5 spaces per dwelling.

Transport advise it should be stressed that the National Planning Policy Framework states the following in relation to car parking:

107. If setting local parking standards for residential and non-residential development, policies should take into account:

a) the accessibility of the development;

b) the type, mix and use of development;

c) the availability of and opportunities for public transport;

d) local car ownership levels; and

e) the need to ensure an adequate provision of spaces for charging plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles.

108. Maximum parking standards for residential and non-residential development should only be set where there is a clear and compelling justification that they are necessary for managing the local road network, or for optimising the density of development in city and town centres and other locations that are well served by public transport (in accordance with chapter 11 of this Framework). In town centres, local authorities should seek to improve the quality of parking so that it is convenient, safe and secure, alongside measures to promote accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists.

This change in National Policy follows on from The Ministerial Statement from March 2015 which stated the following:

The imposition of maximum parking standards under the last Administration lead to blocked and congested streets and pavement parking. Arbitrarily restricting new off-street parking spaces does not reduce car use, it just leads to parking misery. It is for this reason that the Government abolished national maximum parking standards in 2011. The market is best placed to decide if additional parking spaces should be provided

However, many councils have embedded the last Administration's revoked policies. Following a consultation, we are now amending national planning policy to further support the provision of car parking spaces. Parking standards are covered in paragraph 39 of the National Planning Policy Framework. The following text now needs to be read alongside that paragraph: "Local Planning authorities should only impose local parking standards for residential and non-residential development where there is clear and compelling justification that it is necessary to manage their local road network."

The National standards are therefore set to ensure that overspill car parking does not occur creating 'parking misery', as such it is essential that the development provides two off road parking spaces in line with the car ownership data.

Notwithstanding the objection from Transport there are also concerns with the internal layout particularly the level of liveable space for a 3 bedroom house and the design and appearance of the rear projection.

It is acknowledged that the proposal has been designed to overcome the requirement to provide sufficient parking and meet the nationally-described space standards (and Policy H5) both of which were raised as concerns in the pre-application response. However, due to the constraints on the site, the proposal does not provide adequate space for 2 off road parking spaces and in its attempt to provide the parking spaces required, the garage and hallway take up a significant amount of space on the ground floor. Although the proposed dwelling meets the size required as per Policy H5 for a 3b/4p dwelling the living space has been compromised to accommodate the garage. One space for living, kitchen and dining is considered inadequate for a 3 bedroom dwelling particularly if a family occupied it and the inability for a new build to provide adequate internal living arrangements is an indication that the proposal is overdevelopment.

In regards to the design and appearance of the proposed dwelling there is no concern with the appearance of the front part of the proposal. However, compared to the pre-application design, the current proposal now has a two storey hipped projection. The proposed dwelling extends approximately 4.5m from the rear of 4 Alford Close and is approximately 1.4m wider than the front of the proposed dwelling. The submitted plans show the projection does not encroach on a line taken from 45 degrees from the closest habitable window at 4 Alford Close and it extends 1m from the rear of the proposed extension at 4 Alford Close. The submitted Design & Access Statement refers to the hipped roof projection and that this mitigates the massing of the new house and its potential for overshadowing however, the row of terraces within the close and along Corwen Road all have gable ends, including 1 Alford Close which has a two storey side extension. The proposed dwelling will be visible from Corwen Road and extends directly up to the site boundary and the overall size of the hipped roof is greater than the main gabled section of the proposed dwelling. Although officers understand the reasoning for the hipped roof, it is considered out of keeping with the surrounding area and designed in this way due to the tight nature of the site to enable adequate space standards to be met. This concern, in combination with the inadequate internal ground floor layout and lack of space for adequate parking indicate that the proposal is an overdevelopment on a tight site.

Affordable Housing – I note the Design and Access Statement confirms the applicant is willing to provide a contribution towards affordable housing however, 2 independent valuations have not been provided to calculate the contribution. This would form another reason for refusal.

I am sorry this is not the news you would be hoping for but taking all of the above into consideration it is not felt that the proposal can be supported by officers and my recommendation would be to refuse the application unless you wish to withdraw it. Significant amendments would need to be made to overcome the concerns raised and I am not inviting amended plans to be submitted at this time. I would therefore be grateful if you could advise if you wish to proceed with the refusal or withdraw the application. If I have not heard from you by 1st February 2023 I will refuse the application.

Kind regards

Claire Ringwood
Senior Planner

Planning, Directorate for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services

APPENDIX 2 – PRE-APPLICATION RESPONSE DATED 22ND April 2021

Dear Mr Ridley,

PRE PLANNING APPLICATION ENQUIRY RESPONSE

Enquiry Reference: 210122

Address: 4 Alford Close, Tilehurst, Reading, RG30 4TB

Proposal: Pre-application advice for proposed new 2-bedroom starter home and alternative proposal for 2-storey side extension to 4 Alford Close to form 3 separate flats.

Thank you for your enquiry. Apologies for the delay in responding.

1. THE SITE & PROPOSAL

The pre-application site relates to garden land associated with 4 Alford Close. 4 Alford Close is a two storey end of terrace property in a cul-de-sac location. It has a larger garden than other properties in the close. The surrounding area is predominantly residential, consisting of single family dwellings.

The pre-application enquiry includes two schemes: 1) Described as a 2 bedroom starter home (although the submitted plans show 3 bedrooms) and 2) The conversion of the existing property and an extension to create 3 flats. The proposals include parking and amenity space.

2. SUPPORTING INFORMATION SUBMITTED WITH THE PRE-APPLICATION

The following information was submitted:

Drawing No: TR10 Rev A – Site/Block Plan

Drawing No: TR11 – Existing Ground Floor Layout

Drawing No: TR12 – Existing First Floor Layout

Drawing No: TR13 – Existing Elevations

Drawing No: TR14 Rev A – Proposed Ground Floor Layout

Drawing No: TR15 Rev A – Proposed First Floor Layout

Drawing No: TR16 – Proposed Elevations

Proposed Elevations for the flats

Ground floor plan for the flats

First floor plan for the flats

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

None.

4. CONSULTATIONS

Transport:

The site is currently occupied by a 3-bedroom dwelling with garage and driveway parking to the front of the property. The proposed development would be constructed on land to the side of the property which is currently a grassed area within the ownership of 4 Alford Close.

Policy TR5 of the Local Plan states “*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*”. It is important that enough parking is provided so that there is not a knock-on effect on the safety and function of the highway through on-street parking.

Option 1 - Proposed new 2-bedroom starter home

☑ In accordance with the adopted SPD, the development would be required to provide a parking provision of 2no. spaces for the proposed dwelling whilst retaining 2no. spaces for the existing dwelling.

☑ The proposed block plan illustrates a total of 4no. parking spaces which complies with the adopted standards. However, any changes/modification to the existing dropped kerb must be clearly illustrated on the block plan.

☑ It should be noted that the total continual length of dropped kerb (including where shared with neighbouring properties, should ideally not exceed 10m. I am also concerned that the increased width of the dropped crossing will be located too close to the junction radii.

☑ The (new) parking spaces on the northern boundary would be accessed from a private driveway serving no. 5 and 6 Alford Close. As the granting of planning consent does not confer any rights of access, the applicant should establish such rights to ensure the proposed parking space can be accessed.

☑ 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.

☑ In accordance with the adopted Parking SPD, the development is required to provide a minimum of 2 cycle parking spaces for each C3 dwelling. This must be covered and secure.

☑ The Council's Local Plan was adopted in November 2019 and this includes a requirement at Policy TR5 for each new house to be provided with an electric charging point.

☑ The applicant should ensure that the refuse storage provisions comply with the Council's Waste Management Guidance which is available to view online.

Option 2 – 2-storey side extension to form 3 separate flats (1 x 2-bed and 2 x 1-bed).

☑ In accordance with the adopted SPD, the development would be required to provide a parking provision of 1.5 spaces per flat equating to 5 spaces.

☑ Any changes/modification to the existing dropped kerb must be clearly illustrated on the block plan. However, I am concerned that the parking layout for the GF flat would result in vehicles reversing out onto the footway.

☑ I am also concerned that a new dropped crossing will be located too close to the junction radii.

☑ In accordance with the adopted Parking SPD, the development is required to provide a minimum of 0.5 cycle parking spaces for each flat. This must be covered and secure.

☑ The applicant should ensure that the refuse storage provisions comply with the Council's Waste Management Guidance which is available to view online.

Based on the plans submitted, I am concerned the requirement for on-site parking and access cannot be suitably provided given the constraints of the site. Therefore, all the points should be addressed if a full application is intended.

Ecology:

Considering the location of the house and its structure it is considered unlikely that it will host roosting bats and the proposals are very unlikely to affect other protected species or priority habitats. There would therefore, be no objections to this application on ecology grounds.

Environmental Health:

Standing advice states that any subsequent application should provide a statement detailing how noise and dust will be effectively managed during demolition (if relevant) and construction and who will be responsible for this. Conditions would include 1) the control of noise and dust, 2) construction and demolition hours of work, 3) no bonfires.

5. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

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

National Planning Policy Framework (February 2019)

Reading Borough Local Plan (Nov 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)

EN14 (Trees, Hedges and Woodland)

EN15 (Air Quality)

EN16 (Pollution and Water Resources)

H1 (Provision of Housing) H2 (Location, Accessibility, Density and Housing Mix)

H3 (Affordable Housing)

H5 (Standards for New Housing)

H8 (Residential Conversions)

H10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space)

H11 (Development of Private Residential Gardens)

TR3 (Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters)

TR5 (Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging)

Supplementary planning documents/guidance

Sustainable Design & Construction SPD (Dec 2019)
Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (Oct 2011)
Planning Obligations under Section 106 (2015)
Affordable Housing SPD (March 2021)
Residential Conversions (Nov 2013)
Tree Strategy (2021)

6. APPRAISAL

Main considerations:

- A. Principle of development
- B. Impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area
- C. Living conditions of future residents and neighbouring properties
- D. Amenity of proposed dwelling
- E. Transport Implications
- F. Landscaping
- G. Sustainability
- H. Other considerations

A. Principle of development

The principle of the development would need to be assessed in terms of the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) where paragraph 70 seeks to ensure that policies are set out to resist inappropriate development of residential gardens. The NPPF states planning policies and decisions should “promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions.....in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously-developed or brownfield land” (paragraph 117). Annex 2: Glossary of the NPPF highlights that private residential gardens are excluded from the definition of previously developed land. This does not mean that development of private residential garden land is unacceptable in principle but it does mean that previously developed land should be the first choice for housing development, i.e. development of private residential garden land has a lower priority. Policy H11 of the Council’s Local Plan also establishes a number of criteria against which applications for the development of private residential gardens need to be assessed whilst policy H10 seeks to ensure that adequate private and communal outdoor space is retained in terms of development proposals.

Policy H8 (Residential Conversions) of the Reading Borough Local Plan requires the existing property to be converted into flats to measure more than 120sqm gross (not including any proposed or existing extensions). A rough measurement of the existing property shows it to be approximately 108sqm which is significantly below the required 120sqm. As such the proposal for the conversion and extension to create 3 flats would not be acceptable in principle. The remainder of this report will focus on the proposed dwelling only option.

B. Impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area

Policy H11 of the Reading Borough Local Plan applies more stringent criteria for development proposals on private residential gardens (than those on brownfield sites) and requires that:

- a) They make 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.

Policy H2 of the Reading Borough Local Plans states that residential development will be informed by:

- ☑ The character and mix of uses of the area in which it is located;
- ☑ Its current and future level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport;
- ☑ The need to achieve high quality design;
- ☑ The need to maximise the efficiency of land use; and
- ☑ The need to minimise environmental impacts, including detrimental impacts on the amenities of adjoining occupiers.

Policy H10 of the Reading Borough Local Plan seeks to ensure that adequate private and communal outdoor space is retained in terms of development proposals.

Policy CC7 states that *“all development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area”*.

Policy H11 requires that proposals for new residential development makes a positive contribution to the character of the area in terms of:-

1. The relationship to the existing built form and spaces around buildings within the surrounding area;
2. A layout which integrates with the surrounding area with regard to the built-up coverage of each plot, building line(s), rhythm of plot frontages, parking areas and existing pattern of openings and boundary treatments on the site frontages;
3. Providing appropriate hard and soft landscaping, particularly at site boundaries, this includes features such as a variety of trees, hardstanding/lawns and hedges etc;
4. Compatibility with the general building height within the surrounding area;
5. The materials and elevational detail. These should be high quality, and where appropriate distinctive and/or complementary; and
6. The arrangement of doors, windows and other principal architectural features and their rhythm between buildings.

Having looked at the submitted plans and Google StreetView it seems the access driveway to 5 and 6 Alford Close is curved but this is not shown on the submitted plans and it is not possible to accurately assess whether the proposed dwelling would fit on the site as shown or whether it would encroach on to neighbouring land. The submitted plans show the proposed dwelling following a straight line. This matter would need to be addressed should an application be submitted.

The proposed dwelling would be slightly narrower than 4 Alford Close and set down and back from this existing property although it does extend further back at two storey by approximately 0.9m. The proposal retains the same roof design although due to the lower eaves height at the rear the first floor windows are partly within the roof space. Matching materials would be required. The design of the proposed property is therefore similar to that of neighbouring properties. The only concern is removing all the front garden and replacing it with hardstanding for parking. A new dwelling would be expected to accommodate suitable landscaping both to the front and the rear. It is not clear whether the access to 5/6 Alford Close is private to these properties only or whether there is a shared use (discussed later) however one option could be to provide two parking spaces at the rear and retain the front for landscaping.

C. Living conditions of future residents and neighbouring properties

Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) of the Reading Borough Local Plan states that 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:

- o Privacy and overlooking;
- o Access to sunlight and daylight;
- o Visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development;
- o Harm to outlook;
- o Noise and disturbance;
- o Artificial lighting;
- o Vibration;
- o Dust and fumes;
- o Smell;
- o Crime and safety; or
- o Wind

Policy H11 states that proposals for new residential development should not cause a significant detrimental impact to the amenity of adjacent and nearby occupants.

No side windows are proposed and there is a side to front distance of approximately 12m between 5/6 Alford Close and the proposed dwelling. The proposal does look like it encroaches onto 4 Alford Close at the rear and it is not clear why. Although the neighbouring properties will have a change to their outlook, the proposed dwelling is not considered harmful to their living environment. The only concern relates to the proposed parking space at the rear and whether this access is over private land owned by 5/6 Alford Close.

Policy H5 (Standards for New Housing) requires new build housing to comply with the nationally-described space standard. Figure 4.7 of policy H5 provides the minimum gross internal floor areas. It is not clear whether the proposals meet these requirements i.e. a 2bed/3person property would be expected to have a minimum gross internal floor area of 70sqm. Any future application would be required to meet the appropriate standards.

D. Amenity of proposed dwelling

Policy H10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space) sets out that *‘Dwellings will be provided with functional private or communal open space....The design of outdoor areas will respect the size and character of other similar spaces in the vicinity’*.

The proposed development results in a garden area for 4 Alford Close being reduced in size however it would still have a rear garden area that would be comparable with others within the close. The proposed site would have a larger garden (which could possibly also accommodate two parking spaces as mentioned previously). This compares favourably with those in the area and is in accordance with policy H10 which states that outdoor areas will respect the size and character of other similar spaces within the vicinity.

E. Transport implications

Transport's full comments are detailed above however there is a concern that the increased width of the required dropped kerb would be too close to the junction radii. Transport also highlighted that it would be prudent to check whether there is a right of access across the driveway at 5/6 Alford Close.

The existing access at 5/6 Alford Close is curved and not straight (as shown on the plans) and if the proposal does reduce this existing access there may be implications, which would need to be addressed.

F. Landscaping

Should a planning application be submitted a detailed landscaping scheme would be required to include new tree planting as required by Policy EN14 (Trees, Hedges and Woodland) and in line with the Council's Tree Strategy 2021.

G. Sustainability

The proposed development, as per policy H5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan would be required to be designed and constructed to meet the improved dwelling emissions rate, and water efficiency standards. The development would also be required to be accessible in line with M4(2) of the Building Regulations (unless built in line with M4(3)).

H. Other considerations

CIL

The development would be liable to the Community Infrastructure Levy regime that is applicable to all decisions for planning applications made from the 01/04/2015. The details are available on the Council's website

<http://beta.reading.gov.uk/readingldf>.

Affordable housing

Policy H3 (Affordable Housing) of the Reading Borough Local Plan would apply to the current proposal, as the scheme would not be one of the two specific exceptions to the policy. The proposal would result in one additional dwelling being provided on site. As such the proposal would be liable for affordable housing. The applicant would be required to provide a minimum of 2 independent valuations for the proposed development to calculate the appropriate contribution in this instance.

Should the applicant contend that the development would not be viable with the above contribution, a viability assessment would be required to evidence this, which would be subject to review by the Council's Valuations team during the course of the application (there would be a separate fee – see our pre-application guidance for the fees). Please see the validation requirements for more details about the type and nature of information required at application stage regarding affordable housing / viability – all such information would be required in advance of the validation of any application at the site.

7. CONCLUSION

The principle of a proposed dwelling is considered acceptable subject to the matters above being satisfied particularly whether the proposal meets the nationally-described space standards, whether the proposal as shown on the plans fits within the site of 4 Alford Close and whether there is access across the side driveway to 5/6 Alford Close.

8. TYPE OF APPLICATION AND TIMESCALE

The target timescale for determining an application as proposed will normally be 8 weeks. In addition planning applications for additional housing will normally require a S106 agreement to secure affordable housing contributions and this tends to take some time to complete.

9. ADVICE ON SUPPORTING INFORMATION REQUIRED FOR A PLANNING APPLICATION

Should you choose to submit a planning application please see the Council's Planning Applications Validation Checklist for full details by clicking on the following link: [Help with planning - Reading Borough Council](#)

You are also probably aware that LPA.s are now required to seek the developers agreement to use pre-commencement conditions when granting planning permission. Where these details are considered essential to allow permission to be granted developers may be asked to provide this information as part of the planning application.

Please note that the advice contained within this letter, or attached report, is that of an officer of the Borough Council and is provided without prejudice to the decision of the Borough Council in the event of a formal application for planning permission.

Yours sincerely

p.p. A. Amoah

Ms Claire Ringwood Planning Officer