

DELEGATED REPORT

Application No. 220936/FUL

Site Address: Land to the rear of 2 Gloucester Road

Proposal: Erection of 1 x 1-bed dwelling

Applicant: Skyes Capital Ltd

Target Date: 10/10/22

Case Officer: Connie Davis

Site Description

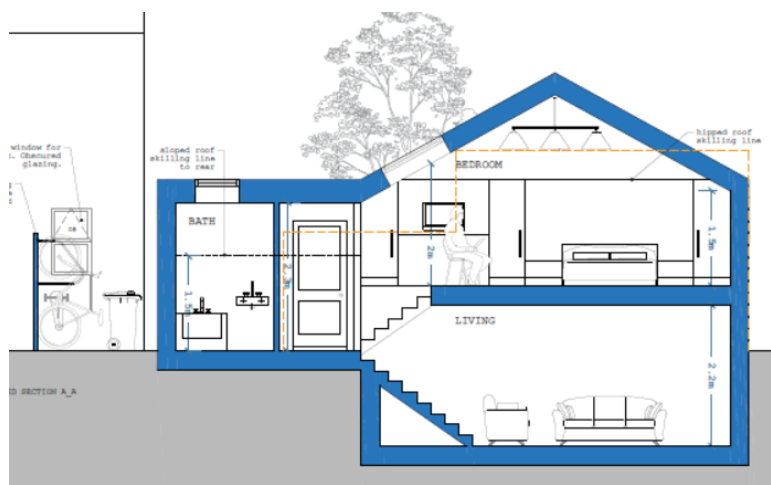
The application site relates an end of terrace property and its rear amenity space/ detached garage. However, no. 2 itself is not subject to this application. The site sits on the corner with Elm Par Road. The area characterized by Victorian dwellings with front bay windows.

The site is not Listed, nor in a conservation area.



Proposal

The proposal seeks the demolition of the existing detached garage and replacement with a 1 bedroom, 2 storey dwelling. The ground floor of the dwelling would be located below ground level.



Plans/Documents Submitted

02-00 - Site location plan
03-10 - Existing plans
02-00 - Existing Block Plan
02-10 - Block Plan Proposed
05-11 - Proposed front elevation
05-10 - Proposed front elevation
05-11 - Proposed front elevation
05-12 - Proposed side elevations
05-13 - Proposed section A_A
Application Form
CIL Form
Affordable Housing Statement

Received 28th June 2022

Air Quality Statement Report Ref.AQ2193
Energy Assessment/ SAP Details Applied
05-02 - Existing side elevations
05-03 - Existing sections A_A
03-10 - Proposed plans
05-01 - Existing rear elevation
05-00 - Proposed front elevation
Design and Access Statement

Received 15th August 2022

Relevant planning history

None.

Discussions with applicant/agent

The agent was advised of the concerns relating to this proposal; namely issues with the design, lack of natural light and outlook, lack of amenity space and impact on neighbouring windows.

The agent was advised that if not withdrawn, the application would be recommended for refusal. No response was received.

Consultations

Internal Consultees

Transport - Revised information required

Environmental Health - No objection subject to condition

Ecology - No objection

Natural Environment - No comments received

Thames Water - The development would require a build over agreement

Public Consultation

The following addresses were formally consulted via letter on 17/08/22:

4 Gloucester Road
174 Elm Park Road

2 representations have been received relating to the following matters:

- The area is built up enough
- Would allow a precedent for development
- Rubbish/ anti-social behavior arising from the existing dwellings (2 Gloucester Road and 174 Elm Park Road)

Officer comment: The principle of development will be assessed in the report. All applications are assessed on their merits, and would not necessarily result in a precedent for similar development. Concerns over living conditions as a result of existing residents needs to be raised with the relevant Council departments (Environmental Protection/ Waste) and the Police, if a police matter.

Planning policies

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

National Planning Policy Guidance

Reading Borough Council Local Plan (2019)

CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction

CC3: Adaption to Climate Change

CC5: Waste Minimisation and Storage

CC7: Design and the Public Realm

CC8: Safeguarding Amenity

CC9: Securing Infrastructure

H1: Provision of Housing

H2: Density and Mix

H3: Affordable Housing

H5: Standards for New Housing

H8: Residential Conversions

H10: Private and Communal Outdoor Space

TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters

TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging

EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment

EN3: Enhancement of Conservation Areas

EN16: Pollution and Water Resources

Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents

Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)

Revised Sustainable Design and Construction (2011)

Planning Obligations Under S106, April (2015)

Adopted Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (2013)

Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document Draft October 2020

Appraisal

The main issues to be considered are:

- a) Principle of use
- b) Design and impact on character of the area/ conservation area
- c) Residential amenity of proposed and existing neighbouring residents
- d) Transport matters
- e) Environmental Protection Matters
- f) The Natural Environment
- g) Sustainability
- h) Affordable Housing, S106 and CIL obligations

a) Principle of development and change of use

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.

Therefore, it is clear that the priority for development should be on previously developed land. The site is currently occupied by a garage in poor repair and the new dwelling would be situated on this brownfield land, although would be larger than the footprint of the garage and so some undeveloped land would be consumed by the development.

The proposal would see the demolition of the garage, which does not represent any historical or architectural merit. It is claimed that no 2 Gloucester Road is currently in use as self-contained flats (although no planning history concerning is found). In any case, the proposal would result in the development of the residential garden associated with 2 Gloucester Road and so Policy H11 applies.

Policy H11 states that ‘Development of Private Residential Gardens’, requires that new residential development that involves land within the curtilage of private residential gardens will be acceptable where:

- 1) *The proposal makes 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;*
- *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 frontage;*
- *Providing appropriate hard and soft landscaping, particularly at site boundaries. This includes features such as the variety of trees, hardstanding/lawns and hedges, etc;*
- *Compatibility with the general building height within the surrounding area;*
- *The materials and elevational detail. These should be high quality, and where appropriate distinctive and/ or complementary;*
- *The arrangement of doors, windows and other principal architectural features and their rhythm between buildings.*

2) 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;

3) The proposal includes access, which meets appropriate highway standards;

4) The proposal does not lead to tandem development;

5) The design and layout minimises exposure of existing private boundaries to public areas, and avoids the need for additional physical security measures;

6) The proposal does not cause a significant detrimental impact to the amenity of adjacent and nearby occupants;

7) The emphasis is on the provision of family-sized housing;

8) The development provides biodiversity net gain wherever possible, and would not have an adverse impact on biodiversity in terms of the fragmentation of blocks of gardens, which as a unit or in association with adjacent green space are deemed to make an important contribution to biodiversity and contribute to the green network;

9) The proposal does not prejudice the satisfactory development of a wider area.

Therefore, while the proposed site is not entirely 'previously developed land', the principle of redevelopment is considered acceptable providing the criteria outlined in Policy H11 is met. Weight is also given to the fact that a large portion of the site is developed.

With regard to the principle of the proposed use, from purely a land use perspective, it is considered that a proposal to introduce one residential unit in an established residential area would comply with the principles of Policy H1 which seeks for the provision of an additional 689 new homes per year between 2013 - 2036, although would unlikely provide a family dwellinghouse in line with point 7 of Policy H11 above.

b) Design and impact on the street scene

The design and impact on the street scene needs to be considered.

Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) states: *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 proposal seeks the introduction of a new dwelling following the demolition of the detached garage. Policy H11 states that development in residential gardens would be acceptable where it has “*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 frontage*”. Whilst the existing garage takes up a portion of the rear amenity space of no.2, the proposed dwelling would result in the entire rear plot being developed, contrary to the pattern and rhythm found elsewhere within Gloucester Road, resulting in an overdevelopment of the site.

In terms of design of the dwelling itself, the proposal lacks architectural detailing, exhibiting blank facades to Elm Park Road. Furthermore, the dwelling would fail to take any architectural cues or language from the Victorian era dwellings to which surround it. The roof form would be at odds with the wider terrace, with the blank frontage at ground floor level providing limited interest, particularly when compared to the uniformity of the Victorian terraces.

The proposal is therefore considered contrary to Policies CC7 and H11 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

c) Residential Amenity of Proposed and Existing Neighbouring Residents

Policy CC8 requires developments to not “*cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties..*” including “...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;...”. At the same time, ensuring that new development creates a quality living environment for potential future occupiers is also required.

Future occupiers

Policy H5 identifies standards for new housing including internal space requirements for all developments outside of the Central Area as defined on the Proposals Map. The site is located outside of the central area boundary and as such, for a new 1 bedroom, 2 storey dwelling would be 58 sqm. The proposed dwelling just meets these standards. Furthermore, Policy H5 identifies (in paragraph 4.4.42(c) that in order to provide one bed space, a single bedroom has a floor area of at least 7.5 sqm and is at least 2.15m wide. The proposal is acceptable in this regard.

Whilst the upper floor would have a window and rooflights to serve the bedroom and bathroom, no windows are proposed on the ground floor (in reality, below ground level). As a result, there would be no outlook for the living room and kitchen spaces. Access to natural light would also be impaired for the ground floor living spaces, and it has not been demonstrated that the light which would be received through windows in the 'tunnel' would be sufficient. The living room and kitchen are both habitable spaces and should have adequate provision of natural light in accordance with Policy CC8.

The dwelling would also not have any amenity space. Within Policy H10 states that that dwellings located outside of central Reading (which is the case with the application site) should have a floor area of no less than the dwelling to which it relates. Whilst it is appreciated that amenity space is currently limited on site, no space will be provided for even basic functions which represents a substandard level of accommodation and is indicative of an overdevelopment of the site.

As a result, it is considered that the flat would become an oppressive and an unattractive place to spend time which may be of potential detriment of the health and wellbeing of future occupiers and would be contrary to Policies CC8 and H10, as outlined above.

Existing occupiers

In terms of existing dwellings, the properties that have to primarily considered are the host dwelling (no. 2) Gloucester Road and neighbours to the west and north respectively (4 Gloucester Road and 174 Elm Park Road).

The proposal would result in the loss of the ground floor rear facing window of 2 Gloucester Road. Whilst plans indicate a relocation of a window on this property, it is not clear as to whether this would be an acceptable alternative; no floor plans have been provided of no. 2 (and no planning permission has been granted to subdivide the units, which has been indicated in the submission). It would leave 2 Gloucester Road with no private amenity space, contrary to Policy H10.

The proposal would extend a depth of 9.3m along the boundary with 4 Gloucester Road, meaning the entirety of the neighbouring amenity space would be encompassed by development with a maximum height of 8.35m. This would result in an overbearing impact and visually dominating development when viewed from the rear amenity space of no.4. It would also result in a loss of light for this neighbour at ground floor level.

With regard to no. 174 Elm Park Road, the development would not extend beyond the rear elevation of no. 174 and would not obscure views from any side windows, as no side windows are present. A gap of 1.35m would remain between the development and this neighbour, similar to the existing relationship. As such, the proposal is considered acceptable in relation to 174 Elm Park Road.

Overall, the proposal is not considered acceptable in relation to nos. 2 and 4 Gloucester Road for the reasons outlined above, and therefore is contrary to Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

d) Transport Matters

The site is located in Zone 2, Primary Core Area, of the Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD. This zone directly surrounds the Central Core Area and extends to walking distances of 2 kilometres from the centre of Reading. Typically this zone is well served by public transport, with buses continuing either into or out of the Central Core Area via this zone.

In accordance with the adopted Parking SPD, the development would be required to provide 1 parking space for the 1 bedroom unit; however no on site parking is being provided.

Given the constraints of the site and the parking controls in the area, a car free development can be considered in this location. However, the parking condition and informative will be placed on the permission to inform the occupants of the unit that they will not be eligible to apply for a resident or visitor parking permits. This will ensure that the development does not harm the existing amenities of the neighbouring residential properties by adding to the already high level of on street car parking in the area.

Plans illustrate that the cycle and bins are to be stored together, these should be stored separately, in addition to this the proposed vertical stands are not appropriate for long term storage and would not be supported for use by Transport, therefore a Sheffield type stand would need to be provided and alternative location for storage. Storage should also be covered. This has not been addressed.

As part of the development a basement is being proposed. In order to protect the stability/safety of the highway it is advised that Highway Councils Authority should be contacted.

The existing dropped crossing serving the property from Gloucester Rd will need to be reinstated and realigned with the footway. A license from the Highways Department will be required to undertake all works on the Public Highway.

Bin storage should comply with Manual for Streets and British Standard 5906: 2005 for Waste Management in Buildings and should be located no further than 15m from the access point of the site to avoid the stationing of service vehicles on the carriageway for excessive periods. Confirmation how the bins are to be presented for collection is required as to access them would require navigation through a door. Bins can not be stored on any part of the public highway. Further information is required. It is recommended that the Waste and Recycling team are contacted to confirm if the arrangements are acceptable.

A CMS will be required for this development.

As the proposal has not demonstrated a policy compliant level of cycle and bin storage, the proposal is not considered acceptable in relation to Policies TR3 and CC5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

e) Environmental Protection Matters

Air Quality

The Environmental Health Officer has reviewed the submitted Air Quality assessment and this was deemed acceptable. nothing further is required in terms of assessment or mitigation to comply with Policy EN15 of the Local Plan.

Contaminated Land

Given the former use of the site is a garage, Environmental Health Officers considered that there is a slightly increased risk of contamination being present eg. oil spills. Conditions are recommended to ensure that future occupiers would not be at increased risk from contaminated land in accordance with policy EN16 of the Reading Borough Local Plan

f) The Natural Environment

Trees

As the proposal leads to an increased residential capacity on site, and in view of our Tree Strategy objectives and policy EN14 (Trees, hedges and woodlands), some planting would be positively received and is justified. However, the extensive plot coverage means that there is little opportunity to provide landscaping. No planting or modern greening solutions (green walls, green roofs, planters, planting beds) have been identified and therefore landscaping principles have not been established in principle. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policy EN14 of the Reading Borough Local Plan, along with Policy H11 which states that development of residential gardens would be acceptable

Ecology

The garden appears to be entirely given over to a single storey shed with corrugated timber roof and lean-to. The works involve the demolition of these outbuildings which are unlikely to be suitable for use by roosting bats.

As such, considering the structures to be affected, it is unlikely that bats or other protected species would be adversely affected by the proposals. As such, there are no objections to this application on ecological grounds.

There is however a small risk that birds may nest in these structures and an would be included to advise the applicant of this.

There are no objections to the application on Policy EN12 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

g) Sustainability

As per Policy H5 of the Local Plan:

- Higher water efficiency standards of 110 litres per person per day; and
- A 19% improvement over building regulations energy requirements

Should the proposal have been acceptable in other regards, an appropriately worded condition will be attached to comply with Policy H5, and sustainability Policies CC2 and CC3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

h) Affordable Housing, S106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

In accordance with Policy H3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) it states that *‘on sites of 1 - 4 dwellings, a financial contribution will be made that will enable the equivalent of 10% of the housing to be provided as affordable housing elsewhere in the Borough.’*

The applicant stated that they agreed in principle to enter into a legal agreement to secure a financial contribution. However, valuations have not been submitted. As the proposal is not considered acceptable in other planning terms, the Council has not pursued the S106 legal agreement to secure the financial affordable housing provision.

As such, the proposal is contrary to Policy H3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

The proposal would be CIL liable as the development is the creation of a new dwelling.

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.

Conclusion

The proposed conversion of the basement to a self-contained flat represents a poor quality of new accommodation within the borough. The proposal is considered substandard in terms of its overall size, access to natural light owing to only have one window, poor outlook from this window and no amenity space. The benefit of the new dwelling in terms of its contribution towards the provision of housing stock in Reading is not considered to outweigh the identified shortcomings of the proposal.

Recommendation: REFUSE for the following reasons:

1. The proposed development, by reason of its limited outlook, limited access to natural light and inadequate provision of outdoor amenity space, will adversely impact upon the level of amenity and provide an unacceptable quality of living accommodation for future occupants, contrary to Policies CC8, H5 and H10 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).
2. 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 Adopted Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document 2021
3. The proposal has failed to demonstrate a policy compliant level of cycle and bin storage contrary to Policy CC5 and TR5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

4. Owing to its depth and height, the proposed development would be in a visually dominant and overbearing from the rear amenity space of 4 Gloucester Road. It would also reduce light levels to ground floor rear windows of 2 and 4 Gloucester Road and leave 2 Gloucester Road with no useable amenity space. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies CC8 and H10 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).
5. By reason of its full plot coverage, the proposal would fail to provide A layout which integrates with the surrounding area with regard to the built coverage of each plot. The proposed dwelling would also have a contrived front wall/ entrance, out of keeping roof form with expansive blank front facades which fails to provide a high quality elevational detail and overall design which fails to sit comfortably within the surrounding context. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies H11 and CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).
6. The proposal fails to make provision for adequate soft landscaping in accordance with Policy EN14 and H11 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

Informatives:

- 1) Refused plans
- 2) Pre-app advice
- 3) Positive and Proactive