



TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (AS AMENDED)

Planning Statement



FULL PLANNING APPLICATION FOR DEMOLITION OF THE EXISTING DWELLING AND REPLACEMENT WITH A 2 STOREY DWELLINGHOUSE at

Willowbrae, The Warren, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7TQ

**PREPARED BY
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This statement has been prepared in support of a full planning application for the demolition of the existing dwellinghouse and replacement with a 2 storey, 5 bedroomed dwellinghouse and associated parking and landscaping. The applicant has engaged the chartered architects Absolute Architects (RIBA) who have designed the dwelling to a high standard ensuring the constraints of the site have been well considered.
- 1.2 The site is within the Flood Zone 3 with the long rear garden backing onto the River Thames. The site is at the end of a cul-de-sac off The Warren and is one of four houses constructed in 1978.
- 1.3 The statement describes the site and proposal and sets out how the proposal complies with the policies and guidance as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework and the Reading Borough Local Plan. We therefore suggest that planning permission should be granted.

2.0 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1 The site comprises a detached dwellinghouse situated towards the end of a cul-de-sac leading off The Warren. Due to the change in land levels, the front of the house appears as a single storey dwelling but the rear of the property is two storeys in height, as shown below. More photographs are at the end of this statement.





2.2 The property fronts onto the Thames and thus the site is within Flood Zone 3 (high probability of flooding).

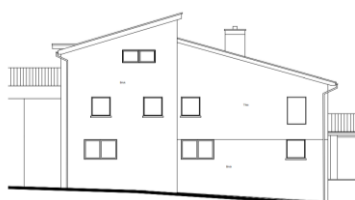
2.3 Other designations:

- There is a designated cycle route along The Warren.
- Within a designated “Major Landscape Feature” zone – Thames Valley.
- Adjacent to Area of Identified Biodiversity Interest.
- Single Tree Preservation Order on site.
- The site is not in a conservation area nor is the dwelling listed.

3.0 PLANNING HISTORY



- A. Application site "Willowbrae" – 1st October 2001 - Permission granted for first floor side extension above garage (refs. – 010806 and 010891)
- B. 145 The Warren "The Shanty" – 26th August 2016 – 160802 - Permission refused and dismissed at appeal for alterations and extensions to the dwelling house for reasons of design, scale, fenestration and use of materials, resulting in a visually dominant and prominent feature that would appear incongruous in the streetscene and intrusive within the riverside setting.



- C. 139 The Warren "Tresilian" – 21st July 2009 – 09/0572 – Permission granted for one of two detached five bedroom dwelling houses and detached double garage on the site of "Vallpineda".
- D. 137 The Warren "The River House" – 21st July 2009 – 09/0766 - Permission granted for the second detached five bedroom dwelling and detached double garage on the site of the previous single dwelling, "Vallpineda".
- E. Karinga House - 28 January 2004 – 03/0889 - planning permission granted for an extension of lower ground floor at rear forming altered balcony, heightening of first floor level and roof over west annex, and erection of a first floor extension over garage with pitched roof. This was amended in 2008 to remove existing staircase from rear

extension and relocate to side elevation and modify existing balcony balustrade to form semi-circular arrangement.

4.0 PROPOSAL

4.1 The proposal is for the demolition of the existing dwellinghouse and for its replacement with a contemporary designed 2 storey house.

4.2 As set out in the Design and Access Statement, the siting of the proposed house is over the footprint of the existing house, with the eastern wing extending further southwards to create screening from the neighbouring property. The proposed house is raised by 890mm in response to the flood risk.

4.3 The mass of the house is broken down into a pitch roof volume and a mono-pitch volume separated by the double-height entrance hall and a flat roof volume at the front of the house. The new house will be constructed from high quality, sustainable materials. A simple palette of materials is proposed with render to the lower floor and lightweight vertical timber cladding to the upper floor. The pitch roofs will be finished with zinc standing seam roofing and flat roofs will be covered with green roofs to encourage biodiversity, minimise the impact of the 'built' structure and help connect the house with the landscape. The new house will be vastly more energy efficient than the existing house. By adopting 'fabric first' principles, the proposed house will be constructed to achieve an energy efficient home.

4.4 The existing and proposed Gross Internal Areas are as follows:

- Existing House Total Floor Area (GIA) = 305 sqm
- Total Demolition (GIA) = 305 sqm (existing house)
- Proposed House Total Floor Area (GIA) = 431 sqm
- Net Additional Floor Area (GIA) = 126 sqm

5.0 PLANNING POLICY

- 5.1 The Development Plan includes the Reading Borough Local Plan (adopted November 2019). The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) from 2021 and the National Design Guide (2019) are also material considerations.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 5.2 Paragraph 126 of the NPPF states that:

The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.

- 5.3 Further, Paragraph 130 states: Planning decisions should ensure that developments:
- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
 - b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
 - c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
 - d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
 - e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
 - f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

- 5.4 Paragraph 167 states:

When determining any planning applications, local planning authorities should ensure that flood risk is not increased elsewhere. Where appropriate, applications should be supported by a site-specific flood-risk assessment. Development should only be allowed in areas at risk of flooding where, in the light of this assessment (and the sequential and exception tests, as applicable) it can be demonstrated that:

- a) within the site, the most vulnerable development is located in areas of lowest flood risk, unless there are overriding reasons to prefer a different location;
- b) the development is appropriately flood resistant and resilient such that, in the event of a flood, it could be quickly brought back into use without significant refurbishment;
- c) it incorporates sustainable drainage systems, unless there is clear evidence that this would be inappropriate;
- d) any residual risk can be safely managed; and
- e) safe access and escape routes are included where appropriate, as part of an agreed emergency plan.

National Design Guide

5.5 This states, (Paragraph 51) that well-designed buildings and spaces:

- have a positive and coherent identity that everyone can identify with, including residents and local communities, so contributing towards health and well-being, inclusion and cohesion;
- have a character that suits the context, its history, how we live today and how we are likely to live in the future; and
- are visually attractive, to delight their occupants and other users (our emphasis).

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

5.6 The relevant Planning Policies related to this proposal are as follows:

- CC1: Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development
- CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction
- CC7: Design and the Public Realm
- CC8: Safeguarding Amenity
- H5: New Housing Standards
- H7: Protecting the Existing Housing Stock
- H10: Outdoor Space

- EN11: Waterspaces
- EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network
- EN13: Major Landscape Features and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodland
- EN16: Pollution and Water Resources
- EN18: Flooding and Drainage

6.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 The main issues for consideration are as follows:

1. Principle of replacement dwelling
2. Design and Impact on the Character of the Area
3. Sustainability
4. Impact on Neighbours
5. Flood risk
6. Impact on Trees
7. Ecology

Principle of replacement dwelling

6.2 Policy H7: Protecting the Existing Housing Stock states that planning permission will not be granted for any loss of residential accommodation or land unless there are exceptional circumstances. Planning permission will not be granted for a net loss in the number of residential units or gross floor area.

6.3 This proposal seeks to replace the existing outdated dwelling with a new energy efficient dwelling and thus there would be no net loss of housing which accords with policy H7. There will be no loss of parking spaces to the front of the dwelling and therefore there are no highways issues which need addressing. The proposal is therefore compliant with policy H7 of the Local Plan.

Character and appearance of the area



Proposed Riverside view

6.5 Paragraphs 130 and 134 of the NPPF support good design and state that *'significant weight should be given to outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long*

as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings’. The National Design Guide includes examples which have used a contemporary interpretation and it is accepted that this is good practice. The proposal is considered to comply with this national guidance. The proposal would result in a high quality building fit for the C21st.

- 6.6 The site is sensitively located set back from the river frontage. The properties in this locality are of different styles and this variety of dwelling styles and forms within close proximity to both the road and the river. The building is clearly visible from both road and river and therefore it is important to ensure the proposal sits comfortably within its setting and context. In this case the proposal would be a marginally taller to the neighbouring properties to take into account the need to meet the flooding requirements of raising the property but it will remain as a two storey dwelling (with one room in the roofspace) and would thus fits comfortably within the streetscene and its river setting.
- 6.7 Overall, the proposal would result in a positive impact to the site and would not harm the character and appearance of the area. The proposal is sensitively designed with regard to its layout, height, massing, fenestration, and the choice of finishing materials. It does not attempt to copy some of the more traditional design of the housing which fronts The Warren but instead employs a reserved but contemporary architectural language in its design, materials and massing.
- 6.8 The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in relation to Policies CC7, EN3 and EN5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

Sustainability

- 6.9 The house would be highly sustainable with the provision of an air source heat pump and mechanical ventilation heat recovery supplemented with openable windows to support the control of overheating and energy efficient servicing. Further, the living spaces are predominately south facing to take advantage of natural sunlight. The use of a green roof would reduce rainwater run-off and contribute towards good thermal envelope as well as encouraging biodiversity. A number of photovoltaic panels would be located on the main flat roof to generate renewable energy. This complies with policies CC1 and CC2 of the Local Plan.

Impact on neighbouring amenity

- 6.10 Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) seeks that development protects the amenity of existing and proposed surrounding occupiers.
- 6.11 The distance between dwellings and amount of mature trees and soft landscaping is such that potential for harm to surrounding occupiers is limited. The most impacted would be those in Karinga House (there is no visibility of Creek House from the rear of Willowbrae due to the dense trees). The separation distance to these properties as well as the difference in levels is such that no overlooking or loss of privacy is considered to result.
- 6.12 At present, due to the terrace to the rear of Karinga House, there is possible overlooking and loss of privacy to the residents of Willowbrae. Therefore, this proposal seeks to build slightly forward of the rear building line to ensure no further overlooking or loss of privacy can occur. However, due to the distance between the two properties and the space to the rear and limited height of the dwelling, the proposal would not appear overbearing or result in harm to the outlook for the residents of Karinga House.
- 6.13 The site is an existing residential plot and the proposal seeks to continue this use. The proposal would not result in any material intensification of the use of the site which would result in any significant noise or disturbance impacts. The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in relation to Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

Flooding

- 6.14 The site, due to its location on the river bank, is located within both flood zone 3A (classified as land having a 'High Probability' of flooding – greater than 1 in 100 (1%) annual probability of river flooding,) and flood zone 3B (classified as 'Functional Floodplain' – land where water has to flow or be stored in times of flood). As such the principle of the development must also be assessed in terms of flood risk.
- 6.15 Policy EN18 (Flooding and Sustainable Drainage Systems) reflects the general requirements set out within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) with regard to flooding. The policy states that:

Development will be directed to areas at lowest risk of flooding in the first instance, following the Sequential and Exceptions Test set out in the NPPF, and taking into account the effects of climate change. It will consider flooding from all sources, including fluvial, surface water, groundwater and sewer flooding. Where development in areas at risk of flooding is necessary, it will not reduce the capacity of the flood plain to store floodwater, impede the flow of floodwater or in any way increase the risks to life and property arising from flooding. Wherever possible, development should be designed to reduce flood risk, both on- and off-site.

6.16 The submitted FRA concludes:

1. Flooding from other sources including groundwater, sewer and artificial water is considered to be a LOW risk.
2. The new house will have a completely new surface water drainage system analysed for the 1 in 1, 1 in 30 and 1 in 100 year storm event plus 40% for climate change. All new surface water run-off will be managed using an attenuation tank to store flows from a 1 in 100 year storm event plus 40% CCF with a vortex controlled chamber to restrict the discharge rate to 1 litre per second through an outfall to the River Thames.
3. Foul drainage will be managed through a below ground sealed drainage system, connected to a new packaged sewage treatment plant discharging through an outfall fitted with a flap valve into the River Thames. Inspection chambers will be fitted with non-return valves to prevent any foul sewage backing up through the system and flooding the house.
4. The proposed ground floor annex is classified as “more vulnerable” which is appropriate in Flood Zone 3a, so long as flood resistance measures are incorporated in the building design, as outlined in RBC SFRA.
5. The proposed house is sited over the location of the existing house, at the high point of the site. The ground floor level of the proposed house is proposed to be 890mm higher than the existing house. In addition, the property will be eligible for the flood alert system, raising the alarm in the event of a forecast flood and the safe evacuation from the property will not be affected.
6. **The development is considered to be acceptable in terms of flood risk and surface water management.**

- 6.17 As such, the proposal is considered to comply with Policy EN18 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019). The applicant is willing to accept a condition that the development will be carried out in accordance with the flood prevention measures outlined in the submission.

Ecology

- 6.18 Policy EN12 (Biodiversity and the Green Network) states that planning permission will not be granted for developments which would negatively impact on the 'green network' including areas of biodiversity interest along the River Thames and 'Green Links' and that on all sites development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity.
- 6.19 Policy EN14 (Trees, Hedges and Woodlands) seeks that individual trees, groups of trees and hedges will be protected from damage or removal where they are of importance, that Reading's vegetation cover is extended, and that the quality of waterside vegetation is maintained or enhanced. New development shall make provision for tree retention and planting to provide for biodiversity and to contribute to measures to reduce carbon and adapt to climate change.
- 6.20 As referred to above the site is located within a designated Green Link as per policy EN12 of the local plan and the site is surrounded by gardens. The River Thames is a priority habitat (as per the NPPF) and the site, the river, and other surrounding habitats are likely to be used by a range of protected and priority species including bats, reptiles, nesting birds, otter, and water vole. As such, the proposals could affect priority habitat and protected and priority species.
- 6.21 Paragraph 99 of the government Circular 06/05: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation - Statutory Obligations and Their Impact Within the Planning System (this document has not been revoked by the National Planning Policy Framework) states that:

"It is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted, otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision. The need to ensure ecological surveys are carried out should therefore only be left to coverage under planning conditions in

exceptional circumstances, with the result that the surveys are carried out after planning permission has been granted.”

6.22 Policy EN12 states that “on all sites, development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity and geodiversity, and should provide a net gain for biodiversity wherever possible...Development should: protect and wherever possible enhance features of biodiversity interest on and adjacent to the application site, incorporating and integrating them into development proposals wherever practicable; and provide new tree planting, wildlife friendly landscaping and ecological enhancements (such as wildlife ponds, bird and bat boxes) wherever practicable”.

6.23 The Ecology Report from Syntegra concludes the following:

- The internal inspection of the dwelling noted potential access points and limited potential crevice roosting opportunities. No signs of bats in the form of marks, stains, droppings, and or debris was noted.
- The external survey of the dwelling noted potential access points and crevice roosting opportunities within the roof space.
- The site is within 15 metres of deciduous woodland, a s41 habitat of principal importance.
- The use of DEFRA’s MAGIC Maps has identified eight known EPSM for roosting bats within 2km of the site, with one application with common pipistrelle bats within 120 metres of the site.
- At the time of the survey no active signs of nesting birds were noted, however the surrounding vegetation in close proximity to the dwelling offer potential nesting opportunities.
- The grounds around the dwelling noted confirmed signs of use by badgers and an active sett within 20 metres of the site. Further investigation surveys will be required to determine the mitigation required for the proposed works. It is advised that all holes, trenches, and/or ditches during the construction phase have an inclined mammal ladder provided for means of escape. Any future fencing must ensure free movement for the local badgers.
- The dwelling was deemed as low potential for roosting bats.
- To ensure that this site complies with wildlife legislation and the National Planning Policy Framework, the following recommendations are made:

- In line with BCT Guidelines (2016), buildings with low potential require a further activity survey, carried out during the active season May to August inclusive. The further surveys will inform the mitigation measures.
- Lighting proposals will be informed by the further 2021 surveys.
- As the site is within close proximity to section 41 habitats of principal importance and the River Thames, measures must be in place to ensure no debris, materials, or spills enter into the areas.
- Given the evidence of an active badger sett within 20 metres of the site, further investigation surveys will be required to determine the mitigation measures for the proposals.

6.24 Proposed enhancements include:

- o Nesting Boxes/Bat Boxes
- o Wildlife-friendly planting scheme
- o Bug boxes/hotels
- o Hedgehog House
- o Lighting plan that is direct and of low light spill
- o Green roof to enhance biodiversity

6.25 Overall, the proposal is considered to comply with policy CP9 of the Core Strategy which requires the landscape characteristics and biodiversity resources to be conserved and enhanced within the borough.

Trees

6.26 The site is located within a designated 'Major Landscape Feature' area. As such the impact on vegetation needs to be considered.

6.27 This application is supported by a full and thorough Arboriculture Report which fully assesses the trees on the site and how the proposal ensures that their long term health is protected. I.e. the proposal will not adversely affect the root protection area of any trees.

6.28 The conclusions of the Arboricultural and Planning Integration Report by Glen Harding from GHA Trees is that there will be no significant or important trees lost to facilitate the proposed scheme. The Report sets out precautionary measures which would ensure the proposal would not be injurious to trees to be retained.

- 6.29 Overall, the proposal is considered to comply with Core Strategy policy EN14 Trees, Hedges and Woodland of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

7.0 OVERALL CONCLUSION

- 7.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Act 2004 requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This approach is supported by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF also states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people. It is sustainable development of good design that will contribute positively to making the new replacement dwelling better for future families which is significantly more sustainable in terms of its energy demand and ecology on the site and will have a neutral impact on flooding issues.
- 7.2 The character of this part of The Warren has a linear built up frontage with large dwellings in substantial plots backing onto the Thames, of which this application site is one. The replacement of the existing dwelling with a contemporary designed building is of the highest standard of design. Due to the substantial distance between the properties themselves and those neighbouring the site there will not be any adverse impact on residential amenity.
- 7.3 The proposal to demolish the existing building and replace it with a new energy efficient dwelling which isn't significantly higher than the existing dwelling. It would sit comfortably within the streetscene of this cul-de-sac which runs off The Warren. Further, the views of the dwellinghouse from the River Thames would also be protected – the house would be viewed in context with its neighbours which are of a similar height, bulk and massing.
- 7.4 There are no flooding or tree implications and any perceived ecological implications can be mitigated against via the imposition of conditions.
- 7.5 For the reasons given above, the proposal is considered to comply with Policies CC1: Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development, CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction, CC7: Design and the Public Realm, CC8: Safeguarding Amenity, H5:

New Housing Standards, H7: Protecting the Existing Housing Stock, H10: Outdoor Space, EN11: Waterspaces, EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network, EN13: Major Landscape Features and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodland, EN16: Pollution and Water Resources and EN18: Flooding and Drainage of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) which are all in accordance with the NPPF.

- 7.6 Overall, it is considered to be fully policy compliant and permission should be duly granted planning permission.

PHOTOGRAPHS OF SITE AND SURROUNDINGS



Karinga House, Willowbrae and Creek House



Willowbrae and the Creek House



Karinga House and Kalewa



Willowbrae



Karinga House and Willowbrae



View up the cul-de-sac towards The Warren



Front of Creek House



Rear elevation of Willowbrae in context with the neighbouring properties





Boundary with Karinga House



Boundary with Creek House



Neighbouring property with large balcony



Rear garden with the river at the end