

DELEGATED HOUSEHOLDER APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Norcot

App Ref: 211182/FUL

Address: 60 Beecham Road, Reading

Proposals: Conversion of existing garage to Change the existing flat roof to a pitch roof, relocate windows and add a bay window on the front building.

Case Officer: Beatrice Malama

Applicant: Mr Rajan Galot

Date received (valid from): 13 September 2021 **Extended Decision date:** 29 April 2022

1. INTRODUCTION

The application site is a detached garage/outbuilding located to the rear of 60 Beecham Road on the western side of Beecham Road. No. 60 Beecham Road is a mid-terraced property containing two flats. There is an existing thru-carport at the front of the site allowing vehicular access to the rear. The area is predominantly residential with a number of terraced properties and narrow back gardens.

2. BACKGROUND, PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

A retrospective planning application 020590/FUL to convert a dwelling house to two flats was refused in 2002 and later allowed at appeal in 2003. Thereafter in February 2021 planning application 201607/FUL to convert an existing garage/outbuilding to a one bed flat was refused.

This planning application is for the conversion of existing garage to habitable accommodation - one bed flat. The proposed changes include roof alteration from flat to pitched, window and door relocation and introduction of a bay window in the front elevation of the existing building. Exterior walls would be of redbrick to match existing.

Plans/documents considered:

- PL01 Location Plan
- PL04 Proposed site plan
- PL05 Existing plans
- PL06 Existing elevations
- PL07 Proposed plans
- PL08 Proposed elevations
- Transport Statement dated 7th February 2021

Received 16th July 2021

Design and Access Statement dated November 20

Received 18th January 2022

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

201607/FUL - Conversion of detached garage to one-bedroom flat. External changes to include replacement of flat roof to a pitched roof, relocated windows and addition of bay window on the front building - refused - 9th February 2021

020590/FUL Conversion of dwelling house to 2 flats. (Retrospective). Refused and allowed at appeal.

4. CONSULTATIONS

RBC Ecology - No Objections

RBC Transport - Objects giving the same reasons as given under the refused planning application 201607/FUL. These are discussed below

RBC Natural Environment - Objects giving the same reasons as given under the refused planning application 201607/FUL. These are discussed below.

4.1 The following addresses were consulted by letter.

55 Beecham Road, Reading, RG30 2RA
57 Beecham Road, Reading, RG30 2RA
58 Beecham Road, Reading, RG30 2RD
64 Beecham Road, Reading, RG30 2RD
59 Beecham Road, Reading, RG30 2RA
45 St Georges Road, Reading, RG30 2RG
Flat 1, 41 St Georges Road, Reading, RG30 2RG
Flat 3, 41 St Georges Road, Reading, RG30 2RG
43c St Georges Road, Reading, RG30 2RG
Flat 4, 41 St Georges Road, Reading, RG30 2RG

A Letter of representation has been received and the neighbour has raised the same concerns as they did before under the refused planning application 201607/FUL. The summary of concerns is as follows:

1. No access to vehicles
2. Adherence to 1 x Bedroom Use
3. The "garden" is currently used for commercial tipping - I would like assurance that this will not be the case moving forward - **Plans submitted indicate that the rear garden would be retained for use as a garden by the occupants of the existing and proposed dwelling units.**

Equality Act 2010:

In determining this application the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. However, there is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups identified by the Act have or

will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application. Therefore in terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'.

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

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework

National Planning Practice Guidance

Reading Borough Local Plan (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

CC9: Securing Infrastructure

EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network

EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodland

EN15: Air Quality

EN16: Pollution and Water Resources

EN17: Noise Generating Equipment

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

H11: Development of Private Residential Gardens

TR1: Achieving the Transport Strategy

TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters

TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging

RBC Supplementary Planning Documents

Affordable Housing SPD (2013)

Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011)

Revised SPD on Planning Obligations under Section 106 (2019)

Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2011)

Other relevant documentation / guidance / legislation

DCLG Technical housing standards - nationally described space standards (2015)

Reading Tree Strategy (2010)

National Design Guide: Planning practice for beautiful, enduring and successful places (2019)

6. APPRAISAL

6.1 Principle and Design Considerations

It is considered that the principle of residential use would broadly comply with the principles of Policy H1 by contributing to the housing needs within the borough.

However, 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*” and the NPPF definition of ‘previously developed land’ excludes private residential gardens.

Although, it is clear that the priority for development should be on previously developed land, in particular vacant and derelict sites and buildings, that does not mean, however, that the development of private residential garden land is unacceptable in principle, rather that previously developed land should be the first choice for housing development.

Therefore, while the proposed site is not ‘previously developed land’, the principle of redevelopment could be considered acceptable providing the criteria, as set out in Policy H11: Development of Private Residential Gardens below, are met. This is in addition to those within Policy H2 relating to general location, accessibility, density and housing mix matters.

- 1) It makes a positive contribution to the character of the area;
- 2) The site is of an adequate size to accommodate the development;
- 3) The proposal has a suitable access;
- 4) The proposal would not lead to an unacceptable tandem development;
- 5) The design minimises the exposure of existing private boundaries to public areas;
- 6) It does not cause detrimental impact on residential amenities;
- 7) The emphasis is on the provision of family housing;
- 8) There is no adverse impact on biodiversity, and
- 9) The proposal does not prejudice the development of a wider area.

However, as the remainder of this appraisal shall demonstrate, the proposals fails to meet a number of the Policy H11 criteria, in particular elements 1), 2), 3) and 4).

The prevailing pattern of development surrounding the site is characterised by terraced properties that have their primary elevation fronting on to the street, with deep gardens. Buildings within rear gardens are present but are predominately ancillary outbuildings. The proposed dwelling, due to its location to the rear of No.60 Beecham Road, would form tandem development that is not characteristic to the area, with no separate access - the building having to be accessed through the carport of No.60 Beecham Road (and resulting in the loss of parking for No.60 Beecham Road as discussed elsewhere in this report). Furthermore, the proposals would give rise to a disparity in plot size in that it would reduce the amount of amenity space to No.60 Beecham Road and the proposed plot would be significantly out of keeping with the plot sizes of others in the vicinity. As such, notwithstanding that the building is existing, the prevailing character of the area and pattern of development should be taken into consideration when assessing whether an independent dwelling such as that proposed is acceptable. As well as Policy H11, Policies CC7: Design and H8: Residential Conversions place importance on the layout of the urban structure and urban grain, stipulating that development should respond positively to the local context and create safe and accessible environments. Paragraph 127 of the NPPF 2019 also details that decisions should ensure that developments are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping and are sympathetic to local character including the surrounding built environment. For the reasons given above, the proposal fails to achieve this.

Notwithstanding the concerns raised above, there are no concerns raised specifically in terms of the detailed design of the proposals. Similarly, notwithstanding the issues raised in regard to the location of the building as a residential dwelling, its location is such that it would have no adverse effect on the visual amenities of the street scene. However, regardless of the 'lower key' design, the resultant dwelling would be fundamentally at odds with the layout, scale and form of the character of the area and prevailing pattern of development.

The proposal would result in unacceptable tandem development and, due to its uncharacteristic relationship with existing built form and spaces within the surrounding area and to the proposed plot sizes, it would fail to respect the size and character of similar spaces in the vicinity, including garden areas. The proposal represents an overly intensive use of the site and due to the harm to the character and pattern of development of the surrounding area that would result, the proposal would not preserve or enhance the local character and would be contrary to the NPPF, Policies H11 and CC7 and H8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

6.2 Impact on Neighbour Amenity

Policy CC8 requires that developments do not cause a detrimental impact on the living conditions of existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties in terms of the following:

Privacy and overlooking;
Access to sunlight and daylight;
Visual dominance and overbearing;
Harm to outlook;
Noise and disturbance;
Artificial lighting;
Vibration;
Dust and fumes;
Smell;
Crime and safety.

Considering the single story nature of the existing outbuilding/garage and the distance to neighbouring properties, it is not considered that there would be any adverse impacts on neighbouring properties in respect of light, privacy and visual dominance and overbearing impacts. Similarly, given the distance to neighbouring properties and nature of the proposed 1 bed unit, it is not considered it would result in any significant noise or disturbance to any nearby neighbouring property.

With regard to noise and disturbance, should the application have otherwise been recommended for approval, conditions would have been required in respect of protecting neighbours during the construction period. A construction method statement would therefore also have been secured via condition and would have been required from a highway safety perspective too. As such in overall terms, considering all nearby residential occupiers, no significantly harmful amenity impacts would occur, subject to conditions.

6.3 Amenity of Future Occupiers

Policy H8 (Residential Conversions) covers the suitability of a property's conversion to residential use. Policy EN16 (Pollution and Water Resources) seeks to protect future occupiers from the impacts of pollution and Policy H10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space) seeks that residential developments area provided with adequate private or communal outdoor amenity space.

Whilst it is considered that the proposal would not adversely impact on the amenities of neighbouring properties, it would have a detrimental impact on the living conditions of future occupiers of the building. Given that the proposed bedroom and kitchen windows (shown in the plan below) would be south facing and would be located immediately adjacent to the property boundary and very close to existing on and offsite trees, the amount of natural light received by these habitable rooms would be adversely affected.

Although the design and access statement and emails received from the agent/applicant indicate that the trees to the left hand side flank wall have been removed to allow more light to the proposal, the conditions on the ground appear different. When the case officer visited the site on 7th February 2022, some trees were found as can be seen in the photos below (photos 1 & 2). This is also evidenced on the existing and proposed floor plans below (fig 2 & 3).



Photos 1 and 2: Application site showing existing trees and boundary fencing (photos taken 7/02/22)

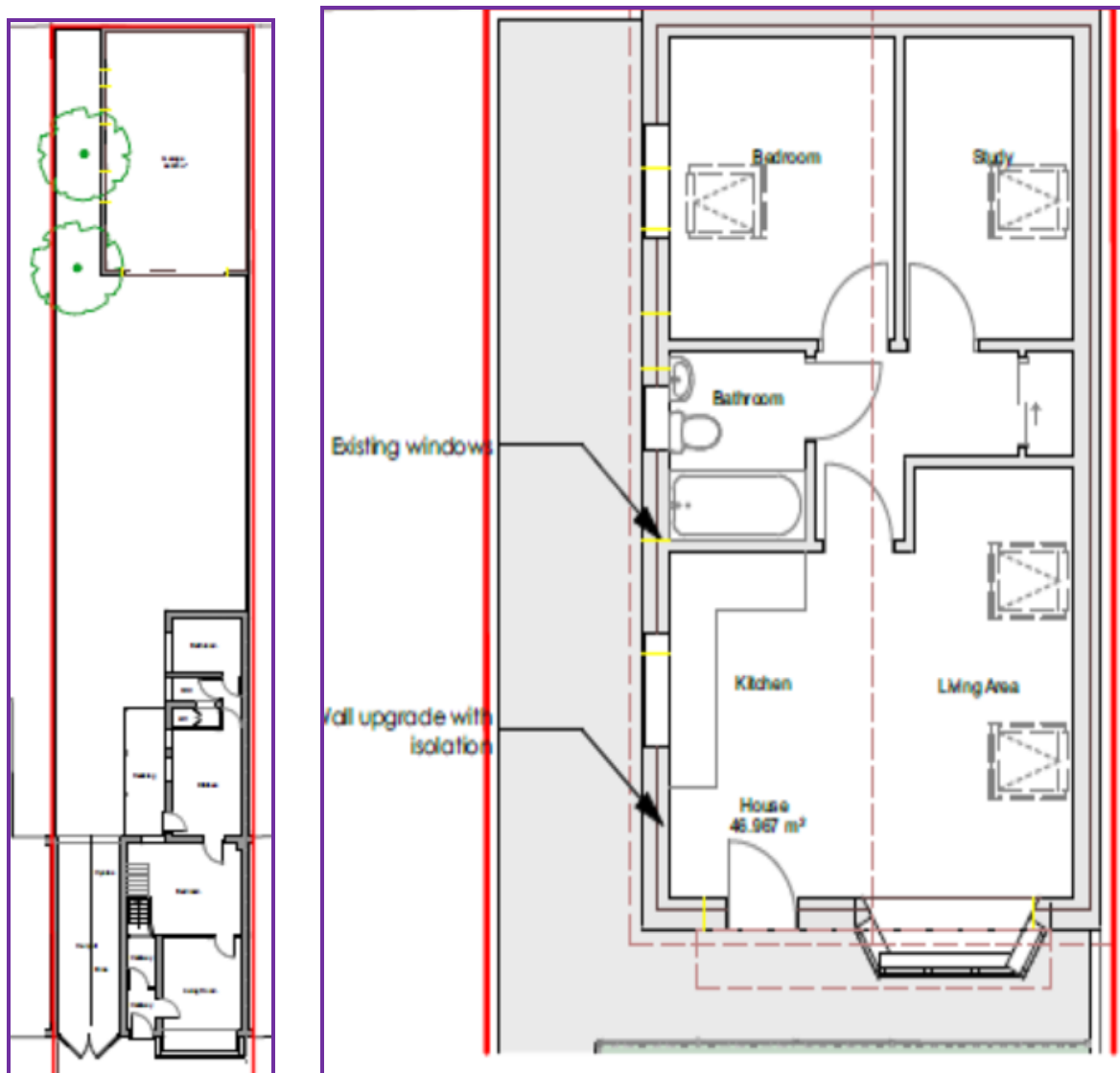


Figure 1: Existing Floor Plan

Figure 2: Proposed Floor Plan

In addition, since no daylight/sunlight assessment has been conducted to ascertain the amount of light or level of shadowing that the property would receive, it is not clear whether sufficient light to this bedroom would be achieved through the proposed window and/or rooflight given the proximity and presence of trees on this side.

Furthermore, due to the location of the bedroom window, there would be no outlook. As such, there would be an unacceptable sense of enclosure and confinement for future occupants whilst using the bedroom.

Whilst some private amenity space has been annotated on the proposed site plan, the space would be limited and not characteristic of those in surrounding plots (which are far more generous in size). The amenity space would thus be heavily constrained by the parking area as required by application 02/00857, which was allowed on appeal. Consequently, the proposals in any event would not allow for an attractive or enjoyable amenity area.

In light of the above the numerous individual shortfalls identified, when considered cumulatively, result in an overall conclusion that the quality of accommodation for future occupiers would be contrary to Policies H8 and H10 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

6.4 Transport Issues

Policies TR1, TR3 and TR5 seek to address access, traffic, highway and parking related matters associated with the development.

Beecham Road is a one -way system running from Waverley Road at its southern end to Oxford Road at its northern end. Beecham Road is approximately 5.5 wide with on-street parking regularly occurring on both sides of the carriageway. This is evidenced in the picture below taken on 7th February 2022 during a site visit conducted by the case officer.



Photo 3: On street parking on Beecham Road (photo taken 7th February 2022)

The proposals would result in the loss of the garage and parking within the car port area/rear of the existing flats - which was identified as the parking area (2 parking spaces) for the 2 existing flats as stated in application 02/00857 which was allowed on appeal - as per the relevant history section above.

The site is located in Zone 3, Secondary Core Area and in accordance with the current parking standards the proposed 1 bed unit would require 1.5 parking space. Parking provision for the existing units would also need to be retained; therefore, a total of 3.5 parking spaces would be required for the whole site. This is therefore a significant increase and would put additional parking demand on Beecham Road which is currently unrestricted. The proposed development would result in additional competition for on street parking and, therefore, off-road parking should be provided for the new unit as well as the retention of the parking spaces for the existing 2 flats at No60 as stated in application 02/00857 allowed at appeal).

Whilst car free developments are supported however both the design and access statement and the transport statement have indicated that currently occupiers of the property park on the street. Similarly, the occupiers of the proposed 1 bed flat would be expected to park on the street as this is a common practice on Beecham Road and according to the applicant there is available space for additional car parking on Beecham Road. The applicant has not made any commitments to show that this would be a car free development.

In addition, Transport has indicated that regardless of the use of the existing spaces the development would generate an increase in on street parking. Furthermore, comments were made by an inspector for a site that was located on Oxford Road/ Beecham Road (application 200136) which are relevant for this application:

Oxford Road is a red route which means there is no parking along its length in the vicinity of the appeal site. Beecham Road is a one way street approximately 5.5 metres in width with no restrictions on parking. During my site visit it was evident that there were high levels of on-street parking taking place on either side of the carriageway, and there were very few available parking spaces. Whilst I appreciate this is a snap shot in time, it nonetheless points towards there being very limited available parking. Any increase in parking demand in this location would likely harm the efficiency of the highway network, with subsequent road safety implications.

Under the previously refused planning application 201607/FUL Transport expressed concern about the proposed bin and cycle storage spaces however this concern has not been addressed in the current proposal. The comment is as shown below:

The Design and Access Statement states that cycle storage for the new unit would be incorporated into the existing provision, currently located in the car port area. However, it should be noted that application 02/00857 stated that cycle storage

was located within the garage, and therefore an alternative location for the cycles would need to be provided as the existing location within the car port would block access to the parking area. Bin storage would also need to be relocated for the same reason and would also need to be illustrated on revised plans.

Nevertheless, in terms of cycle and bin storage, it is considered that should the application have otherwise been recommended for approval, that this could have been adequately dealt with by way of suitably worded conditions and therefore, this element does not form a reason for refusal.

Given the above, the proposed layout fails to demonstrate that it complies with the Local Planning Authority's standards in respect of vehicle parking. This could result in on-street parking/reversing movements on Beecham Road, adversely affecting road safety and the flow of traffic, and in conflict with Policies TR1 and TR5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

6.5 Natural Environment

Policy EN14 seeks to extend the Borough's vegetation cover and that development should make provision for tree planting whilst Policy CC7 seeks proposal should include appropriate landscaping.

Whilst the application form states that there are no trees on the site and no trees/hedges that would influence the development, and indeed various emails received from the agent/applicant state that the trees were cut prior to the submission of the recent application, this is contrary to what the existing plan shows. The existing plan shows two trees located adjacent to the building. This was further confirmed during a site visit of 7th February 2022. Furthermore, in addition to the two trees indicated on the plan, there are other trees within the neighbouring property which are located on the boundary adjacent to the site. However, no tree survey or Arboricultural information has been submitted with this application and it is unclear, due to the lack of information submitted, whether the trees would be retained. Should the trees be retained the Council's Natural Environment officer considers that the crowns would significantly shade the proposed building (as they do currently) and pose a recurrent nuisance for the building's façade in the future. As above, with regard to outlook/loss of light to the bedroom, in order to provide light and to maintain a reasonable clearance to the façade, the trees would be under continuous pruning pressure.

Due to the lack of tree information submitted the application fails to demonstrate that there would be no harm to trees on or offsite. The application also fails to demonstrate that the conversion of the outbuilding to residential, in relation to the trees, is sustainable and as such would result in pressure for the trees to be cut back or removed once the building were occupied, in order to provide light to habitable accommodation and maintain a reasonable clearance to the facade. This would be contrary to Policy EN14 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

6.6 Sustainability

Policy CC2 (Sustainable Design and Construction) requires that all minor conversions to residential are required to meet the most up-to-date BREEAM 'Very Good' standard as a minimum. Whilst reference to sustainability measures have been included in the Design and Access Statement (which in themselves are welcomed and would support the requirement), Policy CC2 sets out information is required to be submitted to enable a satisfactory assessment to be made prior to the determination of an application, as stated in the Policy *"including the construction of new buildings and the redevelopment and refurbishment of existing housing stock"*.

Para 4.1.3 states "for conversion to residential, this policy incorporates the use of BREEAM standards". The Planning Design and Access Statement highlights a number of sustainability measures, including reference to reduced internal water consumption (required by BREEAM standards). Whilst no specific reference to BREEAM standards has been submitted, should the application have otherwise been considered acceptable and recommended for approval, then this could have been dealt with by way of a suitably worded condition.

6.7 Affordable Housing

The proposal seeks to create one additional unit through conversion and therefore a contribution towards off-site affordable housing provision is required as part of the application in accordance with Policy H3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan and the Affordable Housing SPD under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

The applicant stated they agreed in principle to enter into a legal agreement to secure a financial contribution and that valuations would be provided. Whilst this was one of the reasons planning application 201607/FUL was refused, no efforts have been made under the current application to provide any valuation documents to support this application. However, 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. Consequently, this forms a further reason for refusal of the application.

An informative will specify that this reason for refusal could be overcome, in the context of an acceptable scheme in all other respects, by entering into a s106 or unilateral undertaking.

6.8 CIL

The proposal would be a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) liable development. The applicant has provided the CIL Additional Information Form. Based on the information provided by the applicant and the 2021 CIL rate, this is estimated to amount to £7,835.50 (50m² of the proposed dwelling following conversion x £120 per m² x 2021 indexation (£156.71)). If the scheme had been acceptable an informative would have

been attached to the decision notice to advise the applicant of their responsibilities in this respect.

7. CONCLUSION

In weighing up the planning benefits of the proposals (e.g. introducing one additional unit to the housing stock in the borough, assisting the local plan target) versus the dis-benefits of the scheme (as detailed at length in the officer assessment above), it is considered that the critical planning balance weighs against the proposals. Having regard to the material considerations and all matters raised, the Local Planning Authority considers that the balance of considerations therefore weighs against the proposal, and instead planning permission is recommended to be refused.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

REFUSED