

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Application No.: 220381/FUL

Address: 15 Highmead Close

Proposal: Conversion of single dwelling to two dwellings

Target Date: 21/06/22

Case officer: Connie Davis

Site Description and Surrounding Area

The existing property is a two storey brick built house at the end of a small terrace of four properties. It is set within a large, roughly triangular shaped plot measuring 34m at its widest, at the rear of the garden, and narrowing to 5m at the highway edge to the front. The land slopes south-west to north-east, i.e. up towards the rear of the rear garden. There is a mix of boundary treatments with low hedges closest to the road rising up to 1.8 m close boarded wooden fencing between the application site and no 14 (to the north). At the rear there is a mix of fencing and high planting and forms the boundary to the long rear gardens of Hazel Crescent to the east. The garden is mainly laid to lawn and there is driveway parking to the front for two cars. Due to the orientation these windows do not overlook no.14 itself but face towards the garden of that property.

The next group of terraces to the north, (nos 11-14) is set at a right angle to the application site and the properties are arranged around the turning head of the cul-de-sac.

The cul-de-sac is characterised by open areas between each group of terraces, created by large triangular corner plots.

Proposal

Planning permission is sought for the conversion of the existing side extension (which is used as a granny annex) to a self-contained dwelling. The extension/ proposed dwelling has a floor area of with a floor area of 70m². It is 4.6m in width, set back by 1.4m and set down by 0.4m. In addition, the extension has a single storey element to the front to be used as a porch and WC.

The proposal would include one car parking space for the proposed dwelling and one for the existing dwelling.

Plans and other supporting information considered:

Sustainability Statement

Received 26th April 2022

14HICOU_13 - Location and Block Plan
14HICOU_01 - Existing Plans
14HICOU_02 - Existing Elevations
14HICOU_10 - Proposed Elevations
14HICOU_11 - Proposed Ground Floor Plan
14HICOU_12 - Proposed First and Roof Plans
Application Form
CIL Form
Planning Statement

Received 18th March 2022

Relevant Planning History:

181379/HOU - Single storey rear extension and two storey side extension - Application Permitted and implemented

150640/FUL - New attached dwelling in the garden of 15 Highmead Close - Application Refused and dismissed at appeal. Application refused for the following reasons:

- Dwelling would have a distinctly different appearance in comparison to the adjoining terrace which would fail to make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the area - **Reason for refusal upheld**
- Overbearing impact on 15 Highmead Close - **Reason for refusal not upheld**
- Vehicle parking provision being below standard which would likely result in additional on street parking, to the detriment of the highway - **Reason for refusal not upheld**

141486/ HOU - Single storey rear extension and two storey side extension - Application Approved

Consultation Responses:

Internal consultation:

Ecology: No comments received

Transport: No objection subject to conditions

Natural Environment: No objection

External consultation:

The following addresses were formally consulted via letter on 27/04/22:

Nos. 14 & 16 Highmead Close
Nos. 10-16 (evens) Hazel Crescent
11 Maple Gardens were consulted.

A site notice was also displayed.

No comments were received.

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.

Relevant Planning Policy and Guidance:

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 Planning Policy Guidance

NPPF (2021)

NPPG

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
EN7	Local Green Space and Public Open Space
EN8	Undesignated Open Space
EN12	Biodiversity and the green network
EN14	Trees, hedges and woodlands
EN18	Flooding and Drainage
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

Relevant Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) are:

Affordable Housing (2021)

Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)

Planning Obligations Under Section 106 (2015)

Sustainable Design and Construction (2019)

Appraisal:

The main considerations are:

- a) Principle of development
- b) Design and impact on the character of the area
- c) Residential amenities of new and existing residents
- d) Transport matters
- e) The Natural Environment
- f) Sustainability
- g) Affordable housing and CIL

a) Principle of development

The surrounding area is residential and the conversion of the extension to a self-contained dwelling would contribute towards meeting the borough's housing targets, as outlined in Policy H1 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

As such, the principle of residential development in a residential area is considered acceptable, subject to other material and policy considerations as outlined below.

b) Design and impact on character of the area

Policy CC7 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 various components of development form, including: -*

- *Layout: urban structure and urban grain;*
- *Landscape;*
- *Density and mix;*
- *Scale: height and massing; and*
- *Architectural detail and materials*

Policy H11 also makes clear that proposals should make a positive contribution to the character of the area.

An extension to the existing house was approved and implemented under application 181379. The proposed dwelling would result in the conversion of this approved extension.

The pattern of development within the cul-de-sac is two storey terraced properties with large triangular corner plots at the end of each group of terraces. Due to the narrowness of the plot towards the front of the plot, the dwelling is proposed with a set back from the existing building line of the group of terraces, and the overall width would be significantly smaller (4.6m) than the adjacent properties (6.8m wide - no. 15 Highmead Close). The single storey projection with the front door to the side would create a different appearance to the front of the property, compared to the adjoining terraces, the latter being relatively uniform in appearance, with a clear pattern of arrangement of doors and windows. The combination of these issues results in a proposed development which is not considered to make a positive contribution to the character of the area. Whilst Officers acknowledge that extension was deemed acceptable in terms of design at the time it was approved, it is not considered acceptable when assessed as a self-contained dwelling. The proposed property would still have the appearance of an extension rather than a new dwelling indicative that there is insufficient plot width to create a coherent design, which accords with the adjacent group of terraces. The dwelling would therefore fail to make a positive contribution to the character of the area and would not conform with Policies CC7 and H11 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

This is also supported by the conclusions of the appeal Inspector under application 150640:

Due to the tapering of the existing side boundary to the plot, only a limited space remains at the site frontage, which means that the dwelling would be shoehorned into the available space. Whilst I do not consider that the new dwelling itself would be unduly bulky or dominant, its positioning on site is the critical factor. The existing built form of this terrace is uniform and the architectural rhythm created by the consistent frontage widths contribute to the character and appearance of the area. The proposal would not accord with the general local pattern of development and would thereby represent a discordant feature in the street scene.

As such, the proposal would not improve the quality of the built environment and would adversely affect the character and appearance of the area.

The context of the surrounding area has not changed since the previous appeal.

c) Residential amenities of new and existing residents

Policy CC8 seeks to protect the amenity of surrounding occupiers. Policy H5 sets standards for new development for future occupiers

Existing occupiers

The proposed dwelling would be set back behind the front elevation of the host property and extend some 3m beyond the rear wall in the form of a two storey rear gable projection. Despite this projection, the proposal would be unlikely to have a deleterious effect on the host property in terms of loss of light and overbearing; the conclusion also reached by the Planning Inspector under application 150640. The existing property would continue to enjoy a reasonable garden depth and therefore it is not considered that the projection would be unduly oppressive or overbearing.

The dwelling would be located a sufficient distance away from 14 Highmead Close so as not result in a loss of light, outlook or be considered overbearing from this neighbouring property.

Proposed occupiers

The proposed dwelling complies with Nationally Prescribed Space Standards as outlined in Policy H5. It would also have sufficient outlook and habitable rooms would be served by windows. The dwelling would also be provided with a good level of rear amenity space to comply with Policy H10 of the Local Plan; greater than those found elsewhere within the terrace.

d) Transport matters

The Council has produced a Parking Standards and Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), which includes different standards in four different zones according to the accessibility of those zones. The site is located within Zone 3, Secondary Core Area, of the Council's adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD. In accordance with the adopted SPD, the development would be required to provide a parking provision of 1.5 spaces per 2-bedroom dwelling whilst retaining on-site parking for the existing dwelling. The parking layout illustrates 2no. parking spaces equating to one space per dwelling.

The Design and Access Statement asserts that each property (existing and proposed) would be accessed via the existing crossover. It is noted that that the proposed parking for the site is below the Council's adopted parking standards (by 1no. space). However Officers have referred back to the appeal decision for application ref 150640 which concluded that the provision of 1 space per dwelling would provide an acceptable provision for off-street parking. Therefore, the LPA have no grounds to object on parking and the proposed parking layout is acceptable.

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 and this would have been secured via condition should the proposal had been acceptable in other respects.

Cycle parking should be provided at a ratio of 2 spaces per unit. The Design and Access Statement states that the scheme will provide two secure cycle stores to contain 2 cycles each but further details regarding the design and specification would have been covered by condition.

A bin storage point has been located at the front of the site to allow on-street servicing to occur. Refuse and recycling bins will need to be presented closer to the highway on collection days.

There are no transport objections to this application subject to the following conditions:

- Construction Method Statement to be submitted - Officer note: this application does not involve physical external works and therefore this condition is not considered necessary
- Vehicle parking (as specified)
- Cycle parking (to be approved)
- Refuse and recycling (as specified)
- Electric vehicle charging points

The proposal is considered acceptable in relation to Policies TR3 and TR5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan, in light of the Planning Inspectors comments in relation to parking provision under the previous appeal for this scheme.

e) The Natural Environment

Policy EN12 states: *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.*

Policy EN14 states: *New development shall make provision for tree retention and planting within the application site*

The proposal relates to a change of use rather than a new building. As there would be no change in the footprint and the conversation would require internal changes only, the proposal is considered acceptable in terms of landscaping with no conditions required. The proposed dwelling would be provided with sufficient amenity space for planting and landscaping by future occupiers.

However should the proposal had been considered acceptable, a condition for bat/ bird boxes to be installed, would have been secured via condition to ensure the new dwelling complies with Policies EN12 of the Reading Borough Local Plan so as to result in a net gain of biodiversity.

f) Sustainability

The application relates to a change of use from residential to residential. As such, BREEAM or SAP requirements are not applicable, as per policy CC2 of the Local Plan. However sustainability measures have been identified in the applicant's supporting statement to comply with Policy CC3 of the Local Plan. Namely these include the installation of waters butts and is already fitted with a compliant gas boiler.

g) Affordable Housing & CIL

In accordance with Policy H3 (Affordable Housing) the proposed development, being for 1

additional dwelling, would be liable for an off-site affordable housing contribution equivalent of 10% of the GDV of the development.

The applicant was willing to enter into a Section 106 legal agreement on this basis. However at the time of writing a contribution was not finalised and draft legal agreement has not been drawn up due to the outstanding issues with the application.

The scheme would be CIL liable.

RECOMMENDATION: REFUSE for the following reasons

1) The proposed dwelling would have a distinctly different appearance within the street scene in comparison to adjoining terraced dwellings by virtue of its uncharacteristic relationship to the established front building line, narrow width, markedly different front window arrangement, positioning of the front door to the side, and the subdivision of the front garden area to serve two dwelling which would be dominated visually by vehicle parking. On this basis the proposal would fail to make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the area, contrary to Policy CC7 and H11 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 Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (2021).

Informatives:

1. Plans
2. Pre-app
3. Positive and proactive