

Delegated officer report 210141/HOU

35 Tidmarsh Street, Reading

Demolition of existing carport and erection of detached garage

Site

The application site is an end of terrace property on tidmarsh street at its junction with stone St. the part of the application site of concern is accessed from Stone St. Whilst tidmarsh St is a street of Victorian/ Edwardian terraced properties, Stone St is also terraced, but in a later 1950s terrace style and the properties themselves are wider. There is a close-boarded fence which runs along the back of the footway on Stone St at the application site with a set of double gates; this then returns at the corner property on Stone St (No.1). Behind the fence is a low, pergola-style carport and this is set back from the inward-opening boarded gates

Proposal

The proposal is to replace the carport with a garage. There have been 3x alternative designs submitted. The Appraisal section below will confirm the plans considered for determination/assessment.

Planning history

161003/CLP Loft conversion with rear dormer window and 1 front roof light (certificate of lawfulness application): certified as Permitted Development 11/7/2016 and implemented.

Consultations

Public consultation: letters were sent to 33 Tidmarsh Street (flats 1 and 2) and 1 Stone Street. The applicant confirms that a site notice was displayed on 5/2/21. No representation were received.

RBC Transport Strategy (the Highway Authority) were consulted on this application. Original response in their memo:

“The dimensions for the proposed detached garage do not conform to the Councils current standards where it is recommended that the internal dimensions for a single garage are 7m x 3m. Submitted plans indicate external dimensions of 6m width x 5m length.

It is also recommended that roller garage doors are used to ensure vehicles do not wait unnecessarily on the carriage way.

Confirmation is also required if the existing gated access is to be retained.”

Follow-up email from Transport 20 May indicating that the site currently provides for a car parking space on the site and therefore the proposed garage must be able to retain this provision, so the garage must meet the Council’s adopted parking standards.

Planning policy/SPDs/legislation relevant

S38(6) of the Town and Country Planning Act applies.

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019), policies:

CC8 Safeguarding Amenity

H9 House Extensions and Ancillary Accommodation

TR5 Cycle and Car Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging

SPD: Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)

Google Streetview views:



Case officer's photo from external site visit:



Plans considered in this determination:

1:1250 Location plan, received 27/1/21

1:500 Block Plan, received 27/1/21

Hand-drawn plans and elevations, received 24/5/21 [scale says 1:100, appears to be 1:50]

Summary of original advice given to applicant's agent:

These are streets of modest terraced houses and this would be a very big and dominant detached structure, particularly given its position in relation to No.1 Stone St. It would almost have the appearance of a separate detached dwelling and its size would almost compete in size with some of the smaller dwellings in these streets. For these reasons it would present a dominant structure in the streetscene and principally conflict with our design policy CC7 (design and the public realm) of our Local Plan, where development should be in sympathy with the character of the area. Were this to proceed to a recommendation for final decision, it is likely to be one of refusal. These issues could have been identified in a pre-application submission to this authority but we're not. I would suggest that this application is withdrawn. I am not suggesting the submission of revised plans because of the lack of pre-application advice; because of the extended period that may also be needed for reconsultation; and because the advice here is unlikely to be the full extent of concerns.

Appraisal

The issues are to consider in assessing this planning application are:

1. impact on the streetscene/amenity; and
2. parking

Impact on the streetscene/amenity

Adopted Policy H9 states that Householder [level] developments should.... *"Respect[s] the character and pattern of neighbouring properties and appearance of the street as a whole in terms of scale, location, materials and design..."*. The general design policy (CC7) states that development should be suitable to its context in terms of scale, height and massing.

In technical terms, the proposal is almost the size of a double garage in plan form, although even on version 3 it still does not meet the Council's parking standards. The proposal would be 4 metres in overall height. The present carport on site is the approximate footprint of a single garage, set 2m forward of the front of 1 Stone Street, but is very low-level and not dominant in the streetscene. The proposal would be over twice the height of the close-board fence, with overly-elevated eaves. The bulk and massing of the garage will be very evident and in my opinion, overly-dominant in a streetscene/area of terraced houses. It would have the accidental appearance of a detached house and as can be made out from the Block Plan, its size in plan form would actually compete with the houses in the street (for instance, 5 Stone Street). Instead of being set 2m forward of the building line and low-slung; it would be 4m ahead of the building line and extremely bulky. From the approved plans for 1 Stone Street, it would appear that this bulk may only overbear non-habitable rooms, so there is no concern in

this regard. In summary, it is considered to be an alien and dominant feature in the streetscene and out of character and scale with its surroundings, contrary to policies H9 and CC7.

The overbearing/unneighbourly effects on 33 Tidmarsh Street and 35 Tidmarsh Street itself are considered to be acceptable. The garage would be a bulky structure, but sited towards the end of the rear garden of 33 Tidmarsh St. It would overbear a significant length of the end of the garden, but on balance, it would not severely affect the general usable garden space of that property, and so complies with Policy CC8.

Parking

Stone Street is Public Highway with no Controlled Parking Zone restrictions. It is not a Classified Road. There is no indication from the plans that the proposal will involve an altering of the current access layout which is of high double gates which swing inwards and away from the highway (footway).

The application site currently has one off-road parking space under the carport. The carport is open-ended, meaning that although the site is not deep, a parked car can park and leave enough room for the access gates to open inwards in front of it.

Section 8.0 of the Council's SPD, "Parking Standards and Design" is relevant, entitled, "Garages and Carport Layout and Design". There should be a minimum of 5m depth in garages. From inner wall to inner wall of the proposal is only 4.3m. If there was a roller shutter door on the outside (not shown) there would be a 4.6m depth. If there was no garage door, the car would stick out and even so the gates would not open in front of it. The configuration does not work, neither did any of the previous versions. No design thus far shown as met the Council's published/adopted standards. Despite it being of approximately double garage size and bulk, the configuration of the internal space means that two cars could not be accommodated side by side and the overall depth of the garage is not suitable for a car anyway. The garage is very bulky and quite a long way forward in the plot. It is not clear that the building could be used for its purpose. The present plans have no garage doors, presumably in an attempt to resolve the configuration issue, but assuming the gated access is retained and again assuming the gates swing inwards and not out over the footway as they must not; it is not clear that the gates could swing and in fact allow a car to pass. In fact it doesn't look likely. Width of site on GIS system - 6.77m (applicant's block plan shows 6.5m). Carport to edge of site on GIS system - 2.37m. The proposal is much closer.

The agent has advised that the intention of the building is for the parking of motorbikes, which would normally involve secure storage. In any event, there is currently the ability to park a car off-street, the proposal would effectively lose that ability and would exacerbate parking levels on-street and conflict with the adopted parking standards and Policy TR5.

Equalities Act

There are no identified conflicts with any of the protected characteristics

Note: the applicant's agent has asked for the description of the development to be revised to read, "Demolition of existing car port and replacement of new car port with pitched roof". The LPA has not accepted this, as the proposal is considered to be a garage without a door, not a car port. The submitted description has therefore been retained.

Summary/conclusion

The applicant's desire to have a very large garage in this location is considered to be at odds with the prevailing character of the area and has had no regard to highway safety or parking standards. The proposal does not fit on the site in either character or parking/highways terms. Amended plans were not suggested, they were provided anyway. They have not addressed either issue satisfactorily.

The case officer has advised the applicant to withdraw on a number of occasions. The issues have not been addressed nor the invitation to withdraw taken up, therefore unfortunately it has been necessary to recommend this application for refusal.

RECOMMENDATION: REFUSE.

- 1. Due to its scale, height, massing and location forward of the building line of 1 Stone Street, the garage structure proposed would be a dominant and alien addition in the streetscene. The garage would therefore be harmful to the character and amenities of the area, by failing to respect the character and pattern of neighbouring properties and appearance of the street as a whole in terms of scale, location contrary to Policy (House Extensions and Ancillary Accommodation) and Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).**
- 2. Due to its substandard internal depth and siting within the site, the proposed garage would fail to provide an off-road parking space to suitable standards, resulting in a net loss of one parking space. The proposal would therefore put additional pressure on on-street parking in the area, to the detriment of public and highway safety and contrary to Policy TR5 (Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging) and the Council's adopted Supplementary Planning Document, "Parking Standards and Design" (2011).**

Informatives: Plans refused; No preapp; Positive and proactive requirement.