

DELEGATED HOUSEHOLDER APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Thames

App Ref: 210538/HOU

Address: 8 Briar Close, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7QH

Proposals: Erection of two-storey side extension following demolition of existing garage and associated works

Case Officer: Mr Jonathan Markwell

Applicant: Miss Dooley

Date received (valid from): 8 April 2021

Target Decision date: 3 June 2021

1. INTRODUCTION

The application relates to a two-storey detached property dwelling located on the south-eastern side of the Briar Close cul de sac, off Hemdean Road. The existing house is predominantly brick in terms of material finish with a hipped roof and also includes a single storey flat roofed garage along the south-western flank of the site. There is a significant change in levels across the plot with the dwelling set well above the level of the road to the front of the site. The property is set down from No. 7 to the north and set up from No. 9 to the south, with the properties within the close arranged in a horse shoe shape. To the rear of the site is an area of woodland, a local wildlife site known as Highdown Wood. Aside from this, the character of the wider area is predominantly residential. The property is not listed, nor located within a conservation area.

The Covid pandemic meant an accompanied officer site visit was not possible at this time, but an unaccompanied visit from public vantage points was undertaken (see photographs within the report). This, together with photographs supplied via the agent and aerial viewpoints have been considered in assessing this application.



Officer site photo of Briar Close during unaccompanied site visit on 28/04/2021.



Aerial view looking north

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The proposed development seeks permission for the erection of a two storey side extension on the south-west side of the property, close to the boundary with No. 9 Briar Close. To facilitate these works the existing single storey garage at this point will be demolished. One of the two existing chimneys will also be removed, associated with the proposed works at roof level. The proposed plans also detail that an existing single storey side/rear extension closest to the boundary with No. 7 Briar Close will be partly demolished, with the side elevation element removed, leaving only an element to the rear of the existing property - a hipped roof will be added to this element, in place of the existing flat roof which currently exists. The applicant has specified that a number of internal alterations are also proposed; given the property is not listed, these are not referenced within the description of development as planning permission is not required for internal alterations.

Plans considered:

003 Rev P4 - Existing Floor Plans
 004 Rev P4 - Existing Elevations
 005 Rev P4 - Proposed Plans
 006 Rev P4 - Proposed Elevations
 As received 08/04/2021

001 Rev P5 - Site Location Plan
 002 Rev P5 - Existing + Proposed Block Plans
 As received 13/05/2021

Preliminary Roost Assessment Survey by Arbtech Issue 1.2, dated 21/05/2021, as submitted 22/05/2021

During the course of the application, following receipt of the Ecology consultation response, an initial Bat Survey was submitted on 22/05/2021. In addition, clarifications

regarding the extent of the red line boundary facilitated the submission of revised plans on 13/05/2021.



Officer site photo of front elevation during unaccompanied site visit on 28/04/2021.

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

Application site - none.

Nearby sites:

7 Briar Close

170660 - Single storey side extension to replace existing garage - Granted 17/07/2017.

171433 - Two storey side extension to the house to create new living accommodation. Granted 16/02/2018.

9 Briar Close

181313 - Single storey side extension. Granted 14/09/2018.

10 Briar Close

900773 - First floor side extension to provide bedroom with ensuite toilet. Granted 24/04/1990.

4. CONSULTATIONS

4.1 Public consultation - The following addresses were consulted by letter.

9 Briar Close, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7QH
7 Briar Close, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7QH

4.2 No responses have been received. It was witnessed during the unaccompanied officer site visit on 28/04/2021 that a site notice had been erected, specifying that comments

should be received by 10/05/2021. This aligns with the site notice advice slip returned by the applicant, stating that the site notice was displayed on 20/04/2021.

4.3 Transport Development Control

The loss of the garage will result in the loss of a parking space. In accordance with the Councils current Parking Standards and Design SPD 2 off road parking spaces should be provided. Only 1 parking space has been illustrated on the submitted Block Plan. Given that the side extension will be “stepped Back” there will be sufficient space to accommodate 2 vehicles.

There are no Transport objections to this application, subject to the condition and two informatives stated below:

DC1 VEHICLE PARKING (AS SPECIFIED)
IF3 Highways
I24 Do not damage the verge

4.4 GS Ecology - RBC's Ecology consultant

Initial response:

The application site comprises a detached house with adjoining garage that may have features potentially suitable for use by roosting bats. It is proposed to demolish the garage and alter an existing single extension at the rear of the house and erect a two-storey extension at the side of the building. The site is next to Highdown Wood, a Local Wildlife Site that provides excellent foraging habitat for bats. As such, there is a risk that the proposals may affect roosting bats and a bat survey report will need to be provided before this application can be determined. Further details are given below.

Legislation

All species of bats receive protection under UK law and it is a criminal offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (The Habitat Regulations), deliberately or recklessly to destroy or damage their roosts, or to disturb, kill or injure them without first having obtained the relevant licence for derogation from the regulations from the Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation (the SNCO - Natural England in England).

Planning policy

Paragraph 99 of the government Circular 06/05: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation - Statutory Obligations and Their Impact Within The Planning System (this document was not 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”.

In this case because neither the presence or otherwise of protected species, nor the extent to which they may be affected has been established, the application would not be

in accordance with the above planning policy, or other planning policy in relation to biodiversity.

Survey requirements

A presence / absence bat survey is normally undertaken in two stages, firstly a preliminary roost assessment, whereby the inside and outside of the building is surveyed for bats and signs of bats. This survey can be undertaken at any time of year.

If bats are found or features within the building have the potential to support roosting bats and these will be affected by the proposals, further dusk emergence and or pre-dawn re-entry surveys during the bat active season (i.e. between May and the end of August/ sub optimally until mid-October) would need to be carried out. The applicant would then need to submit the results of the survey(s) along with any associated mitigation strategy prior to determination of the application.

Surveys should be carried out by suitably experienced ecologists who are a member of a professional organisation such as the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management and / or are licensed or accredited by Natural England to survey bats.

Summary

The house may host roosting bats and to confirm whether this is the case, and if so how bats will be affected by the proposals, a bat survey will need to be carried out. The survey will need to be carried out prior to determination of the application or the application would need to be refused on the grounds that insufficient evidence had been provided to determine the likely impacts of the proposals on bats (which are a protected species and a material consideration in the planning process).

Further response, following the submission of a Bat Survey on 22/05/2021:

The bat survey has been undertaken to an appropriate standard and concludes that bats are unlikely to roost in the building or be adversely affected by the proposals. There are therefore no objections to this application on ecology grounds.

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)

CC7 Design and the Public Realm
CC8 Safeguarding Amenity
H9 House Extensions and Ancillary Accommodation
H10 Private and Communal Outdoor Space
EN12 Biodiversity and the Green Network
EN14 Trees, Hedges and Woodlands
TR3 Access, Traffic and Highway-related matters

SPG/SPD

- A Design Guide to House Extensions SPG 2021
- Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD 2011

6. APPRAISAL

H9 states: An extension to a house will be acceptable where it:

A. Respects the character of the house in terms of scale, location, materials and design;

To assess this, the following has been considered - would the proposal:

- detract from the appearance of the original building through the use of ill-matching materials and by not fitting in with the design, scale and proportions of the original building; NO - in particular, the set-back of the side extension from the front elevation helps mitigate any impact
- reduce the amount of usable amenity space for the property to an unacceptable degree; NO - the proposal actually decreases the built footprint at the site, with the proposed extension covering a smaller footprint than the existing garage and part of the existing extension on the boundary with No. 7 being removed too.
- require the loss of trees in the garden or put significant trees at risk; NO - all a sufficient distance away from the proposed works

B. Respects the character and pattern of neighbouring properties and the street as a whole in terms of scale, location, materials and design, and any important existing building line; Respects neighbour's amenities and does not present a large blank façade to public areas.

To assess this, the following has been considered - would the proposal:

- significantly reduce the amount of daylight and sunlight enjoyed by neighbouring properties; NO - the orientation of the extension to the neighbouring plot, together with the off-set from the boundary and the separation distances and change in land levels means that although there will be some loss of day/sunlight to No. 9, this is not considered to be of a level to warrant the refusal of the application on.
- invade the privacy of neighbouring properties through overlooking from windows or balconies; NO - the proposal does not include any windows in the side facing elevation towards No. 9 - a condition will prevent any first floor openings being added without the grant of a further separate application by the LPA, to help protect amenity.
- detract from the character of neighbouring properties through siting, excessive bulk, ill-matching materials or inconsistent design; NO - the setting back of the extension at first floor level is consistent with the approach taken at No's 6 and 7 Briar Close; the proposed design is consistent with the existing property, with the application form specifying all materials will match those existing.
- detract from the appearance of the street or area by using ill-matched materials, glazing and detailing; NO - as above.



Existing two storey side extensions evident at No's 6, 7 and 10 Briar Close (Officer site photo during unaccompanied site visit on 28/04/2021).

CC8: Safeguarding Amenity states an extension to a house will be acceptable where it will not cause a significant detrimental impact to the living environment of existing or new residential properties.

To assess this, the following has been considered - would the proposal cause a significant detrimental impact to the living environment of existing or new residential properties in terms of:

- Privacy and overlooking;
- Access to sunlight and daylight;
- Visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development;
- Noise and disturbance;
- Artificial lighting;
- Vibration;
- Dust and fumes;
- Smell;
- Crime and safety.

A number of these matters have already been addressed in the H9 assessment above. In terms of visual dominance and overbearing impacts, the squaring off of the two storey extension (so that it follows the pattern of the existing house, rather than aligning with the side boundary as the existing garage does) helps mitigate any significantly harmful impacts on No. 9. The orientation and separation distances involved again help to ensure that no harm is caused to an extent which would lead to the refusal of this application on. In terms of No. 7, the alterations to the existing ground floor extension closest to that boundary gives rise to no adverse amenity impacts and the two-storey side extension does not extend beyond the existing rear building line, meaning it is too distant to impact on this neighbour. No other nearby occupier is negatively impacted.



Rear garden/elevation (photograph provided by the applicant)

In terms of current and future occupiers of the host building, the proposals will improve the quality of accommodation provided.

Other matters

Ecology - as per section 4 above, the bat survey submitted during the course of the application has been undertaken to an appropriate standard and concludes that bats are unlikely to roost in the building or be adversely affected by the proposals. There are therefore no objections to this application on ecology grounds.

Transport - as per the transport consultation response above at section 4, the loss of a garage is not considered harmful, as sufficient off-street parking would continue to be provided at the site.

7. CONCLUSION

The proposed development has been assessed and the proposed works are considered to be in accordance with the above relevant policies and planning permission can be granted.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

1HA (TL1 / AP1 / M1)

& DC1 / PD2

IF1; IF3; IF5; IF6; IF7; I24.