

DELEGATED REPORT

Ward: Thames

App No.: 200081

Address: 9 Wilwyne Close, Caversham, Reading, RG4 5EP

Proposal: Proposed erection of a new four bedroom detached dwellinghouse

Applicant: Mr S Keeble

Deadline: 15/03/2020. Deadline extended to allow S106 to complete to 21/5/21

RECOMMENDATION: Grant with S106 for affordable housing

INTRODUCTION

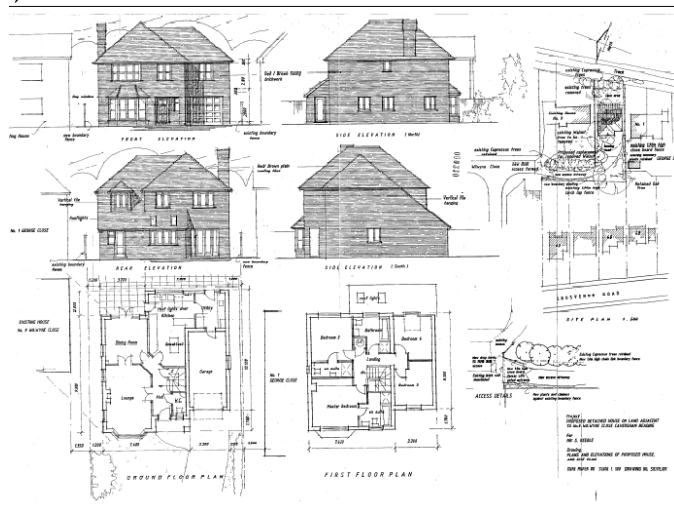
The application site is part of the garden at the side of 9 Wilwyne Close, which is a detached residential dwelling with attached double garage accessed from a privately maintained road (being Wilwyne Close). Wilwyne Close is characterised by having detached dwellings. The application site has a public right of way running north south to the east of it and contains two trees with preservation orders on (TPO); a Walnut and an Oak.. To the South on George Close are a mix of detached, and semi-detached dwellings, and one attached housing unit.



Location Plan

PROPOSAL

To develop a detached 4 bedroom house with access taken off Wilwyne Close. In essence reviving the permission granted in 2003 (outline) and 2006 (Reserved Matters).



Community Infrastructure levy (CIL):

The applicant has submitted a CIL liability form with the submission and the new dwelling will be liable to pay CIL.

PLANNING HISTORY

03/00025/OUT (030794/OUT) - Outline planning permission for one detached house and access APPROVED

06/00330/REM (060072/REM) - Application for reserved matters for the erection of one detached dwelling for residential use, considering the matters of external appearance, design and landscaping. APPROVED

CONSULTATIONS

Statutory - none

Non-statutory

Transport - This proposed development is situated off Wilwyne Close which is a cul-de-sac accessed from Grosvenor Road which is a private unadopted road.

In principle, there are no transport objections to the erection of a detached dwelling as per the previously approved application. The minimum width for a private drive is 2.75m wide but 3m would be preferred. Parking spaces are recommended to be designed at 5m long by 2.5m wide with a manoeuvring distance (forecourt depth) of 6m.

It would not be appropriate for a refuse vehicle to traverse the private drive, therefore, a bin store must be located within 10m of the collection point.

Cycle storage should also be provided in the form of a secure shed or store.
An acceptable parking plan has been provided with turning for vehicles shown.

Landscape - The applicant has submitted an Arboricultural Report in support of this application. There are two significant protected trees within the site subject of Tree Preservation Order 7/95. Of these, a large walnut is proposed to be removed in order to facilitate the build.



TPO.s Walnut Treet

This is a resubmission of an earlier application ref: 03/00025/OUT which was approved. Since this time trees the trees have grown and local policies and British Standards have been updated (including the adoption of the Borough's Tree

Strategy), placing greater importance on the preservation and retention of the Borough's tree stock.

The applicant has submitted an Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Method Statement by ACD Environmental. I am not sure why the report only considers two trees (Oak and Walnut) and one tree group (Leyland Cypress) within the site, overlooking the presence of many other trees and as a result, significantly undermining the Arboricultural Impact of the development proposal.

Of particular note is a large Sycamore growing beyond the rear boundary within a public footpath and which, as a significant, mature tree makes a contribution to the amenity of the local area. The tree has a broad canopy and is likely to have some implications for the usability of the rear garden for future occupants.

The Report lists the Walnut as both a category 'B' (par. 4.3.2) and 'C' (within the schedule) tree. Noted that the tree has a twin stem form which has a prominent 'cup' union which structurally is not a particular cause for concern, however, I do concur with the evidence in the report regarding changes in sound intonation around the base of the tree which indicates the likely presence of decay. I therefore have no objection in principle to the removal of this tree.

The Borough Council seeks to protect and retain all trees in the Borough where it is safe and reasonable to do so and recognises that the very maximum benefit from trees can be accrued to the local area if the trees are allowed to grow to their full potential height and breadth without the foreseeable need for pruning works or to reduce their height in order to prevent them from impacting on the functioning of the telecommunications equipment.

Policy EN14 of the adopted Local Plan which requires that Individual trees, groups of trees, hedges and woodlands will be protected from damage or removal where they are of importance, and Reading's vegetation cover will be extended. The application is also contrary to the objectives within the Boroughs adopted tree strategy and the Revised Sustainable Design and Construction SPD which states that *Development will not be permitted which would undermine current levels of tree cover as this is likely to be damaging to climate change adaptation strategies*'.

The Arboricultural Report submitted in support of this application needs to be extended in order to include all trees growing in or adjacent to the site in accordance with BS:5837 2012. The report should accurately assess the net loss of tree cover on site and future areas of conflict post development. Drainage and service runs including the positions of soakaways will need to be shown. All trees to be removed are replaced in a sustainable location elsewhere within the properties. The potentially large growing Walnut tree which will be required in order to mitigate the removal of the original Walnut should be planted sufficient distance from the Oak so that it's canopy can grow straight and to its full potential without suppression as a result of competition for light and without coming into direct contact with property.

The application will need to be supported by a detailed and high quality landscaping scheme to enhance Wilwyn Close and the setting of the new property if you are minded to approve the application. The current scheme proposes the retention of Cypress Conifers to the front of the property. These are very poor specimens having been topped in the past and although they offer some habitat value as shelter for nesting birds, their wider amenity and ecological value is very limited. As such it is likely that the trees will be removed by any future occupants

of the new property. I would prefer to see these trees removed now in order to permit reasonable landscaping of the two properties. A replacement hedge can be included in order to mitigate the loss of these trees.

Ecology - The application site comprises a parcel of land adjacent to 9 Wilwyne Close where it is proposed to erect a new dwelling. The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (ACD Environmental, December 2019) has been undertaken to an appropriate standard and states that further surveys would need to be undertaken to confirm if the a tree on the site host a bat roost.

The report reads:

“6.4. The walnut, which is proposed for removal, has a compromised twin stem. Cobra bracing has been installed in the upper crown. It is reasoned that the visual inspection of the fork and associated dysfunction will ultimately necessitate the removal of this tree on Health and Safety grounds. It is proposed to utilise the planning application as a means to secure a replacement tree. This is welcomed, given that the tree has some inherent ecological value.

6.5. The walnut tree also has a PRF which could support roosting bats and/or nesting birds. We advocate an aerial inspection to confirm whether this is the case (or not).

6.6. The aerial inspection should be carried out by a qualified tree climber with a Natural England bat licence. If evidence of bats was found, further surveys may be required and/or a licence from Natural England to lawfully destroy the roost. This would include installation of compensatory roosting provision for bats, for example boxes on buildings and/or trees. If evidence of bats was not found, but potential for bats was confirmed, re-inspection prior to felling would be required.”

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.”

In this case, since 1) the presence or otherwise of protected species has not been established, and 2) there appear to be no “exceptional circumstances”, the application would not be in accordance with the above planning policy.

As such, before the application can be determined, a survey to determine the presence or absence of a bat roost in the walnut tree will need to be undertaken. If this information is not provided the application would need to be refused on the grounds that insufficient information has been provided for the council to determine the likely impact of the proposals upon bats, which are a protected species and material consideration in the planning process.

If the survey shows that a bat roost is not present it is likely that there would be no objections to this application on ecology grounds subject to a condition requiring the provision of ecological enhancements on or around the new house.

Officer note - An updated report was submitted. The Ecologist confirmed:

The updated report concludes that the trees did not host roosting bats when they were surveyed, but the walnut tree could be used by bats in the future.

As such, subject to the following conditions there are no objections to this application on ecology grounds:

Condition: The walnut tree that is to be felled shall be surveyed for roosting bats by a suitably qualified ecologist immediately prior to tree works, who will then advise whether roosting bats (or evidence of roosting bats) are present. Should bats or evidence of bats be found no works affecting the roosts are to commence until any relevant licence(s) have been obtained from the Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation (Natural England) and a copy submitted to and approved in writing by the council.

Reason: To ensure that bats, a protected species, are not adversely impacted upon by the development.

Condition: Prior to the occupation of the development, details of biodiversity enhancements, to include bird and bat boxes, tiles or bricks on and around the new buildings and native and wildlife friendly landscaping, and gaps at the bases of new fences to allow hedgehogs to traverse the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the council. The biodiversity enhancements shall thereafter be installed as approved.

Reason: To incorporate biodiversity in and around developments in accordance with paragraph 175 of the NPPF.

Public

79 Chiltern Road, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire, RG4 5HS
42 Grosvenor Road, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire, RG4 5EN
7 Wilwyne Close, Caversham, Reading, RG4 5EP
44 Grosvenor Road, Caversham, Reading, RG4 5EN
8 Wilwyne Close, Caversham, Reading
46 Grosvenor Road, Caversham, Reading
73 Chiltern Road, Caversham, Reading, RG4 5HS
2 George Close, Caversham, Reading, RG4 5EW
48 Grosvenor Road, Caversham, Reading, RG4 5EN
1 George Close, Caversham, Reading, RG4 5EW

Five objections received. Issues raised are loss of privacy, out of keeping with area, inaccuracies since 2006.

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) which states at Paragraph 11 “Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development”.

The development plan for this Local Planning Authority is the Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019). The relevant policies are:

- CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction
- 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
H2: Density and Mix
H3: Affordable Housing
H5: Standards for New Housing
H10: Private and Communal Outdoor Space
H11: Development of Private Residential Gardens
TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging

Relevant Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) are:

Affordable Housing
Sustainable Construction
Parking Standards

APPRAISAL

The main matters to be considered are:

Principle of development

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”. The NPPF definition of ‘previously developed land’ excludes private residential gardens. Policy CC1 reflects this approach.

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

Local Plan Policy H11 (Development of Private Residential Gardens) explains that new residential development that involves land within the curtilage or the former curtilage of private residential gardens will be acceptable where:

- a) It makes a positive contribution to the character of the area;
The character of the area is of detached houses within gardens and the proposed development reflects this. The design is different to No.9, but most of the other houses in the street are individually designed. The most negative impact is the loss of a protected tree - but as identified above the loss of the tree has been accepted by landscape consultants. The proposed dwelling will not harm the character of the area.
- b) The site is of an adequate size to accommodate the development;
The plot size 607 sq.m provides sufficient room for the house proposed.
- c) The proposal has a suitable access;
The access to be taken off Wilwyne Close is suitable.
- d) The proposal would not lead to an unacceptable tandem development;
The relationship of the new house to the existing one and access to it means that this would not be unacceptable tandem development.
- e) The design minimises the exposure of existing private boundaries to public areas;
No new public areas are created adjacent to existing boundaries.

- f) It does not cause detrimental impact on residential amenities;
Neighbours have raised concerns about loss of privacy and outlook but the siting of the new house and windows proposed should not lead to any notable loss of privacy to neighbours - see later section.
- g) The emphasis is on the provision of family housing;
A four bedroom house is proposed.
- h) There is no adverse impact on biodiversity,
The ecologist has commented extensively on the proposed development referencing current policies and requirements. No objections raised.
- i) The proposal does not prejudice the development of a wider area.
There is no scope for any further development here - this "plot" completes the development of rear gardens in this part of Grosvenor Road - see location plan above.

The resulting density and mix of housing complies with Policy H2 and as the site is in the existing built up area of Reading where additional family housing is supported. Therefore, the principle of the proposed development would be acceptable subject to other material planning considerations being satisfied.

Design considerations and effect on character

The proposed dwelling would be forward of No.9 Wilwyne Close but slightly behind the front of No.1 George Close. The siting of the new house will help to punctuate Wilwyne Close as no.s 2 & 3 do at the northern end.

The design is typical English early 20th C in style with bay window, chimney and cat-slide roof with the main roof hipped in from all sides. The proposed materials are brick and tiling.

The design of the other houses in Wilwyne Close are typical for their age and so the new house will look different to this but not in a harmful way. Some neighbours have commented on the height and shape of the new house and the proposed chimney detail as it will appear different to and slightly taller than (just over 8 metres tall to ridge) the rectangular form of No.9 with its shallow roof pitch. In terms of shape and height it will appear more similar to the properties in George Close. Overall it is considered that the impact that the proposed design will have on the character of the area will be neutral.



No9 Wilwyne Close



New house



1 George Close

The proposed design is acceptable and in keeping with the appearance of other houses in the locality (Policy CC7).

Impact on residential amenity

The proposed amenity space would provide sufficient outdoor space for potential future occupiers of the dwelling and would be in keeping with the size of amenity spaces to detached dwellings in the surrounding area as required by Policy H10.

The internal room sizes and facilities are also of an acceptable standard.

In terms of impact on neighbours the siting of the house would be 2.5 metres away from the nearest wall at No.9; about 2 metres from the nearest side wall at no.1 George Close. There will be some oblique views over rear gardens from 2 bedroom windows but not an unacceptable relationship for a suburban street like this. From the rear elevation of properties on both Grosvenor Road and Chiltern Road the distance to the new house will be at least 30 metres. A neighbour has queried side facing windows but these are limited to just one at first floor serving an ensuite.

The conclusion reached is that the residential amenity of existing neighbours will not be harmed and the amenities of future occupiers are acceptable. Complies with Policy CC8.

Transport

Acceptable vehicular access can be provided and it has been demonstrated that larger delivery vehicles will be able to turn on site. Subject to the recommended conditions being applied there are no transport objections to the proposed development as it meets the relevant policies TR£ & TR5 for access and parking.

Landscape/ecology

The landscaping and ecological aspects of this proposed development have been carefully considered - see comments above. While it is a pity that the Walnut tree is to be felled it is a material planning consideration that planning permission was granted for a new dwelling here and the loss of the tree accepted then. The tree has continued to decline. Recently permission has been granted for works to the TPO.d Oak tree.

On balance it is considered that the proposed development, which will retain boundary planting is acceptable subject to the recommended landscape and ecological conditions being applied in accordance with Policies EN10 & EN12.

Sustainable development

Policy H5 requires that all new dwellings will be built to a high water efficiency standard (as required by Building Regs 2015) and that as a minimum a 19% improvement on the dwelling emission rate will be achieved. The dwelling also needs to be accessible and adaptable for future users. A planning condition will be used to ensure compliance.

S106

All new dwellings in Reading are required to contribute towards the supply of affordable housing and where less than 10 dwellings are proposed an off-site financial contribution is acceptable. The applicant has provided estate agent valuations for the proposed dwelling and a contribution has been agreed using the formula set out in the adopted SPD for Affordable Housing. This contribution needs to be secured by a S106 Planning Agreement that needs to be completed before planning permission can be granted.

Equalities Impact

When determining an application for planning permission the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups as identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this 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 proposed development.

CONCLUSION

This proposal has been carefully considered in the context of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and supplementary planning documents, other material planning considerations and comment received from neighbours and consultees. The recommendation is, subject to the completion of a S106 legal agreement to make a contribution towards affordable housing, planning permission can be granted.

Case Officer: Julie Williams/James Overall