

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Application No: 201452/FUL

Address: Land adjacent to 135 Norcot Road, Tilehurst, Reading

Proposal: Construction of 1no. new 4 Bedroom dwelling with associated amenity space and off-street parking on land adjacent 135 Norcot Road

Case officer: Ethne Humphreys

Target Date: Originally 10/12/2020; Extension of Time Agreed until 21st May 2021

Site Description and Surrounding Area:

The application site relates to land to the north west of No.135 Norcot Road, located on the northern side of Norcot Road. The site is currently vacant.

The surrounding properties comprise two storey buildings with a mix of terrace properties, linked detached houses and maisonettes/ flats, some of which have been extended.

Proposal:

This is an application for the erection of a 4 bedroom house with associated amenity space and off street parking on land adjacent 135 Norcot Road.

The materials used in the construction of the building will include:

- Red brickwork and render, slate roof finish, and white painted timber/composite doors and windows

2 car parking spaces are proposed at the front of the site and soft landscaping is also indicated on the plans.

Plans Considered:

Drawing No: Proposed Site Plan and Ground Floor Plan 2025 - PL- 101 Rev B

Received 19th January 2020

Drawing No: Proposed Floor Plans (and Location Plan) 2025 - PL- 102

Drawing No: Proposed Floor Plans and Elevations 2025 - PL- 103

Drawing No: Proposed Contextual Elevations 2025 - PL- 104

Received 15th October 2020

Relevant Planning History:

200950/FUL Construction of 2no. new 3 Bedroom dwellings with associated amenity space and off street parking on land currently owned by 135 Norcot Road. Withdrawn.

080612/FUL To build three x four bed houses on a site to the east and north of 135 Norcot Road Tilehurst Reading. Withdrawn.

070554 Development of land to provide 5 additional houses. Withdrawn.

070223/FUL Development of land at 135 Norcot Road to provide 3 additional houses (re-submission of planning application 07/00317/FUL). Refused and dismissed at appeal.

900335/OUT Erection of five bedroom house with integral garage. Permitted.

Consultation Responses:

Highways Officer: Further to revised plans, no objection subject to conditions and informatives.

Tree Officer: Further to revised plans, no objection subject to conditions.

Valuations: Whilst full policy compliant contribution not viable, £17,000 with deferred mechanism should be secured.

Neighbour letters were sent to adjoining properties and 8 neighbour letters of representation (3 from the same property and 2 from the same property) received. The concerns are summarised as follows:

- overbearing/loss of light/sunlight
- cramped/insufficient soft landscaping
- out of keeping
- smell from bins
- overlooking/loss of privacy
- loss of outlook
- loss of biodiversity
- position of telephone wiring
- insufficient affordable housing contribution
- future plans of land to rear of site

- future tandem development

Summary of discussions with applicant/agent:

The agent was advised of concerns relating the amount of hardstanding, parking provision and impact on trees/soft landscaping. Further to revised plans, no further objection from the Transport or Tree Officers subject to conditions.

An extension of time was agreed on the extension until 21st May 2021.

No formal pre-application advice was sought prior to the submission of this application.

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'. However, the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making. In this case the development plan consists of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

Accordingly, the National Planning Policy Framework and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

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
H1: Provision of Housing
H2: Density and Mix
H3: Affordable Housing
H5: Standards for New Housing
H10: Private and Communal Outdoor Space
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

Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011)
Affordable Housing SPD (2013) / Draft Affordable Housing SPD (October 2020)
Revised SPD on Planning Obligations under Section 106 (2015)
Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2019)
DCLG Technical housing standards - nationally described space standard (2015)

Appraisal

Principle of development / land use matters

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.

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 that previously developed land should be the first choice for housing development.

The Council's Local Plan Policy H11 Development of Private Residential Gardens requires that new residential development that involves land within the curtilage of private residential gardens will be acceptable where:

- a) It makes a positive contribution to the character of the area;
- b) The site is of an adequate size to accommodate the development;
- c) The proposal has a suitable access;
- d) The proposal would not lead to an unacceptable tandem development;
- e) The design minimises the exposure of existing private boundaries to public areas;
- f) It does not cause detrimental impact on residential amenities;
- g) The emphasis is on the provision of family housing;
- h) There is no adverse impact on biodiversity, and
- i) The proposal does not prejudice the development of a wider area.

Therefore, while the proposed site is not 'previously developed land', the principle of redevelopment is considered acceptable providing the criteria outlined in Policies are met.

Furthermore, it is considered that the principle of providing Class C3 residential use at the site is acceptable in that this aligns with the broad objectives of Policy H1. More specifically, the proposals would assist the Borough in meeting its annual housing targets. The proposal of 1x4 bed family dwelling, set within the context of the size and nature of the site, is considered acceptable. The density of development is also considered suitable, with the proposal making an efficient use of the space/land available.

Design, Impact on the Character of the Area and Street Scene

Policy CC7: Design requires all development to 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 include layout, landscape, density and mix, scale - height and massing and architectural detail and materials.

Application 200950, which was for two houses, was withdrawn due to concerns regarding overdevelopment of the site, crampedness, detailed design and lack of soft landscaping at the front of the site.

Since application 200950 was withdrawn, this revised proposal now seeks permission for one house rather than two. There is a greater gap to the side boundaries than previous, a reduction

in hardstanding (with room for soft landscaping) and the previous comments largely taken on board which is welcomed and discussed in more detail elsewhere in this report.

The building line along this part of Norcot Road is slightly staggered and the dwelling would be sited forward of No.131 and slightly behind No.135. As such, the proposal would effectively provide a continuation of the form and layout of this part of Norcot Road, by continuing the existing road line and largely reflecting the placement of the houses. As such, the proposal would be reflective of the immediate street scene in this respect, the continuation of which is not considered to result in any significant harm to the character of the wider area. Whilst the overall footprint would be relatively large, given the separation to the side boundaries of approximately 1.7m either side, the siting of the dwelling within the plot is considered to suitably accommodate the dwelling without giving a feeling of overdevelopment.

Whilst the plot size itself would be smaller than those immediately adjacent (131 and 35 Norcot Road), it would be comparable to plot sizes of dwellings to the north of the site and largely to those on the south side of Norcot Road. Whilst not fully in-keeping as noted, it would be commensurate to the size of the dwelling and no harm is considered to arise in its size or layout.

In terms of detailed design, whilst the appearance would differ from that immediately either side, the character of Norcot Road is noticeably varied, including bungalows opposite the site. In this respect, the siting, appearance, bulk and mass of the dwelling with brick and render finish is considered acceptable in the context of the mixed character of surrounding properties. The ridge height would be comparable with its neighbours and the plot width frontage would be in keeping with that found in the prevailing character of the surrounding area.

Whilst the rear dormer window would be a somewhat odd design feature, the rear elevation would be relatively symmetrically in appearance and, given its location at the rear of the property would not be readily visible from the public domain.

Overall, it is considered that the proposed building has taken enough design cues from the street scene where appropriate, and it is not considered that the design makes the proposals so conspicuous so as to cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area. The proposals would not be overly excessive in scale, allowing for soft landscaping, parking spaces and access. Indeed, the proposal is considered to strike an

appropriate balance between maximising the potential of the site for residential development whilst not representing an overdevelopment of the site.

To ensure suitable quality of materials it is considered reasonable and appropriate to secure further details (and samples) of the proposed materials by way of a suitable worded pre-commencement condition. With this condition secured and in light of the above, it is considered that the proposals would not adversely harm the character of the surrounding streetscape or give rise to an overly dominant or incongruous addition to the immediate area such to warrant a refusal. In compliance with Policies CC8, H10 and H11.

Impact on Neighbour Amenity

Residential amenity is assessed against Policy CC8 which requires developments to not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing properties in terms of: 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; and Crime and safety.

The neighbouring properties potentially most affected by the proposal are No's 131 and 135 Norcot Road, located to the north west and south east of the site respectively.

Concern has been raised by the occupiers of No.131 Norcot Road that the proposals would result in a loss of privacy and overlooking, that they would be visually dominant and result in a loss of light and outlook to this property.

In relation to No.131, the proposed dwelling would not project past the rear elevation of this property. Given this, combined with the distance to the common boundary of 1.7m (and further to No.131 itself), and the orientation of No.131, the proposals are not considered to result in any material loss of light or overbearing impact to the occupiers of this property. A first floor window is proposed on the flank elevation facing this property. Given this would serve an ensuite bathroom this could be conditioned to be obscurely glazed to prevent any material loss of privacy. The first floor windows would face down the garden of the proposed dwelling and any views across to No.131 would be at an oblique angle and not an unusual relationship. Whilst clearly visible to the occupiers of No.131, the proposals are not considered to result in any significant material loss of light, privacy or overbearing impact. It is not unusual for properties to have bin and cycle stores in their garden and the bin store is considered a sufficient enough distance away from No.131 to not result in any unacceptable smells. Any future concerns would

be dealt with through Environmental Health legislation; the proposal is for a residential development and is unlikely to result in a significant increase in noise and pollution.

In relation to No.135 itself, whilst the proposed building would project past the rear elevation of this property, it would not breach a 45 degree line to the nearest habitable room window and the main roof would be hipped away to minimise the impact. Whilst clearly visible to the occupiers of No.135, given its position to the north west and the distances between properties, it is not considered to result in any significant material loss of light or overbearing impact to warrant a refusal on this basis. A first floor window is proposed on the flank elevation facing this property. As above, given this would serve an en-suite bathroom this could be conditioned to be obscurely glazed to prevent any material loss of privacy. Given the nature of the proposed subdivision, the upper floor windows would look across to the north western part of the remaining garden of No.135. However, given the distance and that this would be the rearmost part of their garden - with sufficient garden space remaining to No.135 - this is not considered to result in any material loss of privacy to the occupiers of this property.

Concern has been raised that the proposed dwelling would result in a loss of privacy and overbearing impact to the occupiers of No.11 Delft Close and loss of privacy to No.12 Delft Close, to the rear of the site. There would be at least 20m to the boundaries with No's 11 and 12 and further to the houses themselves which would comply with Policy CC8 which references a 20m back to back distance as being appropriate. In this specific instance, this is not an unusual relationship and, whilst visible, the proposed dwelling is not considered to result in any significantly harmful material loss of privacy or overbearing impact to the occupiers of these properties.

In terms of noise, vibrations, dust and fume considerations, it is considered that both during the construction phase, and subsequently, the proposals will be acceptable subject to a variety of conditions for any permission. A construction method statement will therefore be secured via condition and is 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 and in compliance with policy CC8.

Amenity of Future Occupiers

Policy H5 (Standards for New Housing) seeks that all new building housing is built to high standards. 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.

It is considered that the proposals would provide an overall good standard of accommodation throughout with fairly regular shaped rooms providing suitable outlook, natural lighting and ventilation. Internally, the floor spaces would largely comply with the space standards as set out in Policy H5. Whilst the actual usable floorspace to the rooms in the loft might fall slightly short of the space standards, given these would serve a 4th bedroom/guest room and study, this is not considered unacceptable.

As discussed above, whilst the proposed garden area would be smaller than that immediately adjoining, it would be commensurate to the size of the dwelling and not out of keeping with the wider area which features gardens of similar size.

The plans also include conveniently located cycle and waste storage facilities. Overall, the proposals are considered to provide suitable accommodation within the context of the constraints of the site.

Therefore, in overall terms and having applied a critical planning balance to the consideration of the scheme as a whole, the proposal as a whole is considered to provide an overall suitable standard of accommodation, in line with Policies EN16 and CC8 in particular.

Transport Issues

Policies TR1, TR3 and TR5 seek to address access, traffic, highway and parking relates matters relating to development.

The site is located on the classified C401 Norcot Road and is located within Zone 3, Secondary Core Area, of the Council's adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD. Typically, these areas are within 400m of a Reading Buses high frequency 'Premier Route', which provides high quality bus routes to and from Reading town centre and other local centre facilities. It should also be noted that Norcot Road forms part of the Red Route 'no stopping' corridor which has been implemented along the bus route number 17 corridor.

Policy TR5 of the Local Plan states "*Development should provide car parking and cycle parking that is appropriate to the accessibility of locations within the Borough to sustainable transport facilities, particularly public transport*".

The site currently has a vehicular dropped crossing along the site frontage, and this is to be retained, with the proposal originally providing 3 car parking spaces. However, as there is a lamp column situated on the footway outside the property which would need to be relocated in order to maintain a minimum clearance of 1m from a vehicle crossing (top of transition kerb) to reduce risk of damage from turning vehicles, the applicant submitted revised plans reducing the number of car parking spaces from 3 to 2 to avoid the lamp. This complies with the Council's adopted Parking Standards SPD.

Further to the above, Policy TR5 includes a requirement for each new house to be provided with an electric charging point. This can be dealt with by of condition.

Cycle storage has been proposed and is located at the rear of the site. Whilst the proposed location is acceptable, detailed plans confirming that the cycle parking provision meets the Council's adopted standards in terms of layout is required. This can be dealt with by way of condition.

Bin storage is proposed to be located to the rear of the dwelling which is acceptable. The applicant is reminded that refuse and recycling bins would need to be transported to the front of the site on collection days for kerbside collection as per the other houses in the street.

In the circumstances there are no transport objections to the proposed development subject to conditions and informatives (Policies TR1, TR3 and TR5).

Natural Environment

Policy CC7 seeks that development is of high design quality and maintains and enhances the character of the area in which it is located including landscaping. Policy EN14 requires new development to make provision for tree retention and planting. Policy EN12 requires that new development should provide a net gain for biodiversity where possible and should incorporate biodiversity features into proposals where practical.

Concern was originally raised that the proposed parking provision of 3 spaces as originally proposed would result in the removal of the established Photina hedge and that the creation of a large area of wide hardstanding would limit opportunity for soft landscaping and to the detriment of the street scene. Concern was also raised about tree protection.

Further to revised plans, reducing the parking provision from 3 to 2 spaces, the Council's Tree Officer considers this to be acceptable and there is no objection subject to approval and implementation of a scheme of hard and soft landscaping and Arboricultural Method Statement in respect of the retained trees in compliance with Policies CC7 and EN14.

Given the nature of the scheme, it would also be appropriate to ensure that ecological/biodiversity enhancements are provided, and this can also be secured by way of condition in compliance with Policy EN12.

Sustainability

No specific information has been submitted in relation to the sustainability or energy credentials of the proposed development.

Notwithstanding the above, Policy H5 'Housing Standards' requires that all new build housing integrate additional measures for sustainability. In light of this conditions are recommended to ensure the development meets the following requirements:

- Higher water efficiency standards of 110 litres per person per day; and
- A 19% improvement over building regulations energy requirements

Although secured by planning condition, these new requirements will be administered through the Building Regulations. Confirmation of compliance will need to be submitted to the LPA to discharge the condition.

Affordable Housing

In accordance with Policy H3 (Affordable Housing) the proposed development, being for one additional unit, would therefore be liable for a contribution towards off-site affordable housing provision elsewhere in the Borough.

The applicant submitted viability information seeking to justify a nil contribution towards affordable housing. The Council's Valuer has assessed the information provided and, in summary, does not agree with the viability information submitted. Instead, Officers consider that whilst a full policy compliant contribution is not viable, a contribution of £17,000 towards affordable housing elsewhere in the Borough should be provided. This has been agreed by the applicant, as well as a 50/50 deferred payment mechanism on an increase in sale value

(capped). This will consequently be secured via s106 legal agreement. With this secured the proposal is considered to comply with Policy H3.

CIL

The proposal would be a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) liable development. The applicant has provided the appropriate CIL Additional Information Form. An informative would be attached to the decision notice to advise the applicant of their responsibilities in this respect. Based on the information provided, this is estimated to amount to £34,867.97 (222.5m2 of the proposed dwellings x £156.71 per m2 (2021 indexation rate)).

Other Issues

In relation to planning conditions, in line with section 100ZA(5) of the Town and Country Planning Act (as amended), which came into force on 01/10/18, the agent was emailed on 18/02/2021 regarding pre-commencement conditions. No response has been received within the 10 day response time and as such these conditions will be automatically imposed.

Other Matter Raised in Representations

All material considerations addressed in the above report.

Concern has been raised about the future of the remaining land at the rear of the site. The land at the rear does not form part of this current proposal and this application has been assessed on its merits. If permission was granted and material changes were made to the scheme the applicants would need to apply for permission to any such changes, which would then be assessed on their merits. Similarly, any separate planning application for future proposals relating to the land at the rear of the site would be assessed on their merits.

Any unacceptable smells from the bins/odour concerns would be covered by Environmental Health legislation.

The applicant would need to seek permission from utility providers to relocate the telephone wiring. Maintenance related matters are for the statutory undertakers to resolve and this would be a civil matter.

Conclusion

The proposals are considered to be acceptable within the context of national and local planning policies, as detailed in the appraisal above. Ultimately, when applying an overall

critical planning balance of all material considerations, the benefits are considered to outweigh the conflicts. As such, full planning permission is recommended for approval, subject to conditions and completion of the S106 Legal Agreement.