

## 200232 - 15a Southcote Lane - Delegate Householder Application Report

**Ward:** Southcote  
**App Ref:** 200232  
**Address:** 15a Southcote Lane, Reading, RG30 3AA  
**Proposal:** Loft conversion.  
**Case Officer:** Mr James Schofield  
**Applicant:** Mr & Mrs Harrison  
**Date received (valid from):** 13 February 2020  
**Target Decision date:** 28 April 2020

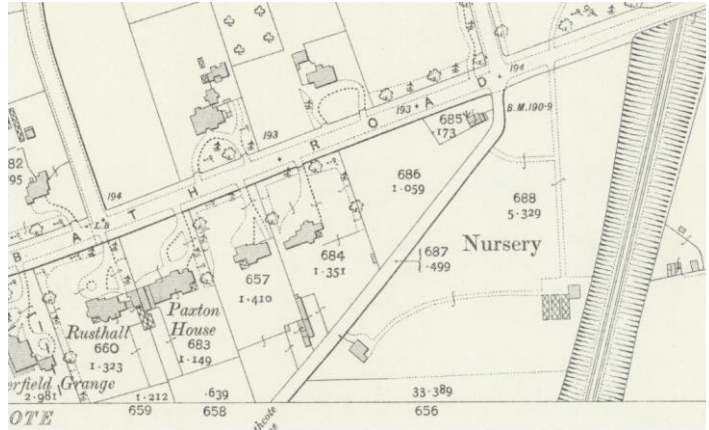
### 1. SITE DESCRIPTION

15a Southcote Lane is on the southside of Southcote Lane between its junctions with Bath Road and Kenilworth Avenue. Southcote Lane has a decreasing elevation moving from north (Bath Road) to south (Kenilworth Avenue). This means 13 Southcote Lane is on slightly higher ground and 15 Southcote Lane on slightly lower ground.

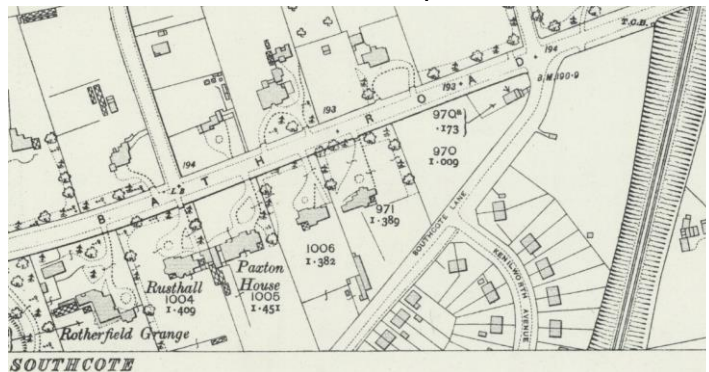
With the exceptions of 15a Southcote Lane and 45a-c Bath Road, the southern stretches of Southcote Lane and Bath Road between Kenilworth Avenue and the train tracks are semi-detached houses with prominent bays in their front elevations, a high degree of symmetry, mirrored features and materials (including red brick, white render, timber and hanging-tiles) in front elevations, prominent hipped roofs and centrally placed and prominent chimneys. Two symmetrical bays from the ground to the first floor take place in each front elevation prior to any break between attached buildings.

Historic OS maps demonstrate this stretch of Southcote Lane and Bath Road was developed out of a former nursery starting with 15 Southcote Lane sometime between 1911 and 1932. The remainder of the dwellings take their design cues from 15 Southcote Lane and were built in the 1950s (replacing two rows of terraces circa 30s to 50s), 15a Southcote Lane was added in the late

1960s/early 1970s and in 2001 the demolition of two typical semi-detached dwellings took place to make space for 45a-c Bath Road. While 45a-c are at the extreme end of this type of development and are partially screened from the streetscene by trees; 15a Southcote lane is conspicuous by contrast. It offers the streetscene an obvious and detrimental visual break.



1911 OS Map



1932 OS Map



1960 OS Map

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15a Southcote Lane has a strikingly long and contentious planning history over the past decade. The dwelling has been described by Inspectors in recent planning appeal decisions as a “squat,” “out of place” and “unappealing” addition to an otherwise appealing and coherent streetscene. The dwelling originally employed red brick, but later used yellow brick in a ground floor front extension to both the main dwelling and side extension. The first floor uses yellow and pink stones of various sizes as facing on the main dwelling; a similar stone finish but in grey has been employed on the first floor of the side extension. This ad hoc approach has resulted in a dwelling characterised within the streetscene by its incoherent use of disparate styles, proportions and materials which neither respond or relate to one another within the dwelling or its wider context.

Six applications relating to roof alterations have been submitted. All six were refused. Three of these saw an appeal submitted and subsequently dismissed by the Inspectorate. In the eyes of the Inspectors and the Council, if successful, these schemes would have resulted in a roof which overwhelmed the original dwelling and would have removed any remaining vestiges of visual coherence left in the design of the front elevation.

### 2. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The application seeks permission for various roof alterations and the introduction of two bays to the first-floor front elevation. The proposal would increase the ridge height of the roof, create a loft and convert the roof type from gable to hipped. Plans considered;

| Plan reference & date of receipt                                                                                         | Notes:                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Drawing No. 01 Existing Plans & Elevations<br>Drawing No. 02 Proposed Plans & Elevations<br>As received 13 February 2020 | Original Submission.                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Drawing No. 02 Rev.A Proposed Plans & Elevations<br>As received 6 April 2020                                             | Response to request for streetscene plan.                                                                                                                                                          |
| Drawing No. 02 Rev.B Proposed Plans & Elevations<br>As received 7 April 2020                                             | Inclusion of streetscene plan.                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Drawing No. 03 Comparison Elevations & Sections<br>As received 15 April 2020                                             | Response to request for amended plans addressing the out of scale roof relative to the main dwelling.                                                                                              |
| Drawing No. 02 Rev.C.1 Proposed Plans & Elevations<br>As received 21 April 2020                                          | Negotiating front elevation 1:<br>One two-storey bay added.                                                                                                                                        |
| Drawing No. 02 Rev.C.2 Proposed Plans & Elevations<br>As received 21 April 2020                                          | Negotiating front elevation 2:<br>Two two-storey bays of asymmetrical proportions and siting.                                                                                                      |
| Drawing No. 02 Rev.C.3 Proposed Plans & Elevations<br>As received 21 April 2020                                          | Negotiating front elevation 3:<br>Two first floor bays of symmetrical size in same render as first floor) and siting. Re-siting/re-sizing of ground floor window to align with first floor window. |
| Drawing No. 02 Rev.C.4 Proposed Plans & Elevations<br>As received 23 April 2020                                          | Negotiating front elevation 4:<br>Two first floor bays of asymmetrical size in brick to match the ground floor. Partial re-siting/re-sizing of ground                                              |

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|                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                               | floor window to align with first floor window.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Drawing No. 02 Rev.D Proposed Plans & Elevations<br>As received 23 April 2020 | Final submission:<br>Two first floor bays of asymmetrical size. The eastern/larger bay in brick to match the ground floor front elevation; the western/smaller bay in render to match the first floor. Partial re-siting/re-sizing of ground floor right-hand window to align with first floor bay; required infill for window to match surrounding existing brick. |

### 3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

|                |                                                                                                                                                          |
|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| APP Ref:       | 091449/HOU                                                                                                                                               |
| Proposal:      | Two storey side and rear extension with new roof to include 3 dormer windows to the front and rear.                                                      |
| Decision:      | Refused                                                                                                                                                  |
| Decision date: | 13/10/2009                                                                                                                                               |
| APP Ref:       | 100641/HOU                                                                                                                                               |
| Proposal:      | Proposed two storey side and rear extension with alterations to roof to provide rooms in roof space (resubmission of planning application 09/01804/FUL). |
| Decision:      | Refused/Appeal dismissed                                                                                                                                 |
| Decision date: | 29/03/2010                                                                                                                                               |
| APP Ref:       | 102059/HOU                                                                                                                                               |
| Proposal:      | Proposed two storey side and rear extension with alterations to roof to provide rooms in roof space (resubmission of planning application 10/00171/FUL). |
| Decision:      | Refused                                                                                                                                                  |
| Decision date: | 26/10/2010                                                                                                                                               |
| APP Ref:       | 110086/HOU                                                                                                                                               |
| Proposal:      | Two storey side and rear extension and single storey rear extension (Resubmission of planning application 10/01998/FUL).                                 |
| Decision:      | Permitted                                                                                                                                                |
| Decision date: | 13/04/2011                                                                                                                                               |
| APP Ref:       | 130783/HOU                                                                                                                                               |
| Proposal:      | Single storey front extension.                                                                                                                           |
| Decision:      | Permitted                                                                                                                                                |
| Decision date: | 01/08/2013                                                                                                                                               |
| APP Ref:       | 161314/HOU                                                                                                                                               |
| Proposal:      | Two storey side & rear extensions with new roof & rooms in the roof space.                                                                               |
| Decision:      | Refused                                                                                                                                                  |
| Decision date: | 12/09/2016                                                                                                                                               |
| APP Ref:       | 171250/HOU                                                                                                                                               |
| Proposal:      | Roof alteration.                                                                                                                                         |
| Decision:      | Refused/Appeal dismissed                                                                                                                                 |
| Decision date: | 07/09/2017                                                                                                                                               |

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|                |                                                                 |
|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| APP Ref:       | 181136/HOU                                                      |
| Proposal:      | Roof alteration to facilitate additional rooms at second floor. |
| Decision:      | Refused/Appeal dismissed                                        |
| Decision date: | 21/08/2018                                                      |

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#### 4. CONSULTATIONS

##### Neighbours

A site notice was displayed and all adjoining neighbours were consulted by letter. One objection form 13 Southcote Lane was received; this is addressed in section 7.3 *Amenity*.

#### 5. 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.

#### 6. 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 Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (2019)

National Planning Practice Guidance

##### Reading Borough Local Plan (adopted 2019)

CC7: Design and the Public Realm

CC8: Safeguarding Amenity

EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network

H9: House Extensions and Ancillary Accommodation

##### SPG/SPD

A Design Guide to House Extensions SPG

#### 7. APPRAISAL

##### 7.1 *Principle of development*

Residential alterations including the construction of outbuildings are supported in principle by Policy H9 (House Extensions and Ancillary Accommodation) of the Local Plan (2019) subject to a number of criteria ensuring the effects of such extensions and alterations respect its context and are not harmful. These considerations will be examined in more detail in the following sections.

## 7.2 Character and scale

Policy CC7 of the Local Plan states that, development must be of a high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area in Reading in which it is located. Policy H9 states that an extension will be acceptable where it: respects the character of the house, the pattern of neighbouring properties and building lines.

The proposed roof alterations and first-floor bays are considered to work together to overcome three principle issues with the proposed character and scale of previous schemes for roof alterations which were deemed unacceptable.

- Firstly, the introduction of a hipped-roof does partially help to reduce the sense of scale of the roof, and does go some way to help incorporate the roof of the site into the established character of the streetscene.
- Secondly, the proposed first-floor bays help to tie together the front elevation; the ground and first floors having a visual link between them and the roof; further reducing its perceived scale and bulk. Accordingly, the result is the proposed roof would not come to dominate the entire front elevation as demonstrated in previous proposals.
- Thirdly, the house takes on a less squat appearance, as the bays establish hierarchical links between each level, drawing on design features seen elsewhere in the streetscene, and thus modestly reducing the sense the dwelling is detrimentally out of keeping with its wider context.

This third point is reinforced by the use of white render on the first-floor (seen elsewhere in the streetscene), the re-siting/re-sizing of the ground-floor western window (allowing for it to align with the first-floor bay) and the use of brick matching the ground-floor front elevation in both the larger bay and any ground-floor infill required around revised fenestration in the ground-floor.

The proposed smaller second bay is deemed to be less beneficial to these three points than a second equally sized bay in matching brick, as originally discussed with the agent (*incomplete plans were submitted during the course of and as the basis of negotiation [Drawing No. 02 Rev.C.3 Proposed Plans & Elevations As received 21 April 2020]*). Regardless, due to the smaller size of the proposed second bay, the use of render is deemed to be more appropriate than matching brick; as it helps to establish a visual sense of subordination to the larger bay. This allows the bay to instead act as a feature of the first-floor in its own right rather than a symmetrical counterweight of the larger bay matching the streetscene. Instead of tying the ground-floor to the roof and the dwelling to its wider context; the smaller bay performs a function of tying the first floor and roof together visually, as well as adding much needed tasteful architectural interest. Despite resulting in some level of persistent detrimental incongruency, the proposed smaller bay in render is considered a net improvement to the character of the dwelling due to the currently established character of the site.

It should be noted that this site has had a ground-floor front extension before the bays were added; any approval of this scheme should not be thought of as a precedent for replicating this result elsewhere within the streetscene. Any acceptability is due to an effort to improve this specific site incrementally.

While this proposal is not a panacea to the problems the site poses, neither completely incorporating the dwelling into its context or enriching it with innovative modern high-quality architecture, it is considered to improve the character and appearance of the dwelling and go some way toward amelioration of those problems.

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However, because the plans do not completely remove the potential for its details to be called into doubt, and the planning history of the site suggest this is not entirely unlikely, a requirement for the approval of materials to be used is considered to be necessary for any recommendation to approve the scheme. Of particular interest is the material palette choices for the front elevation; ensuring the use of bricks throughout the front elevation match those in the ground-floor front elevation, that the choices of render and paint are appropriate to the streetscene (white) and windows/trim appropriate to the dwelling and the wider streetscene. Furthermore, conditions controlling the use of PD rights in the appearance of the front elevation seem equally prudent for the same reasons as those discussed above.

For the reasons discussed above and due to site specifics which may not pertain elsewhere in the wider context, the development is no longer considered to cause any significant harm to the character or appearance of either the dwelling or the wider area, and therefore, accords with the aims of Policy CC7 and the design considerations of Policy H9.

### 7.3 *Amenity*

Policy CC8 requires development to refrain from causing a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for residents. And Policy H9 compliments these aims by indicating that acceptable development will not present an overbearing impact on neighbours or public areas.

The proposal is not considered likely to impose a detrimental impact on neighbour's privacy or to create a sense of overbearingness; with no new views into adjacent neighbour's private outdoor amenity space being introduced. A condition restricting PD rights for the roof, most importantly proposals for rear dormers or revised fenestration, is considered prudent to ensure any such changes do not cause such detrimental impacts in the future.

Previous refusal reasons for similar proposals have included a detrimental impact upon access to sunlight at 13 Southcote Lane. On this occasion, the occupant of this address has submitted an objection against this proposal on this basis. However, this proposal has a ridgeline which is slightly less tall, and the Inspector for the subsequent appeal dismissed this refusal reason (please note: he did not dismiss the character and scale reason). After careful consideration, this revised proposal is not considered to cause any harmful overshadowing to the occupants of 13 Southcote Lane.

Subsequent to the above analysis, in this instance and based on the site's individual circumstances, the proposed development is deemed to accord with Policy CC8 and Policy H9 subject to recommended conditions.

### 7.4 *Biodiversity and sustainability*

Part 'b' of Policy EN12 indicates that all development sites should not result in a net loss of biodiversity or geodiversity. These aims are supported by Policy H9 which states that development will only be acceptable where it does not result in the loss of biodiversity within gardens.

Part 'b' of Policy EN12 indicates that all development sites should not result in a net loss of biodiversity or geodiversity. These aims are supported by Policy H9 which states that an extension will only be acceptable where it does not result in the loss of biodiversity within gardens.

The proposal is not considered likely to result in a net loss of biodiversity or geodiversity. As such the proposal is considered to accord with the biodiversity and sustainability considerations of Policies H9 and EN12 of the local plan.

**8. CONCLUSION**

In light of the above assessment the proposal is considered to accord with the requirements of the development plan and satisfactorily overcome those previous reasons refusal upheld by the most recent appeal decision. As such, the proposed development is recommended for approval subject to conditions.

**9. RECOMMENDATION**

GRANT

**10. CONDITIONS**

1. TL1 Time Limit
2. AP1 Approved Plans
3. M2 Materials to be approved
4. PD2 No new windows/doors/dormers in front elevation or rear/side elevations of the new roof.

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### APPENDIX

#### Site Photos

Photographs provided by agent in April 2020.

