

DELEGATED HOUSEHOLDER APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Mapledurham
App Ref: 192055
Address: 167 Upper Woodcote Road, Reading, RG4 7JR
Proposal: Two storey side & rear and roof extension.
Case Officer: Mr James Schofield
Applicant: Mr & Mrs Dew
Date received (valid from): 1 January 2020
Target Decision date: 28 June 2020

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

Upper Woodcote Road is a suburban street characterised by detached dwellings in a mixture of architectural styles and materials including 2-storey houses and chalet style bungalows with a mixture of gable and hipped roofs, and wall treatments in brick and/or render. These dwellings typically enjoy generous gardens. The application site is a chalet style bungalow with some first floor accommodation, with a gable ended roof, prominent chimney and attached garage with a flat roof. The site does not include any protected trees, and the site is not within a conservation area. The site is within an area deemed to be suitable for bats.

2. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The application seeks permission for two-storey side, rear and roof extensions which would extensively increase the scale of the dwelling; transforming it into a two-storey house with a hipped roof and wall treatments in brick and render. The attached garage would have a small gable roof tied into the roof of a single-storey front extension; while the remainder of the garage would have a flat roof (not visible from the street). The proposal would also re-site the front door from the side elevation to the front elevation with a gable-ended portico to cover. This would provide increased accommodation at the first and second floor. Plans considered:

Drawing No. 167UWR.SP101 Location and Block Plans
Drawing No. 167UWR.MP02 Proposed Plan & Elevations
Drawing No. 167UWR.MP01 Existing Plan & Elevations
As received 6 January 2020

Preliminary bat roost assessment & Emergence Survey
As received 16 June 2020

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

None relevant.

4. CONSULTATIONS

Neighbours

A site notice was displayed and all adjoining neighbours were consulted by letter. One objection was received from 165 Upper Woodcote Way regarding concerns about loss of light and the view of a brick wall. However, it is noted that the proposal does not include a blank wall along this boundary line. This is addressed more fully in section 7.3 regarding amenity.

Natural Environment

Officers indicated there were no objections regarding tree concerns.

Ecology

Officers indicated the site is within an area deemed to be suitable for bats and a bat survey would need to be sought. One was subsequently sought and the Ecology Officer has provided the following comments in response:

A planning authority's duty under The Habitat Regulations

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[The courts have considered the application of a planning authority's duty under the Habitat Regulations e.g. Morge vs Hampshire County Council (2010). In the Morge case the supreme court has ruled that it cannot see why planning permission should not be granted unless the proposed development would be unlikely to be licensed as a derogation from those provisions.]

Consideration of The Habitat Regulations

In this case it is considered that as long as a mitigation plan such as that given in the bat survey report is provided the proposed works would pass the three tests of The Habitat Regulations, and as such receive from Natural England a licence, because:

1. The development is for an imperative reason of overriding public interest of an economic nature as the development will contribute to a social and economic need of the local community (this is assuming that it is in compliance with other planning policy) - therefore Regulation 55(2)(e) can be met
2. There is no satisfactory alternative to the development as without carrying out the works the aforementioned need would not be met - therefore Regulation 55(9)(a) can be met
3. Appropriate mitigation can be provided which will ensure that there will not be a detrimental impact to the favourable conservation status of the bat species concerned - therefore Regulation 55(9)(b) can be met

Planning policy

Paragraph 99 of the government Circular 06/05: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation - Statutory Obligations and Their Impact Within The Planning System (NB 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. However, bearing in mind the delay and cost that may be involved, developers

should not be required to undertake surveys for protected species unless there is a reasonable likelihood of the species being present and affected by the development. Where this is the case, the survey should be completed and any necessary measures to protect the species should be in place, through conditions and/or planning obligations, before the permission is granted. In appropriate circumstances the permission may also impose a condition preventing the development from proceeding without the prior acquisition of a licence under the procedure set out in section C below. “

As such, subject to the condition below, there are no objections to this application on ecology grounds.

Condition

Condition: No [works] to the hanging tiles on the front (east) elevation shall commence until a licence for development works affecting bats has been obtained from the Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation (Natural England) and a copy of the licence (or an email from Natural England that the site has been registered under a bat mitigation class licence) has been submitted to the council. Thereafter mitigations measures detailed in the licence shall be maintained in accordance with the approved details. Should the applicant conclude that a licence for development works affecting bats is not required for all or part of the works the applicant is to submit a report to the council detailing the reasons for this assessment and this report is to be approved in writing by the council prior to commencement of works.

Reason: The building hosts a bat roost which will be affected by the development. This condition will ensure that bats, a group of protected species and a material consideration in the planning process, are not adversely affected by the development.”

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 extensions and alterations are supported in principle by Policy H9 (House Extensions and Ancillary Accommodation) and Policy H14 (Suburban Renewal and Regeneration) 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 side and first floor extensions would significantly enlarge the scale of the dwelling but it is not considered that this would be to a detrimental degree. The *Design Guide to House Extensions SPD* indicates that extensions should typically be subservient in nature to the original dwelling; this proposal does not do this. While the proposal does differ markedly in terms of scale and the proposal lacks subservience, the proposal does make use of other development components including the layout, design detail, materials and architectural language (as discussed in CC7) which respond positively to that of the site and the wider area. The overall result is a proposal which respects the character of the dwelling and the wider area while improving the local built environment and modernising the residential amenity of the dwelling itself. The wider area is characterised by a range of dwelling types including a mix of houses and chalet bungalows, and plots where properties have been enlarged significantly. An enlarged property to create a two-storey dwelling is not considered to be incongruent within this context, subject to it meeting amenity considerations.

Policy *H14 Suburban Renewal and Regeneration*, while more applicable to large scale developments, includes elements which are relevant to the proposal: schemes which improve the local built environment and those which, improve and modernise local housing stock. The dwelling has had a number of extensions over the years resulting in a somewhat ad hoc appearance. The proposal would re-introduce a design coherence to the front elevation and be congruent with other dwellings in the immediate context, many of which utilise a mixture of brick and render treatments. There would be no significant change in the amount of open and green space available as a result of the development. Features of the original dwelling which offer a positive contribution, such as the prominent chimney, are retained while positive features of neighbouring dwellings like the prominent hipped roof of 184 Upper Woodcote Road are introduced. And no impacts on community facilities or the highway network are deemed likely to result.

The overall scale of the proposal, although large in the context of the host dwelling has been balanced against the improved contribution to the streetscene and modernised residential amenity, and the wider context. It is therefore considered acceptable and accords with the aims of Policy CC7 and H9 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

7.3 Amenity

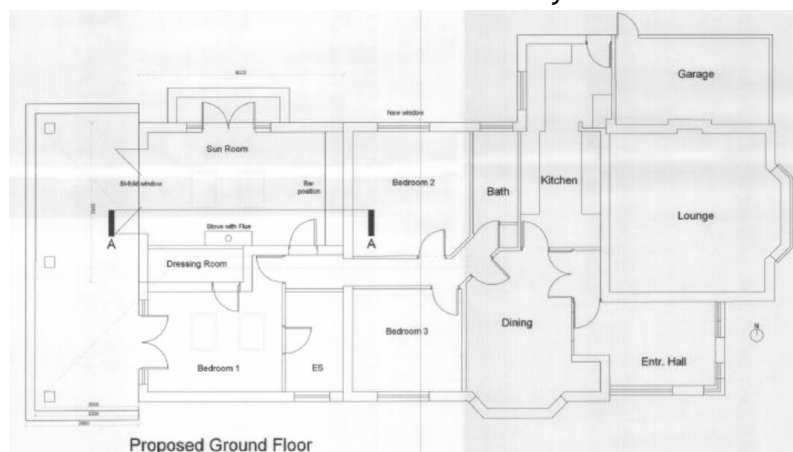
Policy CC8 requires development to not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or result in unacceptable living conditions for proposed residents. And Policy H9 complements these aims by indicating that acceptable development will not present an overbearing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

It is noted that topographically, 165 Upper Woodcote Road is located slightly lower than 167 - while 169 is slightly higher (see site photos in the attached annex for details). Neighbour concerns have been raised by the owner of 165 with respect to loss of light and looking onto a brick wall.

Those windows of 165 Upper Woodcote Road on the northern elevation (facing the application site) serve a bedroom, bathroom and sun room as demonstrated on the most recent plans available (ref: 141254, see image below). The proximity of the proposed two storey extension at ca 13.5 m distance from 165's side wall is more than sufficient distance to ensure that the property would not experience a loss of light to a detrimentally harmful degree. Additionally, no. 165 is located south of the application site.

Based on the site visit (photos in the annex) and images from Google Maps, the existing side facing windows of no. 165 already experience a compromised outlook, as they look onto a fence and the garage wall of 167 Upper Woodcote Road. It is not considered that the proposed scheme would have any further harmful effect on outlook and would not cause any significant overbearing effect.

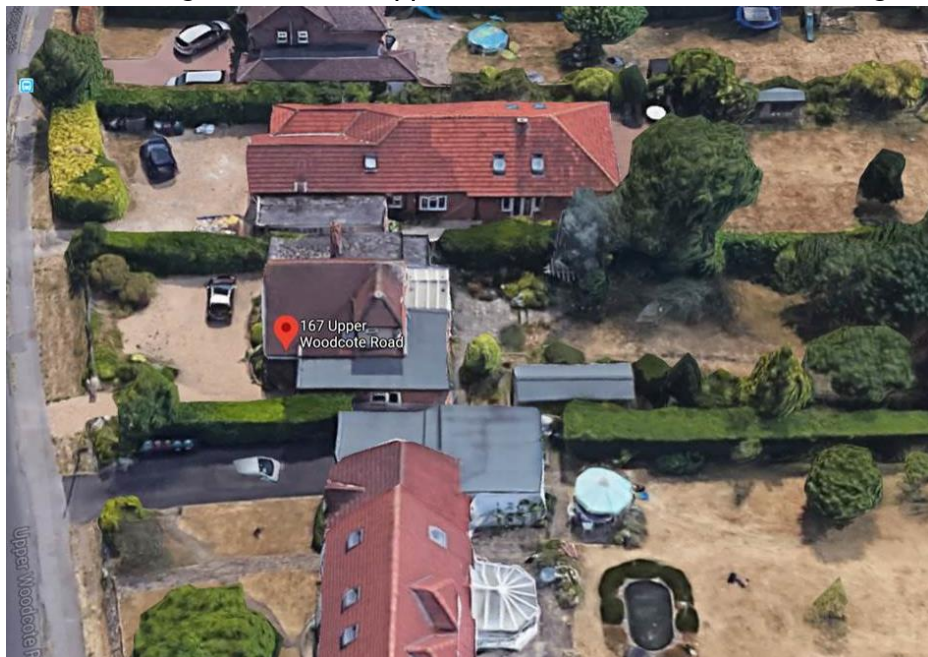
With respect to no. 169 Upper Woodcote Road, which is sited at a higher ground level, and is separated from the application site by a large and high single storey extension, with no side facing windows, it is not considered that there would be any detrimental amenity effects.



Floor Plan of 165 Upper Woodcote Road in LPA ref: 141254.



Aerial view looking north of 167 Upper Woodcote Road as seen on Google Maps.



Aerial view looking south of 167 Upper Woodcote Road as seen on Google Maps.

As demonstrated on plans, the first and second floor elements of the proposal would not obstruct the 45-degree line for views of the residents of either 165 or 169 Upper Woodcote Road. No views into adjacent neighbour's private outdoor amenity space is introduced which are considered to be worse or different from those already established elsewhere in the existing rear elevation; they are simply moved further back. The proposed north-facing side elevation windows do not overlook any windows or private outdoor amenity space of neighbours; while those in the south-facing side elevation are proposed to be obscure glazed. A condition should be included requiring these windows to remain as such to avoid any detrimental effects on the privacy amenity of number 165.

Subsequent to the above analysis, whilst constituting a comprehensive change to the dwelling, in this instance and based on the sites individual circumstances, the proposed development is deemed to accord with Policy CC8 and Policy H9.

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 an extension will only be acceptable where it does not result in the loss of biodiversity within gardens.

The Natural Environment Officer indicated there were no objections relating to protected trees or loss of habitat as a result of the proposal. And the proposal is noted to only modestly increase the footprint of the dwelling and in areas already subject to existing hardstanding. The site does not have any protected trees or identified Green Links which could be negatively impacted by the specifics of the proposed development under consideration.

The area was identified as possibly suitable for bats, and the Ecology Officer provided comments indicating they had no objections provided a condition was included requiring the seeking out of a bat license and following subsequently required mitigation measures.

Further to a condition along the lines of that suggested by the Ecology Officer and subsequent submission of evidence of the licence to the council, 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. As such, the proposed development is recommended for approval subject to conditions.

9. RECOMMENDATION

GRANT

10. CONDITIONS

1. TL1 Standard time-limit
2. AP1 Standard approved plans
3. M3 Materials as specified
4. PD3 Obscure Glazing
5. L11 Bat License
6. C1 Hours of Construction/Demolition
7. C2 Construction Method Statement
8. C4 No Bonfires
9. IF1 Positive and Proactive Working

APPENDIX
Site Photos

Photographs taken in the course of a site visit conducted on the 27th of February 2020.









