

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Application No: 191206/HOU

Address: 11 Holmes Road

Proposal: Proposed ground floor and first floor extension, floor plan redesign, installation of solar panels and all associated works

Case officer: Connie Davis

EOT: 24/01/20

Site Description and Surrounding Area:

The application site is a two storey semi-detached property located on the southern side of Holmes Road. Surrounding properties are largely similar in their size and style (with the exception of the application site) and are greater in terms of height than no. 11. From the front, the property has a bungalow style appearance. The property is finished in brick with white render and has brown timber cladding on the front elevation.

The existing property is haphazard in its current design, having been extended in various non-sympathetic ways over the years. There are projections to different depths at first floor level, areas of flat roof and conservatory additions. It also has a high level boundary wall that faces on to neighbouring property 9 Holmes Road. A small dead-end track separates nos. 11 and 13. It has a gable roof over the porch/ entrance to the property and mono-pitched roof just on the eastern elevation and the rest of the property has a flat roof.

The application site is not listed, nor in a Conservation Area. However it is within an air quality management area.

Proposal:

The proposal seeks to extend the property by way of a ground and first floor side/ rear extension. An extension in height and length of the exiting high level wall is proposed which would result in it being a height of around 5.3m and a depth of 10m. As existing, the wall at 2 storey level measures a height of 4.4m and a length of 6m.

The entire extension is proposed to have a flat roof. The existing property has a predominately flat roof, other than on the eastern elevation (closest to no 13 where the roof has a pitched side).

Due to the existing design of the existing dwelling, the property proposes to be extended by different amounts at ground and first floor level. At ground floor level, the main addition is a conservatory would measure a width of approx. 4.8m and a depth of 2m. An existing storage area (although on the existing plans this room is labelled as 'Not surveyed') is proposed to be demolished and in its place the extension would level with the existing kitchen/ dining room to form the sun room. The new built form will measure just over 4m in depth to be level with the kitchen.

At first floor level, the property is proposed to be extended by approx. 4m in depth on the eastern elevation (side of no. 9 Holmes Road) which would result in the property having a squared-up rear elevation. On the southern elevation, the property is proposed to be extended by 4.3m in depth. A Juliette balcony is proposed along with 9 roof lights are proposed and 8 solar panels.

Materials are proposed to generally match the existing property; brickwork with white painted render, clay tiles and fibreglass for the roof and matching windows/ doors.

Plans/ Documents Considered:

Location Plan

1379-401 - Existing and Proposed Block Plan
1379-101 - Existing Ground and First Floor Plan
1379-202 - Existing Rear Elevation
1379-201 - Existing Right and Left Side Elevations
1379-301 - Existing Section A-A
1379-102 - Existing Roof Plan
1379-203 - Proposed Right and Left Side Elevations
1379-204 - Proposed Rear Elevation
1379-103 - Proposed Ground and First Floor Plan
1379-104 - Proposed Roof Plan

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The agent provided a series of sketches (with possible amendments) which were discussed with the case officer during the course of the application. However these were not submitted as formal and complete revised plans, therefore this application is being assessed on those plans originally submitted.

Relevant Planning History:

081629/NMA - Minor amendment to planning consent 07/01674/FUL for alterations to the roofline along the eastern site boundary and an extension to the existing first floor boundary wall - Not Agree

071498/FUL - Part two storey and single storey rear extension and roof alterations (re-submission of 07/00977/FUL) - Application Permitted

071320/FUL - Part two storey and single storey rear extension and roof alterations - Application Withdrawn

Consultation Responses:

Internal Consultees

Ecology

The RBC Ecologist was consulted on the application and provided the following response:

The building is situated in habitat suitable for use by foraging or commuting bats; a suburban area of houses with large back gardens which connect to nearby woodlands. Images on Google Maps show the house may contain features suitable for use by roosting bats, and bat roosts have been recorded previously in two other nearby properties. 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.

A bat survey was carried out and concluded that the potential for bats is minimal. As such, the Ecologist advises no objections.

Natural Environment (tree officer)

No objections

External Consultation

The following addresses were formally consulted via letter on

9, 13 and 15 Holmes Road
129 and 149 Whiteknights Road

In addition a site notice was displayed between 2nd - 23rd August 2019.

One objection was received from no. 9 Holmes Road and the main points raised were:

- Extension breaches 45 degrees from the living room ground floor window
- Extension is beyond 4m
- Extension of the boundary wall will cause shadow and block out light to the downstairs living room window
- No architectural detail is shown on the boundary wall to be extended
- Rear elevation drawing does not show sky lights which will protrude above the original roof line which will be visible from the street and out of character with the surrounding area

Officer comment: These comments are addressed within the officer's appraisal of the application below

Summary of discussions with applicant/agent:

The agent was advised via email and telephone of the issues with the proposal. More specifically, these were the scale of the proposal in relation to the main house and the impact this was considered to have on neighbouring property, 9 Holmes Road.

The agent did not wish to withdraw the application, hence this recommendation of refusal.

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 (NPPF paragraph 12).

In this regard, the NPPF states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the Local Development Framework (LDF) (Core Strategy and Sites and Detailed Policies

Document) according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).

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

At the time of the application's submission/validation, the former LDF documents were in place. These were superseded by the New local plan, which was adopted on 4 November 2019.

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

Supplementary Planning Guidance - A Design Guide to House Extensions (2003)

Appraisal

The main issues are considered to be:

- Design, impact on the host dwelling, character of the area and street scene
- Impact on neighbouring amenity
- Impact on amenity space

Design, impact on the host dwelling, character of the area and street scene

Policy H9 states that an extension to a house should respect the character of the house in terms of scale, location, materials and design, and respect 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. Policy CC7 also states that all development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area.

The property from the front is considered to be of a fairly attractive design with timber detailing. Although acknowledged the property is has been poorly extended in the past, it is considered that the proposed extension (particularly at first floor level) represents an overdevelopment of the site. The extension of the eastern boundary wall in terms of height and depth to form the side elevation of the development is considered a poor quality design solution which would appear overly domineering, particularly from no.9. This 'feature' of the site is considered to be unneighbourly and using this as a design pointer for further extensions is not a good starting point. The expansive flat roof is also considered of poor design. From the rear, the design appears to be unbalanced, with the southern elevation having a pitched roof, whereas the eastern side would have a roof form that meets at a right angle. As such this varied roof form is considered to aid the conclusion of the overall poor quality design of the proposal and as such is considered contrary to Policy H9 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) and the Council's SPG on House Extensions.

It is considered that the proposed ground floor extensions are of an acceptable scale. Although slightly over the 4m specified in the 'A Design Guide to House Extensions', the addition of 0.38m over the 4m is considered acceptable as it was not considered to be sufficiently harmful to neighbouring amenity (as discussed further in the 'Impact on Neighbouring Amenity' section of this report).

No existing or proposed front elevations were provided, nor have the proposed solar panels or roof lights been depicted on the proposed elevations (as they would not be flat as depicted on the block plan due to solar panels requiring upstands). As such, it could not be determined if the proposal would impact the existing street scene in this respect and therefore cannot be thoroughly assessed against Policy CC7.

Impact on Neighbour Amenity

Policy CC8: Safeguarding Amenity of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019), states that development should not cause a significant detrimental impact to the living environment of existing or new residential properties in terms of visual dominance and overbearing effects of the development.

The neighbouring properties potentially affected by the proposals are Nos. 9 and 13 Holmes Road which are adjacent to the site, east and west respectively. It should be noted that from the site visit conducted by the case officer, and photographs produced in the objection from no. 9, this property appears to have been extended which is not depicted on the existing and proposed block plan that has been submitted.

The impact on both of these properties will be assessed:

No 9

Presently, the boundary wall is considered somewhat overbearing on no. 9 Holmes Road and its extension in terms of height of 5.3m and a length of 10m would present a further substantial blank façade towards this neighbouring property. Although acknowledged that the site is set lower down than this neighbouring property, it is considered that this would still be overbearing and as such is considered to compromise outlook from neighbouring side windows. No. 9 appears to have a lean-to glazed structure, and set within this is the property's living room window. The proposed extension would breach a 45 degree line when taken from the approximate location of this window. The rear of the properties are also south facing meaning this elevation is exposed to the highest levels of natural sunlight which the extension (and specifically the extension to the wall) is considered to reduce for this neighbouring property.

At ground floor level, the proposed extension measures slightly over 4m as specified in the Design Guide SPG and referred to in the letter of objection. However this neighbouring property has built form that extends to a greater depth than what would be achieved under this extension. As such at ground floor level, there is not considered to be conflict with this neighbouring property and the additional 0.38m above the 4m is considered, on balance, acceptable. As noted earlier in the report, the existing and proposed block plans do not illustrate the correct configuration of no. 9 Holmes Road.

No 13

Due to the track that separates these properties, there is considered sufficient gapping so that the proposed extension would not cause substantial impact to this neighbour in terms of overall bulk and loss of light. On the western elevation, the extension at first floor level is to suitably integrate with the existing elevation (the pitch roof on this side of the property will continue by a further 4.23m). The additional 0.23m above the 4m specified in the Design Guide SPG is considered acceptable given the separation distance and the height is not proposed to increase, unlike on the other side elevation. The proposed conservatory, which is also closer to no. 13 is considered of acceptable dimensions in

relation to this neighbour. The proposal is not considered to be in direct conflict with neighbouring windows on this property. No representations have been made by the occupier to also state otherwise.

As such, the proposal is considered to cause a significant impact on no. 9 Holmes Road in terms of outlook and loss of light and as such the proposal is not compliant with Policy CC8.

Amenity Space

Policy H10 states that *'the design of outdoor areas will respect the size and character of other similar spaces in the vicinity'*. The application site has a much smaller rear plot than no 9, however the proposal is not considered to reduce the amount of an amenity space to an unacceptable degree. As such the proposal is considered acceptable in terms of Policy H10 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

RECOMMENDATION: REFUSE

- 1) The proposed development represents a poor quality design and unsympathetic addition to the main property due to the expansive flat roof and extension of the high level flank wall on the eastern elevation. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policy H9 (House Extensions and Ancillary Accommodation) and CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) and the Council's adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance - A Design Guide to House Extensions.
- 2) Due to the additional depth and height of the eastern side boundary wall, the proposal is considered to have detrimental impact to the ground floor living environment of 9 Holmes Road by way of being overbearing and resulting in reduced outlook and access to sunlight to this property. As a result, the proposed development would have a detrimental effect on neighbouring amenity which is contrary to Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

Informatives

1. The plans/ documents considered in this planning application are as follows:

Location Plan

1379-401 - Existing and Proposed Block Plan
1379-101 - Existing Ground and First Floor Plan
1379-202 - Existing Rear Elevation
1379-201 - Existing Right and Left Side Elevations
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2. The Local Planning Authority has worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive manner. The agent was made aware of the issues relating to this proposal

but decided to allow the Local Planning Authority to proceed with the refusal of this application.

3. This planning application was submitted without first having sought pre-application advice, which can often avoid the need to refuse planning permission. The Council's pre-application advice service is here:

http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/1190/Pre-Application-Enquiry-Form/pdf/Pre-app_1_Revised_Nov_2015.pdf