

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Target Date:

Application No: 180641/FUL

Address: 9 Highmead Close, Caversham

Proposal: Two storey dwelling attached to 9 Highmead Close

Case officer: Ethne Humphreys

Site Description and Surrounding Area:

The application site relates to an end of terrace dwelling located on the western side of Highmead Close, at the end of the cul-de-sac. The property features a large triangular shaped garden to the rear and side of the property.

The immediate character of the area is that of 5 similar terraced rows positioned around the cul-de-sac, all of similar design, some of which have been extended.

The area around and including 9 Highmead Close is the East Reading Wooded Ridgeline, a designated Major Landscape Features and Strategic Open Space.

Proposal:

This is an application for a two storey attached dwelling, attached to No.9 Highmead Close on land forming the side garden of No.9 Highmead Close, with its own amenity space and parking. The dwelling would be set back from the main front elevation of No.9 and would have an overall width of 7.2m, overall depth of 8.4m and overall ridge height of approximately 7m.

A new driveway and soft landscaping is proposed. A chimney is proposed, in brickwork to match that of No.9; dark brown tiles to match those of No.9, brick plinth to match No.9 and white painted render similar to adjacent properties.

Plans Considered:

Drawing No: Proposed Site Plan 1253.04 Rev A

Drawing No: Proposed Floor Plans 1253.05 Rev A

Drawing No: Proposed Elevations Sheet 1 1253.06 Rev A

Drawing No: Proposed Elevations Sheet 2 1253.07 Rev A

Received 26th June 2018

Drawing No: Location Plan

Drawing No: Existing Site Plan 1253.02

Drawing No: Tree Protection Plan HTS01GPa

Received 13th April 2018

Relevant Planning History:

None.

Consultation Responses:

Highways Officer: No objection subject to conditions and informatives.

Tree Officer: No objection subject to conditions.

Ecologist: No objection.

Neighbour letters were sent to No's 8 and 10 Highmead Close and a site notice was put up. No neighbour letters received.

Summary of discussions with applicant/agent:

The agent was advised of concerns relating to the impact to the rear of No.9 Highmead Close itself. Revised plans were received moving the dwelling slightly further forward (towards the front elevation of No.9) and reducing the depth of the first floor rear section. This was considered to result in a more appropriate relationship between the two properties.

Pre-application advice was sought on this site prior to the submission of this application although the scheme was for a detached dwelling within the garden of No. 9 Highmead Close, which was not considered acceptable.

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

The following local and national planning policy and guidance is relevant to this application:

Reading Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy, 2008 (amended 2015)

- CS1 Sustainable Construction and Design
- CS7 Design and the Public Realm
- CS14 Housing Provision
- CS15 Location, Accessibility, Density and Housing Mix
- CS20 Implementation of the Reading Transport Strategy (Local Transport Plan 2006-2011)
- CS24 Car/Cycle Parking
- CS34 Pollution and Water Resources
- CS36 Biodiversity and Geology
- CS37 Major Landscape Features and Strategic Open Space
- CS38 Trees, Hedges and Woodland

Sites and Detailed Policies Document, Oct 2012 (amended 2015)

- SD1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- DM1 Adaption to Climate Change
- DM4 Safeguarding Amenity
- DM5 Housing Mix
- DM6 Affordable Housing
- DM10 Private and Communal Outdoor Space
- DM18 Tree Planting
- DM19 Air Quality

RBC Supplementary Planning Documents

Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011)

Supplementary Planning Document: Affordable Housing (July 2013)

Supplementary Planning Document: S106 Planning Obligations (March 2014)

The main issues are:

- a) Principle
- b) Design, Impact on the Character of the Area and Street Scene
- c) Impact on Neighbour Amenity
- d) Amenity of Future Occupiers
- e) Transport Issues

- f) Ecology
- g) Natural Environment
- h) Sustainability
- i) Affordable Housing
- j) CIL

Appraisal

Principle and Design Considerations

The current use of the land is private residential garden space for No.9 Highmead Close and as such the principle of the scheme would be assessed against Policy DM11 (Development of Private Residential Gardens) of the SDPD 2012 and this sets out the criteria for acceptable development of land within the curtilage of private residential gardens.

The pattern of development within the cul-de-sac is two storey terraced properties with large triangular plots at the end of each group of terraces. It is noted that an application for an attached dwelling at No.15 Highmead Close, opposite the site to the east, was refused and dismissed at appeal (application 150640). In this respect, the Inspector considered that the frontage available to the development would be limited with the appeal site narrowing considerably at the front due to the angle of the side boundary with the neighbouring property No.14. Consequently, the Inspector considered that the frontage width would be substantially narrower than any of the existing houses and would limit the opportunity for off-street vehicular parking. The Inspector concluded that due to the tapering of the existing side boundary to the plot, only a limited space would remain at the site frontage, resulting in a dwelling that would be shoehorned into the available space.

The above is noted and has been considered in depth and it is considered that there are differences between the two sites in this respect. No.9 Highmead Close and its garden – the development site – is set at a slightly lower level than No.15 such that the proposed dwelling, combined with the setback proposed from the front elevation, would not be clearly visible within the street scene. Furthermore, No.15 is sited closer to its side boundary than No.9, resulting in a narrower frontage to both the existing dwelling and that refused. The proposals for No.9 would retain sufficient space about the site, with a suitable gap/relief between the site and the neighbouring property No.10 Highmead Close so as not to result in a cramped appearance. Furthermore, the proposals would also be able to incorporate off street parking – which the Inspector referred to – without resulting in the dwelling appearing shoehorned into the available space; indeed, it is considered to sit reasonably comfortably.

It is noted that the Inspector raised no concerns over the scale of the dwelling proposed at No.15 in terms of overall bulk and dominance. The proposed dwelling would be set back from the front elevation of No.9 and would be set below the main roof ridge, allowing it to achieve a level of subservience. Albeit the gable end on the rear elevation would be somewhat bulky, it would not be readily visible from the public domain, and, as above, given the position of the dwelling in the plot, it would not be highly visible within the street scene. The dwelling is proposed to be painted white render. Whilst this would not match the adjoining No.9, it would match other properties within the terrace as well as the adjacent No.10 and in this is considered acceptable.

Although angled, the property would benefit from a large side garden and the existing dwelling would also retain adequate garden space commensurate to the dwelling and the other properties within the immediate vicinity.

The proposed hard and soft landscaping is considered acceptable subject to conditions.

As such, there is no in-principle objection to the proposals, subject to all other matters (as discussed below) being satisfactory.

Impact on Neighbour Amenity

The neighbouring properties potentially affected by the proposals are No 10 Highmead Close and No.9 Highmead Close itself, located to the north east and south of the site respectively. In relation to No.10, although visible, given its position, distance to the common boundary and orientation of the dwellings in their plots, it is not considered that there would be any material loss of light or overbearing impact to the occupiers of this property. No first floor windows are proposed on the flank elevation facing towards the rear garden of No.10 and the first floor window on the front elevation would face across the front of No.10, with any views towards No.10 itself at an oblique angle. As such, there would be no material loss of privacy.

In relation to No.9, there was some concern that the proposals would result in an overbearing impact to the rear windows of this property. Revised plans were received reducing the depth of the first floor rear section closest to the common boundary and pitching the roof of the single storey element to minimise the impact. At first floor, the proposals would not breach a 45 degree line to the nearest habitable room window. At ground floor, it is noted that both immediately adjacent windows to No.9 serve a toilet and the kitchen. Whilst there would be some loss of light to the kitchen window, this room is dual aspect and it is considered that

sufficient light would still reach this room. Whilst visible, it is not considered to result in such significant loss of light or overbearing impact such to warrant a refusal on this basis. No first floor windows are proposed on the flank elevations facing across the rear of No.9 and as such there would be no material loss of privacy. It is considered that the retained amenity space to No.9 would be sufficient, commensurate to the size of the dwelling and characteristic of the size of other garden spaces in the area.

In addition to the above, a further condition is required in respect of protecting the amenity of neighbours during the construction period. 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 DM4.

Amenity of Future Occupiers

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. Furthermore, there would be ample space on site for the adequate storage of waste and recycling bins. The garden size would not be too dissimilar to the gardens of other properties to the rear of the cul-de-sac and is considered sufficient and acceptable.

Transport Issues

The site 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. In accordance with the adopted SPD, the development would be required to provide a parking provision of 2 parking spaces per 3-bedroom dwelling.

The Design and Access Statement asserts that each property (existing and proposed) would be accessed via the existing crossover. A new permeable paved driveway is proposed providing 1no. parking space for the existing dwelling and 2no. parking spaces for the proposed dwelling. The proposed parking is below the Council's adopted parking standards (by 1no. space). However, it is noted that the Planning Inspector for an appeal decision at the nearby 15 Highmead Close concluded that the provision of 1 space per dwelling would provide an acceptable provision for off-street parking. On this basis, there are no grounds to object on parking and the proposed parking layout is acceptable.

Provision of secure cycle storage is provided in rear gardens of both dwellings in the form of small sheds which is acceptable.

The refuse and recycling bin storage is also acceptable.

Transport does not have any objections subject to conditions and informatives.

Ecology

The Council's Ecologist has confirmed that the proposals are unlikely to affect bats or other protected species and has raised no objection to this application on ecology grounds. In any event, as bats are protected species, this is covered by separate European legislation.

Natural Environment

As noted above, the area around and including 9 Highmead Close is the East Reading Wooded Ridgeline, a designated Major Landscape Features and Strategic Open Space. Policy CS37: Major Landscape Features and Strategic Open Space states that 'Planning permission will not be granted for any development that would detract from the character or appearance of areas designated as a Major Landscape Feature'.

The trees to the rear of the property are therefore considered to be important to the character of the local area.

The arboricultural report and method statement submitted in support of this application demonstrates that the trees can be adequately protected during the course of the building works, which can be secured by way of suitably worded conditions. The relationship between the property and the adjacent trees will be slightly closer than that for the neighbouring properties; however, the larger garden space will provide outdoor useable garden space well away from the trees adjacent to the site.

The additional parking areas at the front of the property prevent any reasonable of soft landscaping at the front of the properties beyond the new Hornbeam hedge and Maple at the side of the property. However, the extent of the proposed hard surfacing is not out of keeping with many other dwellings in Highmead Close which have entirely converted their front garden space into parking areas and it would therefore be unreasonable to object to the application on these grounds.

Given the above, there are no tree or landscape objections to this application subject to conditions.

Sustainability

The submitted Sustainable Design Statement highlights a number sustainability principles adopted for the proposed development considered to be in line with policy CS1 and the Revised Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (July 2011).

The appropriate level of sustainable construction would be secured the appropriate building regulations requirements.

Affordable Housing

West Berkshire District Council and Reading Borough Council applied for a judicial review of the Secretary of State's Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) to Parliament in 2014 on changes to national planning policy. Those changes sought to exempt developments of 10 or less dwellings from planning obligations for affordable housing and social infrastructure contributions and to introduce a new measure known as the Vacant Building Credit.

The High Court handed down its judgment on the case on 31st July 2015. The High Court found in favour of the challenge by the local authorities and quashed the amendments to the NPPG. The Secretary of State appealed the judgment and the Court of Appeal then quashed the decision of the High Court.

At its meeting of the Strategic Environment Planning and Transport Committee on 13th July 2016, the Council discussed the outcome of the Court of Appeal's decision on its challenge (http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/5651/Item09-SEPT-C-Report-on-C-of-Appeal-judgement-05-16/pdf/Item09_SEPT_C_Report_on_C_of_Appeal_judgement_05_16.pdf).

Having considered its options, the Committee agreed the following as the basis for determining planning applications where Policy DM6 of the SDPD is relevant:

To implement Policy DM6 as currently adopted in the SDPD but excluding proposals that solely involve the conversion of an existing property, where the conversion involves the provision of 10 or less dwelling units (i.e. not HMOs), or the replacement of dwellings by the same number of replacement dwellings where there is no net increase.

The proposal seeks to create a new dwelling and therefore a contribution towards off-site affordable housing provision is required as part of the application in accordance with Policy DM6 of the Reading Borough SDPD and the Affordable Housing SPD under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. The applicant has agreed to provide the required contribution towards affordable housing of £16,436.25 which has been secured by way of a Section 106 agreement.

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 £13,182.45 (89.5m2 additional x £120 per m2 x 2018 indexation).

RECOMMENDATION:

GRANT subject to S106 legal agreement, conditions and informatives