

4 HIGHDOWN AVENUE

EMMER GREEN

READING

RG4 8QS

PLANNING SUPPORTING STATEMENT

APRIL 2018

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Supporting Statement accompanies the householder application for planning consent for first floor extensions above the existing ground floor walls and rear extensions to form a two storey dwelling to the front and a 1 ½ storey to the rear at 4 Highdown Avenue, as shown on the submitted drawing BA 0123/04.
- 1.2 The existing house is a brick and tile detached bungalow on a plot of approximately 785m² and set back from the road by approximately 16m along a common building line and with a mix of lawn and hard surfacing for vehicle parking.
- 1.3 According to the Local Development Framework Interactive Proposals Map the site is within the settlement boundary but is not subject to any land use designations, although the Proposals Map does appear to show an existing or proposed Cycle Route running along Highdown Hill Road linking to the wider cycle network. From the Council's adopted Parking Standards SPD the site appears to be in Zone 4 which is identified as generally less accessible locations with some support by direct bus services.
- 1.4 There is no particularly defined character to the houses along the road with a variety of styles including bungalows, chalet style houses and 2 storey houses and with a number of houses benefiting from approved extensions. There is no planning history relating to the application site on the Council's electronic records although it is noted that planning consent was granted in 2004 for alterations to the existing bungalow at 28 Highdown Avenue to form a two storey dwelling.

1.5 The existing house is oriented along an east – west axis whereas the neighbouring property to the west, No.6, orientates along a north - south axis and extends to the rear of No. 4 with accommodation in the roofspace and with a dormer window overlooking to the rear of No. 4. No. 2 Highdown Avenue is also oriented along an east – west axis with a side to rear relationship with the subject dwelling of some 23m with intervening structures, fences and planting and with a large area of external amenity space surrounding that house.

1.6 The house has been subject to a bat survey with the report submitted with this application where it is concluded there is a very low potential for bats to be using the site and that no further surveys are required.

2. THE PROPOSAL

2.1 Effectively the application seeks consent for 1½ storey rear extensions and to add a first floor to the existing bungalow walls to create a two storey dwelling to the front with a reduced rear element comprising accommodation in the roof space. A single integral garage would be provided with existing space to the front of the property retained for additional car parking and a single storey lean-to structure would be removed from the western side of the dwelling.

2.2 The proposal allows for an open-plan family/kitchen/dining area to the rear ground floor taking advantage of the passive solar gain presented by the southerly aspect and with dormer windows on the rear element allowing for the master bedroom in the loft space and bedrooms at first floor level to the front.

2.3 The re-modeled dwelling would be finished externally with render under interlocking roof tiles with white uPVC windows and powder coated aluminium bi-fold doors to the rear. Given the relationship to adjoining properties it is considered that the works can be accommodated on the site comfortably and with little significant detriment to the character of the area or the amenities currently enjoyed by neighbouring residents.

2.4 The applicants require a larger property to accommodate a growing family but given the current state of the housing market purchasing a new dwelling is not a viable option. What this scheme does is achieve a far more contemporary internal plan allowing the host dwelling to adapt over time without detriment to the character of the site or the area generally, but providing the space necessary.

- 2.5 The scheme allows for the retention of approximately 400m² of useable, south facing, outdoor amenity space, which is more than the proposed internal floorspace and provides for 3 car parking spaces, which accords with the Council's adopted standards in this location.
- 2.6 We are of the opinion that this scheme is an appropriate response to the needs of the applicant and one that has due regard to the character of the area and the amenities currently enjoyed by neighbouring occupiers but it is now necessary to consider the scheme in light of relevant Development Plan policies.

3 POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The local plan context relevant to this application is made up of policies from the adopted Core Strategy Document (2008) and the Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012). The following policies are considered most relevant to this application:
- 3.1.1 Policy CS7: Design and the Public Realm, requires that all development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located.
- 3.1.2 Policy DM9: House Extensions and Ancillary Accommodation, requires that extensions to houses respect the character of the house and the area generally in terms of scale, location, materials and design, that they respect important existing building lines and do not present a large blank façade to public areas.
- 3.1.3 Policy DM4, Safeguarding amenity, seeks to ensure that new development does not cause significant detriment to existing living conditions for occupiers of new or existing residential properties.
- 3.1.4 The Design Guide to House Extensions (2003) is a 'saved' document and is also therefore relevant to this application.

3.2 POLICY APPRAISAL

- 3.2.1 Policy DM9 tends to expand upon to a large extent the guidance contained in the Core Strategy policy CS7 and it is considered here that the proposal complies with that guidance. The proposed extensions are considered here to be respectful of the character of the site and the surroundings and materials used would be appropriate to the context of the existing house and the local area. Furthermore, the proposals would generally maintain existing levels of

landscaping over the site and the existing amount of private garden space would not be reduced significantly.

- 3.2.2 It has been noted that there is no particularly defined character along the road with significant variation within the whole street, though generally following a defined building line along the frontage which this scheme maintains. Clearly the character of the existing bungalow would alter but it could be argued that is something of an anomaly within the existing streetscene and that the re-modeled dwelling would appear more appropriate to the site and providing more contemporary living accommodation and elevation detail.
- 3.2.3 The proposal maintains the established building line along this side of the road and existing gaps between the adjoining properties are generally maintained such that the works would not contribute towards an inappropriate 'terracing effect', which is something the House Extensions SPD seeks to avoid.
- 3.2.4 The gabled roof design is considered in keeping with adjacent properties and dormer windows are not an uncommon feature in the area. The overall height of the forward two storey element extends to approximately 7.3m to the ridge with the 1 ½ storey element to the rear at a height of approximately 6m to the ridge and 2.7m to the underside of the eaves, which is not considered would appear as particularly overbearing or unneighbourly given the existing relationships to adjoining properties and the street.
- 3.2.5 As the rear extensions relate to no. 6 Highdown Avenue, they do not extend significantly to the rear of that property which, as noted has accommodation in the roofspace, and would be of a similar height. The dormer windows to the eastern roof slope of the rear extension would be set some 6m from the boundary with No. 2 which has a significant amount of external amenity space around the building and where views into the more private amenity spaces of that property would be restricted by the relatively low height of the windows and intervening structures and vegetation.
- 3.2.6 The proposal would retain a side to rear distance of some 23m to the rear of No. 2 Highdown Avenue and more than 35m to the rear of No. 28 Highdown Hill Road and it is not considered that the scheme proposed would cause any significant detriment to the living conditions of the occupiers of those properties. There is a window at first floor to the rear south elevation but, with regard to views from that window to No. 6 Highdown Avenue, it is not considered to be a particularly unusual relationship with views only afforded to the rear of the rear garden of No.6.

- 3.2.7 It has been noted previously in this statement that planning consent was granted for works to convert the existing bungalow at 28 Highdown Avenue to a full two storey dwelling and whilst there are no drawings of that scheme on the Council's electronic database it is considered reasonable to assume that the principle of such development was established in this area at that time. Indeed, there are a number of other properties that have been substantially enlarged over the years along this road and this further indicates that such development can be considered acceptable.
- 3.2.8 What this indicates is that there is scope within the streetscene for changes to the built form particularly where there cannot really be considered to be any particular or characteristic grouping of buildings. This is considered wholly appropriate and evidence that areas can and do evolve as different generations with differing accommodation needs move out of and into older housing.
- 3.2.9 Given the above assessment, we are of the opinion that this is a proposal that is well considered in respect of its impact on neighbouring occupiers and one that respects the character of the site and the area more generally. The proposal is considered here to represent an appropriate design solution for the site and to the requirements of our client without appearing discordant in the streetscene and where appropriate setbacks and gaps between houses are maintained. We are also of the opinion that the scheme complies with local policy and guidance and we believe that officers can comfortably support this application in the context of development in the area.

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