

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Application No: 180128/FUL

Address: 2 Wrenfield Drive, Caversham, Reading

Proposal: Proposed residential development of a one and half storey two bedroom dwelling with associated hard and soft landscaping.

Case officer: Ethne Humphreys

Decision date: Originally 31/05/2018; Extension of time agreed with the applicant until 06/07/2018

Site Description and Surrounding Area:

The property is situated on the corner of Wrenfield Drive at the junction with Sheridan Avenue. The orientation of the existing two storey detached property is such that it fronts Sheridan Avenue more so than Wrenfield Drive. The property incorporates a flat roof single storey side projection onto the boundary with Wrenfield Drive and also a flat roof single storey side garage to the front of this. The gradient of the land raises steeply along Sheridan Avenue such that the properties show a stagger and gradually increase in height towards the junction with Wrenfield Drive. The properties are also staggered in that they do not face directly onto Sheridan Avenue and are set at an angle towards the road which curves towards the junction with Sheridan Avenue with each property appearing gradually more forward of the next. A staggered boundary wall fronts Wrenfield Drive and wraps around the front of the site onto Sheridan Avenue. The rear elevation of the dwelling faces onto the side elevation of no. 4 Wrenfield Drive. To north/east of the site the adjacent property is no. 79 Sheridan Avenue. The surrounding area is predominantly residential.

Proposal:

This is an application for an attached dwelling to the south west side of No.2 Wrenfield Drive following the demolition of existing single storey additions.

The proposed materials would include stock facing bricks with a roof tile mix (to be confirmed).

Parking is proposed to be retained at the rear, and also introduced to the frontage. Indicative landscaping is shown on the proposed plans.

Plans Considered:

Drawing No: Existing Site Plan 5005285 A 0101

Drawing No: Existing Building Plan and Elevations plus Location and Block Plans

Drawing No: Proposed Plans and Elevations 5005285 A 201Rev C

Received 22 January 2018

Drawing No: Proposed Site Plan and Street Section 5005285 A 201Rev C

Received 29th June 2018

Relevant Planning History:

03-00841 Erection of a two storey side extension to dwelling. Granted

02-01501 Erection of a two storey side extension to dwelling. Refused

Consultation Responses:

Highways Officer: Further to revised plans, no objection subject to conditions and informatives.

Ecologist: No objection subject to condition.

Tree Officer: No objection subject to conditions.

3 neighbour letters of representation received objecting to the proposals and raising the following concerns:

- Building line
- Impact on Street Scene/Overdevelopment
- Impact on Parking
- Loss of Green Space

Summary of discussions with applicant/agent:

Pre-application advice was sought prior to the submission of this application for the creation of an additional 3 bedroom dwelling.

The applicant was advised by email that the application was not acceptable as the proposals were not considered to overcome all the concerns raised at the pre-application advice stage, namely with regards to the character and pattern of development of the surrounding area, and parking/highways concerns.

Revised plans were received 29th June to overcome the concerns raised from the Transport Department. The concerns relating to the overall pattern of development/character of the area and amenity space remained.

The applicant confirmed that they wished to receive the decision notice, with a view to appealing any such 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

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
- 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) Natural Environment
- g) Sustainability
- h) Affordable Housing
- i) CIL

Appraisal

Principle

The NPPF states that LPAs should “*encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value*”. The NPPF definition of ‘previously developed land’ excludes private residential gardens.

Therefore, it is clear that the priority for development should be on previously developed land, in particular vacant and derelict sites and buildings. However, that does not mean that the development of private residential garden land is unacceptable in principle, rather that previously developed land should be the first choice for housing development.

The Council’s LDF SDPD Policy DM11 Development of Private Residential Gardens requires that new residential development that involves land within the curtilage of private residential gardens will be acceptable where:

- a) It makes a positive contribution to the character of the area;
- b) The site is of an adequate size to accommodate the development;
- c) The proposal has a suitable access;
- d) The proposal would not lead to an unacceptable tandem development;
- e) The design minimises the exposure of existing private boundaries to public areas;
- f) It does not cause detrimental impact on residential amenities;
- g) The emphasis is on the provision of family housing;
- h) There is no adverse impact on biodiversity, and
- i) The proposal does not prejudice the development of a wider area.

Therefore, while the proposed site is not 'previously developed land', the principle of redevelopment is considered acceptable providing the criteria outlined in Policies DM11 and CS15 are met.

The existing property incorporates significant flat roof single storey side projections/outbuildings which abut the boundary with Wrenfield Drive and which are not considered to enhance the appearance of the street scene - particularly given their projection beyond and relationship with No.4 Wrenfield Drive to the rear of the site.

Within this context, there is no in-principle objection to the existing additions/outbuildings being demolished, subject to their replacement with proposed attached dwelling being appropriate in all other respects (which is detailed further below). As such, there is no in-principle objection to the proposals, subject to all other matters (as discussed below) being satisfactory.

Design, Impact on the Character of the Area and Street Scene

The NPPF requires that development, including individual buildings, should achieve a high quality design (paragraph 57). Local plans should aim to ensure that developments 'respond to local character and history and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation'.

The Council's LDF Core Strategy Policy CS7 states that "all development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area".

Policy DM11 (Development of Private Residential Gardens) states that proposals for development within existing gardens should make a positive contribution to the character of the area and sets out criteria which must be met by such development. This contribution should be demonstrated by, inter alia:

- the relationship of the existing built form and spaces around buildings within the surrounding area
- a layout which integrates with the surrounding area with regard to the built-up coverage of each plot, building lines, rhythm of plot frontages, parking areas and existing pattern of openings and boundary treatments on the site frontage.
- The plot should be of an adequate size and dimension to accommodate the proposal in terms of, inter alia, setting and spacing around buildings, and amenity space.

It is recognised that currently, the existing additions to No.2 Wrenfield Drive are forward of the building line of Wrenfield Drive. However, given their single storey nature, they are not so prominent within the street scene. They are ancillary to the main dwelling and small in scale. The prominence of this site is exacerbated by the gradient of the land and the proposals would bring the built form at two storey level closer towards Wrenfield Drive, and forward of the building line at two storey level. This area is currently open in the sense of an absence of a two storey building close to the highway, and the proposed dwelling would be highly visible in longer views from both Wrenfield Drive and Sheridan Avenue. As above, the proposed dwelling would be set, at two storey, well forward of the existing consistent building line of Wrenfield Drive and, due to its detailed design, (discussed further below) as well as prominent corner plot location, would appear a somewhat jarring feature. In this respect, the proposed dwelling, significantly forward of the building line at two storey is considered to result in a visually oppressive form of development, harmful to the character of the street scene.

In terms of its detailed design, whilst the proposal would incorporate a modest set down from the peak of the existing dwelling, this is not considered to overcome the detrimental impact of the design and bulk of the proposed roof form. Furthermore, there would be a minimal set back from the main front elevation. The proposed dwelling would appear at odds proportionately with the existing dwelling and, given the significant width, depth, bulk and mass of the proposal it is not considered to integrate sufficiently enough with the existing dwelling.

In this particular corner plot location, given the levels of the surrounding land and relationship to surrounding properties (in particular the forward projection beyond No.4 Wrenfield Drive) the proposal would appear visually prominent and, for the above reasons, would fail to make a positive contribution to the character of the surrounding area and result in overdevelopment of the site.

Further to the above, and as relayed at the pre-application advice stage, there is planning history on the site and in 2002 an application (02-01501) for a significant two storey side extension to the property was refused on the basis that 'The proposal would be detrimental to the visual appearance of the property and surrounding area generally as it would be an overly prominent and incongruous addition to the property by virtue of its excessive scale and massing and over dominance in the context of its prominent location in the street'. Whilst a subsequent permission in 2003 (03-00841) for a two storey side extension was then granted (but not implemented) this was for a significantly reduced extension which appeared more subservient to the existing dwelling. Whilst the policies to which these decisions now relate have now been superseded, the principles regarding design, integration with the existing dwelling and street scene and context of the site remain the same.

The Council's pre-application advice response considered that the introduction of a new dwelling in this location would result in an overdevelopment of the site and would cause significant harm to the character of the host dwelling and visual amenities of the street scene and surrounding area. It was further stressed that whilst it may be possible to extend the existing property by way of a modest two storey side extension (similar to that approved under application 03-00841), that an additional dwelling was unlikely to be appropriate on this site. This remains the same. In these circumstances, the proposal would create a development that would fail to satisfactorily integrate with its context, and the overall pattern of development would be markedly different from that of the immediate surroundings, and at odds with the prevailing character of the area.

As such, the proposals would be contrary to Policy DM11 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012 (altered 2015) and Policy CS7 of the Core Strategy 2008 (altered 2015). The proposal would also be contrary to paragraph 61 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 which states that planning decisions should address the integration of new development into the built environment.

Impact on Neighbour Amenity

Policy DM4 Safeguarding Amenity of the SDPD is concerned with preventing significant detrimental impact to the living environment of existing or new residential properties, including in terms of privacy and overlooking, loss of daylight and visual dominance, amongst other impacts.

Due to the orientation and siting of the proposed dwelling it is not considered to result to result in any material loss of light or overbearing impact to any neighbouring property. The rear windows would face down the applicant's garden and towards the front of No.4 Wrenfield Drive. However, views would be across the drive and it is not considered that there would be any material loss of privacy.

The proposed single storey rear element proposed would project approximately 2.5m past the rear elevation of No.2 Wrenfield Drive itself. Whilst clearly visible, it is not considered to result in any significant material loss of light or overbearing impact.

Amenity of Future Occupiers

It is considered that the proposals would provide adequate room sizes with suitable outlook, natural lighting and ventilation.

Policy DM10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space) seeks that dwellings be provided with functional private outdoor amenity space and that the design of such areas should respect the size and character of other similar spaces in the vicinity.

The pre-application advice response raised concerns about the amenity space proposed to both the existing dwelling and the proposed dwelling. It is recognised that under this application, the amount of amenity space afforded to both properties has increased. However, as a result of the subdivision of the plot, and given the existing garage/driveway located to the rear of the site, the existing dwelling would be left with a rear amenity space of approximately 6m in width and 10m in depth and the proposed dwelling approximately 6m in width and 7.5m in depth. These private amenity spaces are still considered small and are not comparable to the garden sizes in the immediate vicinity. The policy goes on to state that for houses, useable private outdoor space should be no less than the gross floor area of the dwelling to which it relates (measured externally and including garage space). In this respect, the proposed dwelling would not meet this guidance, and, in addition, the amenity space proposed - and retained for the existing dwelling - would not reflect those standards to dwellings in the surrounding area which are predominantly larger and would therefore fault

reflect the prevailing character of the area. The insufficient amenity space proposed is symptomatic of the proposals being overdevelopment of the plot.

Contrary to Policy DM10 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012 (altered 2015).

Transport Issues

Concern has been raised that the proposals would result in additional pressure on the parking of Wrenfield Drive.

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 new 2 bed development would be required to provide off road parking provision of 2 spaces; the existing dwelling would need to retain its existing provision.

Further to a revised plan showing visibility splays and the provision of bicycle parking and bin storage, the Council's Transport Officers have raised no objection to the proposals subject to conditions and informatives in relation to vehicle parking, vehicle access, bicycle storage and bin storage.

Should the application otherwise have been acceptable then these details would have been secured by way of suitably worded conditions.

Natural Environment

In addition to indicative landscaping shown on the plans, there are also existing trees to be retained. The Council's Tree Officer has confirmed that there is no objection to the proposals subject to conditions to secure landscaping. Should the application otherwise have been acceptable then these details would have been secured by way of suitably worded conditions.

Sustainability

The Design and Access Statement highlights that the proposed scheme will conform to Building Regulations, Document Part L; refers to pv solar installation and refers to bicycle parking for the dwelling. Notwithstanding, 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.

This planning application does not relate to the conversion of an existing property and therefore would need to accord with the requirements of Policy DM6 and make an appropriate financial affordable housing contribution. The applicant has agreed in principle to enter into a legal agreement to secure a financial contribution of £19,750. However, in the interests of avoiding undue delay and given the other major concern with this proposal set out above, the S106 legal agreement to secure the required financial contribution has not been progressed and would therefore represent a further reason for refusal. An informative will specify that this reason for refusal could be overcome, in the context of an acceptable scheme in all other respects, by entering into a s106 or unilateral undertaking.

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.

Other Matters Raised in Representation

All material planning considerations considered in the above report.

Conclusion

The proposal is unacceptable in terms of its impact on the character of the area and because of the absence of a completed legal agreement to secure financial contributions towards affordable housing in the Borough. The proposal is therefore contrary to policy and is recommended for refusal.

RECOMMENDATION:

REFUSE

1. The proposed dwelling, due its detailed design, scale, bulk and mass combined with its prominent corner plot location and proximity to side boundary, would appear incongruous and out of keeping with the character of the surrounding area, resulting in a discordant effect within its setting.

Furthermore, the subdivision of the plot would result in plot sizes which would not respond to local character in terms of size and are uncharacteristic of similar spaces in the vicinity. Moreover, the amount of garden space associated with the proposed dwellings would also be significantly less than the surrounding houses, further out of character with the pattern of development in this area.

For these reasons, the proposals would result in an overdevelopment of the plot, at odds with the established urban grain of this part of Wrenfield Drive, failing to respect the existing patterns of development and would consequently be harmful to the character of the area. This would be contrary to Policies DM10 and DM11 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012 (altered 2015) and Policy CS7 of the Core Strategy 2008 (altered 2015) and the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.

2. In the absence of a completed legal agreement to secure an acceptable contribution towards the provision of Affordable Housing, the proposal fails to contribute adequately to the housing needs of Reading Borough, contrary to Policy DM6 (Affordable Housing) of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012 (altered 2015) and the Council's Adopted Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document 2013.

Informatives

The decision relates to the following drawings and documents:

Drawing No: Existing Building Plan and Elevations plus Location and Block Plans

Drawing No: Proposed Plans and Elevations 5005285 A 201Rev C

Received 22 January 2018

Drawing No: Proposed Site Plan and Street Section 5005285 A 201Rev C

Received 29th June 2018

The local planning authority has worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive way by clearly setting out concerns relating to the proposal and providing an opportunity for the applicant to withdraw the application. However, the applicant chose not to withdraw the application, hence the issuing of this refusal notice within the statutory time period to determine the application by.

The applicant is advised that the refused scheme, had it been able to be approved, would have been a CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) liable development.

Without prejudice to any future application or appeal, the applicant is advised that reason for refusal 2 (affordable housing) could be overcome by entering into a Section 106 Legal Agreement or unilateral undertaking for a scheme that was in all other respects acceptable.