

## Planning Statement

**2 Connaught Close, Reading,  
RG30 2UG**

*Prepared For*  
**Kennet Investment Ltd**

**8450  
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CHARTERED TOWN PLANNERS

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 On behalf of our client, Kennet Investment Ltd, we submit this planning statement to support the application for one new 3-bed dwelling at 2 Connaught Close, Reading, RG30 2UG.
- 1.2 The application site is located at the end of Connaught Close, a cul-de-sac in a residential area of West Reading. The existing site consists of a 2-storey detached property located in the centre of a large plot. In the context of its surroundings the existing property at 2 Connaught Close has a large plot which is capable of accommodating an additional residential unit.
- 1.3 Connaught Close is a cul-de-sac with three pairs of semi-detached properties, however the application site is surrounded by residential dwellings of varying sizes, styles and design on all sides.
- 1.4 The application site is located within the built up area with good access to a range of services and facilities. The includes areas of public open space, schools and shops. Bus stops are available on Tilehurst Road approximately 200 metres away and Reading West train station is approximately 800 metres north-east. This public transport provisions and access to a number of services and facilities makes this a sustainable location for residential development.
- 1.5 Our clients, Kennet Investment Ltd, previously submitted an application on this site for the demolition of the building and erection of 4 houses (ref: 171802/FUL). The council refused this application and the proposal has been reconsidered by the applicant in light of this.

### PROPOSAL

- 1.6 The proposal consists of retaining the existing residential building on site and the construction of single house to the west of the existing property. The proposed new dwelling has been designed to reflect the style, character and form of the existing property on site. The property reflects the decorative brickwork and features, including the roof pitch and style, windows, and door. The property has three bedrooms, two parking spaces to the front and rear amenity space. Access will be shared with the existing property from Connaught Close from the north-east corner of the site. There will also be benefits for the existing property on site, through formalising the access and parking arrangements.



## 2 PLANNING HISTORY

- 2.1 As already mentioned in the introduction the site was subject to a planning application for the demolition of the existing property and erection of 4 houses, under reference 171802. This application was refused by the council on the 5<sup>th</sup> January 2018, with 6 reasons for refusal. Since this application the proposal on site has changed considerably.
- 2.2 The application no longer comprises the demolition of the existing building, and instead one additional unit will be constructed adjacent to the existing building. This is much more in-keeping with the character and scale of the plot.
- 2.3 The previous application was considered to be overdevelopment of the site. The first reason for refusal on application 171802 stated that *'the proposed development would appear incongruous within its setting by reason of its uncharacteristic scale, excessive plot coverage and cramped relationship with boundaries with Connaught Close and Elm Park Road'*. It then goes on to say how it is considered to be an overdevelopment and would be uncharacteristic and visually harmful to Connaught Close and the surrounding area, failing to make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the area. In response to this the scheme has been revised and instead of demolishing the existing building, the existing building will remain on site and one additional house will be built adjacent. This building will be in keeping with the scale and design of the existing building and its positioning on site is sensitive to its close relationship.
- 2.4 The second reason for refusal regarded affecting the amenities of neighbouring properties. Those specifically identified were 1A and 3 Connaught Close and properties on Elm Road. In reply to this, the proposed development is much more responsive to these relationships. It is unavoidable that there is going to be some form of relationship given the positioning of the plot and the existing relationships it has with its neighbouring properties. The density of the area means residential properties are going to interact with each other one way or another. The proposed new dwelling is positioned adjacent to the existing building, which will mean the relation with 3 Connaught Close will be the same as its existing relationship with the existing property. The new dwelling will not change these relationships and the amenities of neighbouring properties will remain as they are.



- 2.5 The third reason for refusal relates to the access road being unsuitable to accommodate the traffic generated. Now that the proposal has been reduced in size, meaning only one new dwelling is proposed, there will only be potential two additional vehicles using the access. The increase of two additional vehicles using the access will not have an adverse effect on road safety or the flow of traffic.
- 2.6 The fourth reason for refusal related to the failure of application to demonstrate the likely impact of the proposed development upon protected species. The application now does not consist of the demolition of a building which reduces the potential impact on ecological factors. The proposed development is of a scale which is unlikely to have any adverse impact on protected species.
- 2.7 The fifth reason for refusal is concerned with the excessive area of hard landscaping at the front and limited amount of soft landscaping being detrimental to the green suburban character of Connaught Close. In response to this the hard landscaping at the front has been pulled back. Given the reduced number of units there is not the need to provide the amount of parking proposed in the previous application. This application has taken on board and where possible, soft landscaping has been used. The existing access for 2 Connaught Close is very informal at the moment, the improvement of this will benefit the existing property as well as the proposed unit. Other properties in Connaught Close have formal hardstanding driveways, despite the green suburban character of Connaught Close, therefore it is not out of character.
- 2.8 The sixth and final reason for refusal relates to the absence of a completed legal agreement to secure acceptable contribution towards affordable housing. In this application, only one additional net unit is being sought, which means appropriate financial contributions will be sought by the council.
- 2.9 All the reasons for refusal relate to site specifics, rather than the principle of development on the site, which given its location in a residential built up area of West Reading is acceptable. When considering this new proposal against the policies in the development plan the issues mentioned above will be discussed in greater detail with policy justification. The proposal now being submitted is a vast improvement on the previous scheme on this site.



### **3 PLANNING POLICY**

- 3.1 Section 70 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless other material considerations indicate otherwise. In the case of this application, the development plan of relevance consists of the Reading Borough Core Strategy (January 2008) and the Reading Borough Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012). The main material consideration is the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which sets out the Government's up to date strategy and guidance for plan making and decision taking.
- 3.2 There are a number of adopted Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) which also need considering as part of this application. These include the Revised Sustainable Design & Construction SPD, Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD and the Affordable Housing SPD.

#### **PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT**

- 3.3 The application site is located with a residential built up area of Reading West. The Spatial Strategy within the Cores Strategy sets out that it will seek to maximise development opportunities within the built-up area of Reading. Policy CS14 in the adopted Core Strategy sets out that provision will be made for the completion of an average of at least 521 dwellings per annum in the period 2016-2026, in accordance with the spatial strategy set out in this Core Strategy. The location of the application site within the built-up area of Reading and the fact the site already contains a residential property means the principle of residential development on this site is acceptable.

#### **MATERIAL CONSIDERATION**

- 3.4 The NPPF has a presumption in favour of sustainable development at the core of the document. It outlines the three dimensions of sustainable development and makes clear that all development which is sustainable should be approved without delay.
- 3.5 Chapter 17 of the NPPF outlines a set of planning principles which identifies the overarching roles that the planning system ought to play. A number of these principles are relevant to this application, including:



- Delivering high quality design and securing good standards of amenity for all existing and future occupants;
- Encouraging the efficient use of land; and making the best use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focusing development in locations which are sustainable.

3.6 Given that this proposal is delivering one dwelling within the built-up area of Reading, on a site which is capable of supporting both the existing building and the proposed building, the proposal should be considered acceptable in principle.

### **SITE SPECIFICS**

3.7 With the principle of development on site established, site specific issues now need to be addressed. In the previously refused application the Officer Report said that the main issues were character and appearance, effect on residential amenity, transport issues, ecology and landscaping, and other matters. Now that the proposal has been changed we will go through these issues to show how the new proposal addresses them.

### ***Character and Appearance***

3.8 Policy CS7 of the Core Strategy sets out 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. This includes design component such as layout, landscaping, density, scale, height, and architectural detail and materials. These design components will be assessed to ensure that development makes a positive contribution to a range of urban design objectives including; character, legibility, adaptability, continuity and enclosure, and ease of movement and permeability.

3.9 Policy DM11 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document sets out when proposals for new residential development that includes land within the curtilage or the former curtilage of private residential gardens is acceptable. Development in these circumstances are acceptable where:

- The proposal makes a positive contribution to the character of the area;
- The application site provides a site of adequate size and dimensions to accommodate the development proposed in terms of the setting and spacing around buildings, amenity space, landscaping and space for access roads and parking;



- The proposal includes access, which meets appropriate highway standards;
- The proposal does not lead to unacceptable tandem development;
- The design and layout minimise exposure of existing private boundaries to public areas, and avoids the need for additional physical security measures;
- The proposal does not cause a significant detrimental impact to the amenity of adjacent and nearby occupants;
- The emphasis is on the provision of family sized housing;
- The development would not have an adverse impact on biodiversity in terms of the fragmentation of blocks of gardens, which as a unit in association with adjacent open space are deemed to make an important contribution to biodiversity and contribution to the green network; and
- The proposal does not prejudice the satisfactory development of a wider area.

3.10 These policies in combination help to ensure that development is delivered to high design standard. In this case the proposal relates to development within the private residential garden of the existing property at 3 Connaught Close, hence why policy DM11 is applicable. The position of the existing property within Connaught Close and the large size of the plot means the property is set back and its visibility from Connaught Close is limited. The application site is located in the corner of Connaught Close and the position of the property is unusual in that it does not face into the Close but instead faces to the side of 3 Connaught Close; this further restricts the visibility of the proposed new dwelling. Therefore whilst the wider character of Connaught Close with regard to its residential character needs to be considered, the individual characteristics of 2 Connaught Close are unique to this site.

3.11 The officer report from the previous application makes reference to the ‘distinctive character’ of the existing house. The proposed new dwelling has taken its overall design, form and architectural detailing from the existing property. From the front elevation the new dwelling has taken clear design inspiration from the existing property, with its decorative brickwork, pitched tiled roof, gabled porch, and gabled window. The position of the new dwelling is well related to the existing dwelling, located adjacent to the existing property it is orientated the same way, with its front building line following the existing building line.

3.12 As part of the proposal parking spaces will be provided for the new property at the front of the property. This will result in the formalisation of the parking and access arrangements for both the existing property and the proposed dwelling. To allow access to the new dwelling,



hard surfacing will be introduced to the front of both properties, with landscaping maintained around the edge of the hard surfacing to the front. This landscaping will help to maintain a soft buffer between the site boundaries. Most of the properties in Connaught Close have some form of formal driveway at the front of the properties. The position of 2 Connaught Close in relation to its access is irregular compared to the other properties in Connaught Close.

- 3.13 In the previous application the officer report comments on the loss of garden and introduction of hard surfacing and vehicles being a marked change from the character of the existing property. It will be change from the existing situation, however this is not out of keeping with the character of the area. Most of the other properties in Connaught Close have formal access arrangements with hard surface driveways and parking spaces. In addition, the neighbouring 1A and 1 Connaught Close have no front gardens. It is usually the occupier's preference as to whether they have a front garden or not. A quick review of the wider area shows there is a mixture of properties types, some with front gardens and some with no front gardens and only parking. In this case the existing rear garden is sufficient to compensate for the loss in front garden.

#### ***Residential Amenity***

- 3.14 Policy DM4 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document looks to safeguard amenity. It sets out that development will not cause a significant detrimental impact to the living environment of existing or new residential properties in terms of, privacy and overlooking, access to sunlight and daylight, visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development, noise and disturbance, artificial lighting, vibration, dust and fumes, smells, or crime and safety.
- 3.15 The scale of the proposed development means it is unlikely that one new dwelling will have any detrimental impact in terms of noise and disturbance, artificial lighting, dust and fumes, smells, or crime and safety. The location of the new dwelling adjacent to the existing property means the development will not result in the loss of privacy, or restrict access to sunlight and daylight. The proposed dwelling does not have any first-floor side facing windows, with the habitable rooms all having front and rear facing windows.
- 3.16 The positioning of the existing property on site means there is an unusual relationship between 2 Connaught Close and 3 Connaught Close and potential for overlooking to occur which needs to be considered. The existing property at 2 Connaught Close faces directly towards the side of 3 Connaught Close, which will be the same relationship with the new



dwelling given it is proposed adjacent to the existing building. We acknowledge that the new dwelling has the potential to overlook onto the rear garden of 3 Connaught. On the first floor is where overlooking might occur, the new dwelling only has one front facing window to try and minimise the impact of this. At this point it is worth pointing out that a large number of the dwellings in this area of Reading have close relationships with one another. The density of the area means properties are located close to each other and it is almost unavoidable that some level of overlooking occurs.

- 3.17 Policy DM10 requires that dwellings are provided with functional private or communal open space that allow for suitable sitting-out areas, children's play areas, home food production, green waste composting, refuse storage, general outdoor storage and drying space. Both the existing and the proposed new dwelling will be provided with their own private residential garden space sufficient to meet the above objectives.

### ***Transport***

- 3.18 Policy DM12 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document deals with access, traffic and highway-related matters. It sets out that where proposals involving the generation of additional trips on the transport network consideration will be given to the effect on safety, congestion and the environment. It further identifies that development will only be permitted where accesses to the highway comply with adopted standards, the development would not have a material detrimental impact on the functioning of the transport network, and the proposal would not be detrimental to the safety of users of the transport network.
- 3.19 The development will lead to the creation of a 3-bed dwelling, the associated vehicle movements with this are likely to be low. The proposal will not lead to the creation of a new access and instead will use the existing access for 2 Connaught Close. The addition of potentially 2 more cars using this access will not have any detrimental impact on the access or highways network. It's location within a cul-de-sac means it does not have a large amount of passing traffic, only those associated with the neighbouring properties and deliveries etc. The chances of conflict at the site entrance will be extremely limited and when it does occur it will not be a difficult manoeuvre to allow passing. The absence of through traffic at Connaught Close means that momentary waiting on the highway will not affect the flow or have any highway safety implications.



- 3.20 The Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (adopted October 2011) sets out the parking standards for the borough. Using zones it identifies the central core area, primary core area, secondary core area, and wider urban area. This application site is located within the defined primary core area which means it is well served by public transport. Within this zone and for residential development the SPD sets that for a 3-bed dwelling 2 parking spaces must be provided. The new dwelling will be provided with 2 spaces in accordance with the standards. Both the proposed and new dwelling will be provided with covered cycle sheds for the storage of 4 bicycles. The existing property on site will also be provided with 2 parking spaces which is also in accordance with the standards.

### ***Ecology and Landscaping***

- 3.21 Policy CS36 of the Core Strategy aims to protect features of biodiversity and geological interest. The existing site forms the residential garden of 2 Connaught Close which consists of mowed grass with some sporadic trees and hedgerows. This site does not have any recognised biodiversity value nor would it sever or threaten an established wildlife link. There is no demolition proposed as part of this application, which was a concern in the previous application.
- 3.22 Ensuring the development delivers appropriate landscaping forms part of wider point of delivering a high design quality proposal. Policy DM11 specifically refers to landscaping and comments, *'providing appropriate hard and soft landscaping, particularly at site boundaries. This includes features such as the variety of trees, hardstanding/lawns and hedges, etc'*. The existing garden at 2 Connaught Close is being split to accommodate two separate rear gardens. These gardens will comprise grass lawns with paving providing to the rear of the new property. Refuse storage will be provided for both properties at the access, within carrying distance of both properties.

### ***Other Matters***

- 3.23 Policy DM6 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document is the affordable housing policy, it sets out the thresholds for contributions across the borough. It requires that on sites of 1-4 dwellings, a financial contribution is provided that will enable the equivalent of 10% of the housing to be provided as affordable elsewhere in the Borough. This proposal will be policy compliant with regard to affordable housing contributions.



- 3.24 Reading Borough Council implemented its Community Infrastructure Levey (CIL) on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015. Policy DM3 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document ensures that proposals for development make appropriate provisions for infrastructure, services, resources and amenities. These provisions will be secured through planning obligations and/or CIL as relevant. In accordance with the CIL Charging Schedule (January 2015), this development is subject to £120 per m<sup>2</sup>. This proposal will be policy compliant regarding CIL requirements.



## 4 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Sustainable development is at the core of the planning system. The NPPF identifies that economic, social and environmental elements all play a vital role in creating sustainable development. Paragraph 7 of the NPPF provides a clear definition of what constitutes sustainable development:

- **An economic role** – *contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right place and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;*

4.2 The proposed development is utilising land within the built-up area of Reading. The principle of residential development is acceptable given its location within the settlement and proximity to local services and facilities. The site is capable of accommodating one additional residential unit without compromising the existing character of the area or the amenity of the existing property or neighbouring properties. Through the appropriate CIL payment infrastructure provision will be met.

- **A social role** – *supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of the present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being;*

4.3 The application site is located within the defined built-up area within a short distance of a wide range of facilities and services. The proposal has been designed to a high quality standard, with the design reflecting the style and appearance of the existing property on site. The proposal will deliver a 3-bed detached property, reflecting the character of the area through its design. Reading has a diverse mix of housing needs across the borough and the delivery of a mix of housing is emphasised in policy. The most recent Annual Monitoring Report 2016-17 (AMR) identifies that the largest proportion of new permissions are for flats rather than houses and are for smaller rather than larger units. This application would contribute towards the delivery of houses in the borough, which is the most appropriate form of the development in this location.



- **An environmental role** – *contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.*

- 4.4 The proposed application site is not within any Conservation Area nor within the curtilage of a listed building. The nearest listed buildings are approximately 200m west at Battle School, with three roads in-between – Elm Park Road, Belmont Road, and Cranbury Road.
- 4.5 The site is in an accessible location with good access to nearby public transport links, including Reading West train station approximately 800m north east, and bus stops along Tilehurst Road less than 200m south.
- 4.6 In terms of the biodiversity the site currently consists of residential garden land. This has a relatively low level of biodiversity potential, with mowed lawn being the main feature. The existing garden of 2 Connaught Close is unusually large in comparison to many of the neighbouring properties. Its large size means it is capable of being split and providing 2 dwellings with sufficient amenity space.



## 5 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The proposed development will deliver a new dwelling within the defined urban area of Reading. The site has good access to local services and facilities and is within proximity of a number of public transport links. The location and scale of the proposed development means the principle of development is acceptable in this case.
- 5.2 The proposed development comprises sustainable development in accordance with the NPPF. The proposal is efficiently using land within the urban built-up area which is capable of accommodating an additional dwelling. The house will be an attractive addition to Connaught Close with it unlikely that there will be any adverse impacts on neighbours, the environment, or the wider community. In fact, through boosting the local housing stock with a 3-bed property it will be a positive addition to local economy and contribute towards local housing need.
- 5.3 The applicant has taken on board the comments from the previous proposal on site and designed a scheme which is much more in-fitting with the character of the area. The reduced scale of the development and the fact the existing building will remain on site significantly reduces the issues the council previously had with development on this site. Careful consideration has been given to the design of the proposed dwelling to ensure it contributes positively to the character and appearance of the site.
- 5.4 There are no site specific issues which cannot be dealt with which would prevent this development from coming forward. Therefore the council should view this application favourably and approve it without delay.