

Dr Steven Hughes
2 Ashcroft Close
Caversham
RG4 7NU
17th Feb 2018

Dear Sirs

PLANNING STATEMENT: 2 Ashcroft Close, Caversham, RG4 7NU

1. This Statement describes the application for a single-story side and rear extension to add a granny annex to the above titled property.

Site Description and Surrounding Area

2. The application property is a two-storey, semi-detached property on the South Eastern corner of Ashcroft Close and Kidmore Road. The existing property has an original double-storey rear gable, with a later single-storey mono-pitch addition to the rear. There is a small single story mono-pitch roof conservatory to the rear of the property. The property is set back from both Kidmore Road and Ashcroft Close with driveway parking for two cars to the rear of the property. The North West face of the property is set back from Ashcroft close by approx. 4.6 m with a brick wall of approx. 2 m in height running along the boundary.
3. The surrounding area is residential in nature with a mix of semi-detached and detached properties of a variety of styles and designs.

Reason for Application

4. The above titled property is a Victorian structure made from un-insulated solid brick walls, with a narrow and steep brick staircase that bisects the property in two, and with no upstairs bathroom.
5. This application seeks to provide a downstairs granny annex on the same level as our existing downstairs bathroom adding flexible living accommodation suitable for both elderly relatives. The narrowness and pitch of the stairs (which no longer meet building requirements) combined with there being no upstairs bathroom make the home unsuitable for families with young children, or older relatives.
6. This application seeks to improve the insulation value and sustainability of the house by insulating a large un-insulated North-facing brick-wall that acts as a heat sink, in order to make the property comfortable to live in and reduce carbon emissions that contribute to climate change and flooding.
7. This application seeks to adapt an older layout property to provide flexible accommodation suitable for both young and growing families and elderly and vulnerable relatives.
8. If the applicants are unable to adapt the property layout to the needs of a young family, then they will be forced to move out of the area to somewhere more affordable where a family-friendly layout is possible.
9. This application proposes an extension that is small in bulk and scale, provides versatile downstairs accommodation, improves the insulation value of an older property which is difficult to insulate, does not affect light to neighbours, does not overlook neighbours, contributes a high quality extension matching the existing exterior and allows a considerable area of garden space (>150 m²) to remain. The sympathetic nature of the design, matching materials, being set-back from the existing front of the property, and referencing the existing gable roofline over the granny annex seeks to contribute positively to the street scene, and is smaller in scale and bulk than an existing two-story extension that is already present on a property opposite the proposed site (113b Kidmore Road, Caversham, RG4 7NH – the opposite property on the corner of Ashcroft Close and Kidmore Road).

Details of the Application

10. It is proposed that the side extension will project 3.2 m, leaving a 1 m gap to the existing boundary wall with Ashcroft Close, where a path with gate will be installed to allow easy access from front to rear gardens.
11. It is proposed that the side extension will be smaller in scale than the original house by setting back from the front. The proposed extension will be significantly smaller with respect to the existing property and will not create an over-bearance on neighbouring properties.
12. To the rear of the property it is proposed to install sliding doors on the ground floor to maximise the passive heating effect of the South West elevation, with sky-light windows on the flat section, matching the existing design of the extension on the neighbouring property at 111 Kidmore Road.
13. To the front of the property it is proposed to install a sash window on the ground floor matching the existing windows.
14. It is proposed that a pitched slate roof will cover the single-story granny annex section of the side extension, matching the design of the existing building roof and importantly respect the character of house in terms of design. The significantly reduced height of the roofline of the proposed single-story granny annex will serve to break up the existing large brick façade presented to the street scene. Only the slate roof will be visible over the existing 2m high brick boundary wall and will serve to visually break-up the height of the existing brick façade and visually stagger the property down towards the boundary.
15. It is proposed to erect a 2m high garden fence along the internal boundary of the existing 2-car driveway to the rear of the property and plant a tree to the rear of the property to sympathetically obscure the proposed development from view of Ashcroft Close. Although, no planning permission is required for these particular steps, they are noted here as actions that will be undertaken to reduced the visibility of the proposed development from the existing street scene.
16. It is proposed that the rest of the materials to be used in this development will match those of the existing property dating from 1870.
17. The proposed development will have no direct or indirect effect on nearby trees as stated in the tree report prepared by M Welby Tech Cert (ArborA), Dip Arb (RFS), FArborA in accordance with BS5837:2012 *Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction*.

Discussion of relevant planning policies

18. This plan has been prepared in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Reading's adopted 'Core Strategy' (CS2008) and Reading Borough Council's adopted 'Sites and Detailed Policies Document' (SDPD2012). The relevant policies with which this proposal accords includes, but is not limited to:
19. NPPF 95: Local planning authorities should actively support energy efficiency improvements to existing buildings – achieved in this application via insulating a large North facing un-insulated wall to reduce the carbon footprint of heating this difficult to insulate property.
20. CS2008 3.3.2: Improve the quality of life for those living, working, studying in and visiting the Borough – achieved via adapting the property to the needs of a growing family and elderly relatives.
21. CS2008 4.3.1: Use energy, water, minerals and other natural resources appropriately, efficiently and with care – achieved via insulating a large North facing un-insulated wall to reduce the carbon footprint of heating this property.
22. CS2008 4.3.12: Provide high quality housing of a type and cost appropriate to the needs of the area – Reading Borough Council having established the need for family housing in Reading in addition to more common applications for apartments this is achieved via adapting a Victorian layout to be more suitable to the needs of families in the area.

23. CS2008 4.6 In relation to sustainable buildings, the main thrust of National (PPS 1 and PPS 22), Regional (RPG 9 and the emerging South East Plan) and Strategic (Berkshire Structure Plan 2001-2016) policy is to address the causes and potential impacts of climate change. This is to be achieved through reducing energy use, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, promoting high standards of energy efficiency – achieved via insulating a large North facing un-insulated wall to reduce the carbon footprint of heating this property.
24. SDPD2012 DM4: SAFEGUARDING AMENITY: 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; Smell; or Crime and safety – achieved via the proposal design being considered in such a way as to reduce any potential overlooking, access to sunlight and or dominance and overbearing effects.
25. SDPD2012 DM7: ACCOMMODATION FOR VULNERABLE PEOPLE (i) Development providing specialist accommodation for vulnerable people (including children, as defined in SDPD2012 5.3.1) will address the identified needs – achieved via the proposal design adapting an out-dated Victorian layout with narrow and steep stairs to the needs of young children and elderly family to support the needs of a family looking to remain within the Borough.
26. SDPD2012 DM9: HOUSE EXTENSIONS AND ANCILLARY ACCOMMODATION: An extension to a house will be acceptable where it:
 - Respects the character of the house in terms of scale, location, materials and design;
 - Respects 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; and
 - Does not present a large blank façade to public areas.
 – achieved via the proposal design satisfying these criteria.
27. SDPD2012 5.5.3: Reading is a dense urban area, and there is limited land for new housing development. When household needs change, particularly through growing families, the ability to extend a house can give an alternative to moving to a larger property, often in a less accessible location, or out of the Borough. Such a movement of families can act against creating mixed communities. Therefore, it is important to ensure that, where a household wishes to stay in an existing house, there is as much flexibility as possible to do so – significant to this proposal is that if we are unable to adapt the original property layout to the needs of a young family looking to have children, then we will be forced to move out of the area to a property with a layout more suitable to our needs.

Precedence of planning permission being granted for much more prominent and bulkier side extensions within the local area

28. Reading and Caversham is comprised of a significant number of Victorian properties. As local needs have changed, a number of these properties have been adapted, including through the use of side extensions. There are a number of highly visible side extensions to similar properties in the vicinity, including those that are much larger in scale and bulk than this proposal, and including numerous two-story side extensions (whereas this proposal is for a single-story extension only).
29. An example of a two-story in-fill side-extension on a Victorian property in a prominent street-scene position with a matching the existing roof line can be found at 63 Priest Hill, Caversham, RG4 7RY, Planning Application Number: 131221 (see: Appendix, Image 1)
30. An example of a two-story side-extension in keeping with the original Victorian property with a lowered roof line can be found at 76 Albert Road, Caversham, RG4 7PL, Planning Application Number: 980663 (see: Appendix, Image 2)
31. An example of a large two-story side-extension with significant size and bulk and a matching roof line can be found at 15 Richmond Road, Caversham, RG4 7PP (see: Appendix, Image 3)

32. An example of a large two-story side-extension on a corner plot abutting a highway can be found at 113b Kidmore Road, Caversham, RG4 7NH – opposite the application property and less than 20m away, Planning Application Number: 880323 (see: Appendix, Image 4)
33. An example of a recently approved large two-story side-extension on a corner plot abutting a highway in a prominent visual position effecting the street scene can be found at 9 Aldenham Close, Caversham, RG4 6RR, Planning Application Number: 130573 (see: Appendix, Image 5)
34. An example of a recently approved large two-story side-extension on a corner plot abutting a highway in a prominent visual position effecting the street scene can be found at 1 Earlsfield Close, Caversham, RG4 6NX, Planning Application Number: 141123 (see: Appendix, Image 6)

Summary

35. This proposal would be of great benefit to the applicant; allowing their family to remain within the Borough, and allowing vulnerable elderly relatives to stay at the property in the granny annex.
36. The proposal is a high quality design matching existing design and materials of one of the oldest properties in the local area.
37. There is no loss of privacy for neighbouring properties.
38. The proposal would greatly improve the insulation of a large North facing un-insulated wall to reduce the carbon footprint of this property. As recognised in the National Planning Policy Framework 187: 'Local planning authorities should look for solutions rather than problems, and decision-takers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible'.
39. There is no impact of shadowing on neighbours - proposed structure is to the north of the site and significantly far away from any neighbours to have no effect on light.
40. A significant area of garden will still remain on the property after the development (over 150 m2).
41. Consideration has been made for the protection of trees during and after construction of the proposed structure – please see the included tree survey detailing Arboriculturalist approval of the proposal.
42. The extension has been designed to be smaller in scale than the original house by setting back from the front.
43. The proposed pitched slate roof of the single-storey granny annex section will respect the character of the house in terms of design, matching the roof pitch at a much reduced height, thus serving to break up the existing large brick façade and stagger the building height, positively contributing to the street scene.
44. Other measures such as a fence and new tree have been co-operatively proposed to serve as ways of obscuring the visibility of the site from the street scene.
45. No 'terracing effect' or 'infilling' will result from this extension
46. This proposal would be of long-term benefit to Reading Borough Council, improving the flexibility of the existing housing stock by adapting a dated Victorian layout to meet the needs of the Borough's families today.
47. The proposal aligns with the relevant terms of the National Planning Policy Framework, the Core Strategy and the Sites and Detailed Policies Document.

Yours faithfully,

Dr Steven Hughes.

Appendix



Image 1: Modern two-story in-fill side extension at 63 Priest Hill, Caversham, RG4 7RY, Planning Application Number: 131221 (located 1200 m from application property).



Image 2: Modern two-story side extension to Victorian property at 76 Albert Road, Caversham, RG4 7PL, Planning Application Number: 980663 (located 480 m from application property)



Image 3: Large two-story side extension with significant size and bulk to Victorian property at 15 Richmond Road, Caversham, RG4 7PP (located 200 m from application property)



Image 4: Large two-story side extension on a corner plot abutting a highway at 113b Kidmore Road, Caversham, RG4 7NH, Planning Application Number: 880323 (located on opposite side of Ashcroft Close 20 m from application property)



Image 5: Recent two-story side on a corner plot abutting a highway and in a prominent position and recently given planning approval (130573) at 9 Aldenham Close, Caversham, RG4 6RR, Planning Application Number: 130573 (located 1800 m from application property)



Image 6: Recent two-story side on a corner plot with significant size and bulk abutting a highway and recently given planning approval (141123) at 1 Earlsfield Close, Caversham, RG4 6NX, Planning Application Number: 141123 (located 2700 m from application property)