



PLANNING, DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

For: No. 145 The Warren, Caversham, RG4 7TQ

To support a householder planning application for extensions and alterations

The site and surroundings

The application site is located on The Warren which comprises a long, single track, semi-rural lane running along the top of a short escarpment on the northern side of the Thames.

The river side of the street is lined by individually designed detached houses, mostly split level with their upper floors facing on to The Warren and with 2 or more storeys to the rear, facing the river.

There is a change in site levels and the houses slope down from The Warren to the Thames.

No.145 is fairly typical in this respect and comprises a brick and tile 3 storey house with only the top floor fronting onto The Warren.

It has now a little 'tired' and dated appearance.



There is a boathouse to the south of the site, on the waterfront and a garage to the front of the site. The site is within the Thames Valley area major landscape feature area and an area of identified biodiversity interest.

The site is also within Flood Zones 2 and 3b as designated by the Environment Agency. The Warren is also on a cycle route.



Relevant Planning History

The application site has been the subject of prior applications, the latest of which went to, and was dismissed at planning appeal for proposed improvements to the existing house in a more contemporary design including 2 relatively small scale 2 storey extensions at the back, a 2 storey extension to one side and a small top floor extension at the front.

The existing rear ground floor and first floor terraces were also proposed to be extended, and other alterations made, and a garage added to the front of the house. [Application Ref 160802 & Appeal Decision APP/E0345/D/16/3163447 refers].

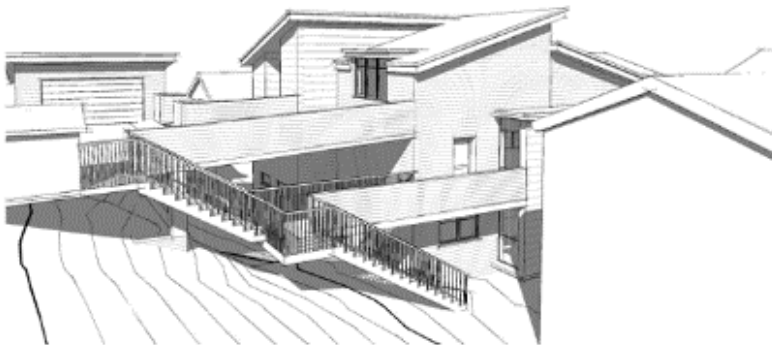
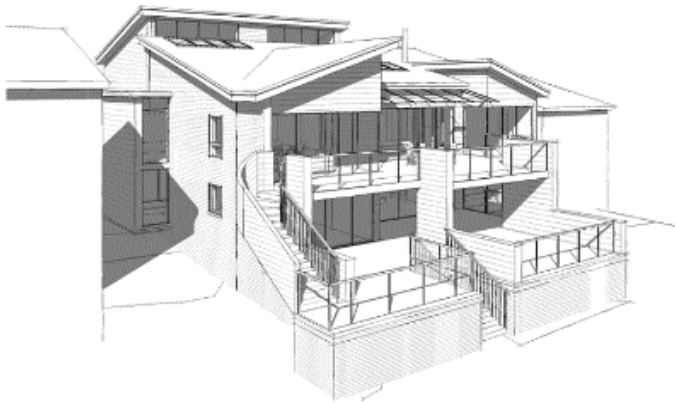


As part of this appeal the planning inspector confirmed that the Council accepts that a contemporary design solution is appropriate here, but in this instance objected to the particular design proposed.

The inspector stated that the existing house has varied roof lines and angles, which combined with site level changes make it look somewhat disorderly in some views.

He felt in response to the appeal proposal that whilst on one hand it would help to improve the roofscape by replacing the existing profile tiles with slates, giving the building much cleaner lines, on the other hand it would also introduce several new roof slopes without establishing any clear overall form, resulting in a cluttered, disharmonious design that would not resolve into a coherent whole.

(Visuals of dismissed appeal proposal – not to scale)



It was felt at this time therefore that the extended house would have stood out unattractively from the other, more simply designed houses in this row, as seen in views from The Warren, the river and the other side of the river.

The appeal determination did however also confirm that the use of more glass than existing is only to be expected in such an area, to take advantage of the views to the river and beyond which met with no objection, and nor did the scale of the proposed extensions which were considered modest in size.

The Warren is characterised in part by garages to the front of houses, so that part of the proposal was also found acceptable in design terms.

In summary in reference to design and character the inspector on this occasion felt;

"Although aspects of the proposal would therefore preserve and even enhance local character, I find that the harm from changes to the roof form would outweigh any benefits. Taken as a whole, I conclude that the proposal would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of both the house and the local area."

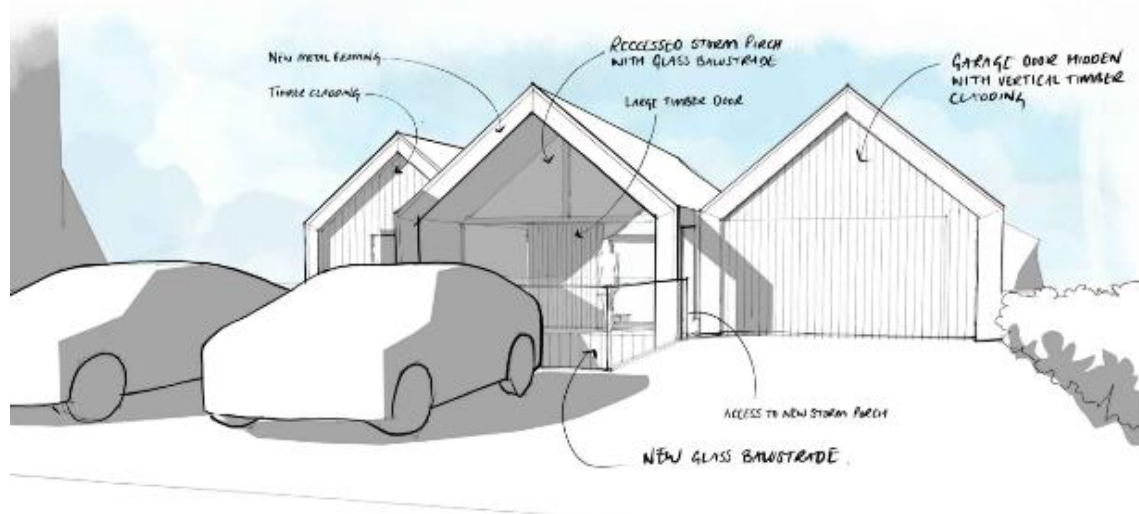
This pre-application enquiry therefore seeks the Council's views on a revised design concept for updating the property and for providing for much improved living accommodation internally and a significant uplift in its external visual appearance and energy performance.

It has sought to address previous planning officer and Inspector concerns which whilst recognizing that the application site is in an area wherein there is no distinct property style and design, (and in particular no distinct roof design) also expressed concern over the proportions of the sides with differing mono pitch roofs,

This was considered to result in geometrically jarring roof forms, and a somewhat confusing and visually cluttered appearance with a distinct lack of balance to the form of the dwelling.

Subsequent to this decision a new, reconsidered design was submitted as a pre-application enquiry, ref: 230739/PREAPP.

The Pre-App sketch designs are shown below;





Officers response to this revised proposal concluded that;

“the current proposals are considered to offer a more unified and coherent design when viewed from the front and rear of the property. There are a variety of designs and architectural compositions along The Warren and there are some design features which are prevalent, such as gables facing on to the river similar to that proposed. The proposals would not be too dissimilar in scale and appearance to other developments including at No’s 137 and 139 The Warren.

Whilst materials should typically match those of the existing dwelling, use of high quality contemporary materials would be welcomed. It would be expected for details of the proposed material and finished appearance of the scheme to be shown at application stage.

This pre-app proposal has now been further developed and forms the basis of the submitted householder planning application. Extracts of illustrative views of the proposal (not to scale) are shown below.

Elevation (proposed) facing The Warren;





Elevation (proposed) facing the River Thames;



The proposal now provides a more balanced and visually coherent design, albeit retaining some contemporary elements to the detailing and materials but in a manner which is easily identifiable as a residential dwelling, retaining residential features, and being more domestic in form.

The current proposal adopts a simple and more traditional roof design more in keeping with other established designs fronting the river edge, utilising a series of 3 stepped gabled pitched roofs with glazed and weatherboard elevations and simple glass balustrade balcony at first floor level.

This architectural form remains domestic in scale whilst providing attractive double height space to some of the interior rooms. It draws some parallels with recently completed development at nos. 139 and 137 The Warren two doors down from the application site.

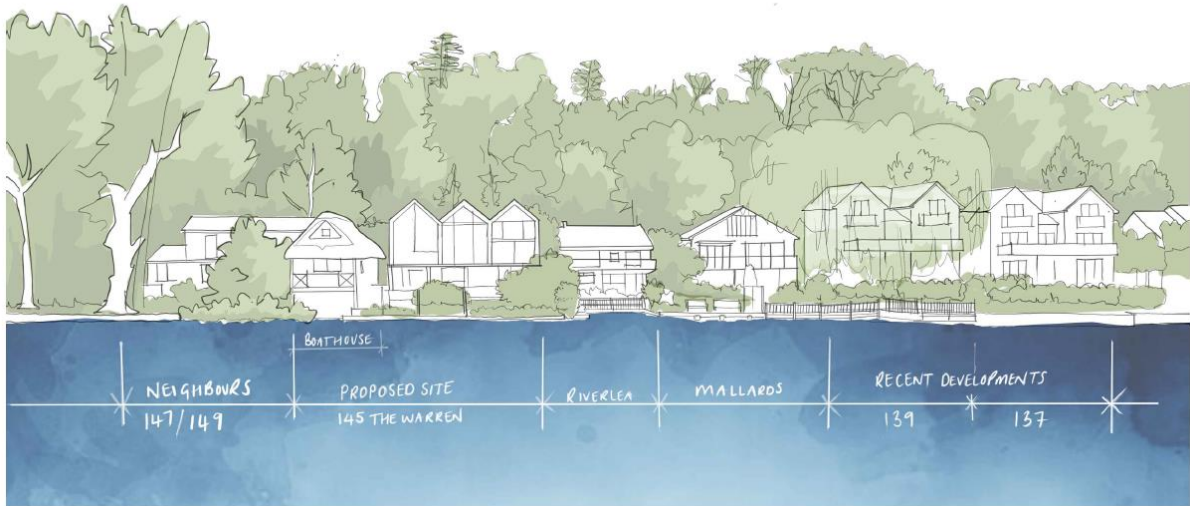
See aerial view of these properties below;





In massing terms the proposal echoes finished ridge heights of nearby dwellings and has a comparable impact on riverside views / context to those properties at 139 and 137 the Warren.

See illustrative massing sketch below;



Relevant Planning Policy:

The submitted drawings and supporting reports (covering Flood, Ecology and Trees) have been prepared with due consideration given to the context set by the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019, RBC Supplementary Planning Documents together with national guidance (the NPPF 2023).

These include;

Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) which aims to preserve or enhance the character of the area in which a development is in terms of layout, landscape, density, scale, height, massing, architectural detail and materials.

Policy EN11 (Waterspaces) states that Reading's waterspaces will be protected and enhanced...and that there will be no adverse impact on the functions and setting of any watercourse and its associated character.

Policy EN13 (Major Landscape Features and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) states that planning permission will not be granted for any development that would detract from the character and appearance of a Major Landscape Feature Area (MLF).

As guided by the Pre-App response ref: 230739/PREAPP Regard has also been paid to the following matters;

Policy EN18 - (Flooding and Drainage) which sets out the planning permission will not be granted for development that would increase risks arising from flooding.

Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) seeks to ensure development does not cause harm to the living environment of existing properties, in terms of loss of privacy, overlooking and visual dominance, amongst other things.



Policy EN16 (Pollution and Water Resources) seeks to protect surrounding occupiers from the impact of pollution.

Policies TR3 (Access, Traffic and Highway related matters), TR1 (Achieving the Transport Strategy) and TR5 (Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging) which seek to address access, traffic, highway and parking related matters relating to development.

Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) seeks that development should contribute positively to the area of Reading within which it is located, including by way of landscaping.

Policy EN14 (Trees Hedges and Woodlands) states that individual trees, groups of trees, hedges and woodlands will be protected from damage or removal, and the Borough's vegetation cover will be extended with new development to make provision for tree planting within the application site, or off-site in appropriate situations.

Policy CC3 (Sustainable Design and Construction)&(Adaption to Climate Change) of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) which seek to ensure that proposed development incorporates measures to adapt to climate change through the design of buildings, and that site layouts use energy, water, minerals, materials and other natural resources appropriately, efficiently and with care and take account of the effects of climate change.

Neighbours' living conditions

The proposed redesign has also sought to address any concerns of the new works causing any loss of privacy or appearing overbearing to Riverlea adjacent and the new extensions and the revised terrace arrangement are now considered to have no adverse effect on the rear windows, terraces and gardens of either Riverlea or the house to the other side, No 147.

Both of these houses would retain wide, open, sunny southern aspects. All 3 houses already have terraces at first floor level, overlooking each other and each other's gardens. The proposed re-plan of the first floor terrace at no.145 would not materially change this situation.

Flood risk

The lower part of the site, including much of the footprint of the house, is situated in Flood Zone 3b, the functional flood plain of the Thames, where flooding is to be expected from time to time. Flood risk from this main river needs careful consideration. The Planning Practice Guidance advises that decision-makers should ensure that development is appropriately flood resilient and resistant, safe for its users for the development's lifetime and will not increase flood risk overall.

Development Plan Policy CS35 exempts small-scale householder developments from its general restriction on development in high risk flood areas, though this does not necessarily mean that such development is acceptable.

The Planning Practice Guidance advises that site-specific flood risk assessments should always be proportionate to the degree of flood risk.

The application is therefore accompanied by a flood risk assessment to demonstrate that the proposal would not result in significantly increased risk of flooding to the property itself or dwellings beyond the site boundary.



Access

No material alterations are proposed to the site's access and car parking arrangements.

It is acknowledged that traffic speeds are very low at the Warren and residents are used to proceeding with caution when leaving homes here. The site also enjoys the benefit of a nearby cycle path.

Trees

As confirmed within the accompanying arboricultural report and tree protection plan the proposal has been designed around the retention of the existing tree population. No trees, shrubs or Root Protection Areas (RPA) directly interfere with the proposed development. Therefore, it is not necessary to remove any surveyed trees and shrubs of BS5837 (2012) category 'A', 'B' or 'C'.

Three trees have been identified as having a BS5837 (2012) category of 'U'. These trees are generally of poor structural and physiological form, possessing a limited predicted lifespan. Although these trees do not directly interfere with the proposed development, it is recommended they are removed on health & safety grounds (refer to tree survey).

Ecology

As confirmed within the supporting ecology report the existing dwelling and the boathouse is assessed as having 'negligible' potential (Collins, 2023) to offer shelter to roosting bats within an undetected location. The vegetated garden is also considered to be of low ecological value.

No evidence of nesting birds was found inside or outside of the buildings.

Otters No evidence of otters was noted along the bank of the River Thames or within the site. The garden does not offer any suitable habitat or shelter to otters.

Water Voles No evidence of water voles was noted along the bank of the River Thames, or within the site. The bank of the river is engineered and does not offer suitable habitat to water voles.

Other Species: No evidence of other protected or notable species was noted.

There is no evidence of badger *Meles meles* activity within the garden.

Sustainability

All materials will be locally sourced if possible. The building fabric will be airtight through its construction method to maximise the efficiency of energy retention within the house. The large, glazed apertures will be controlled by a reflective layer within the glass itself, improving the G' value.

A new air source heat pump system coupled with solar panels and battery storage will make for a sustainable run home that is future proofed when gas is obsolete. The solar panels will also run low energy output led light fittings.



Conclusion

It is the applicant's intention to occupy the property as their family's principal residence and the proposed works as outlined below reflect the need to embrace the opportunity to add sympathetic features and additions to preserve and enhance the character of the property whilst giving it additional habitable space, greater flexibility and a more sustainable future, bringing it more in to line with modern day expectations for such a family home.

The context of the application site and the surrounding area has been carefully considered and fully taken into account by the architects in designing the application proposals.

The Government's NPPF states that planning should always seek to secure high quality design and avoid conflict between the character and appearance of an area and the identifiable need to improve the appearance and functionality of existing property.

This guidance which looks for planning decisions to address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment should ensure that sustainable development is permitted where proposals respond to local character and history, (are visually attractive as a result of good architecture) and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials.

The proposal also addresses directly the importance of securing the property in its optimum viable use as a family home and to improve its related functionality and sustainability credentials.

This particular proposal presents an interesting and noteworthy contemporary uplift of an existing residence that presently fails to maximise opportunities presented by its attendant plot.

The new design integrates elements of the existing house into new energy efficient improvements that introduce positive enhancements both to the appearance of the property and the way it functions and meets future expectations.

The proposal will not materially damage the prevailing mixed character of this established residential area nor the quality and character of views to it or within it.

The proposal is of a high quality design, finish and materials and is of a size, scale and arrangement that is appropriate to the host building and compliant with the prevailing policy.

For all of these reasons we look forward to the Local Planning Authorities support for these revised proposals for the site.