

DELEGATED PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Caversham Heights

App Ref: 240556/FUL

Address: 11 Rhigos, Emmer Green, Reading, RG4 8LF

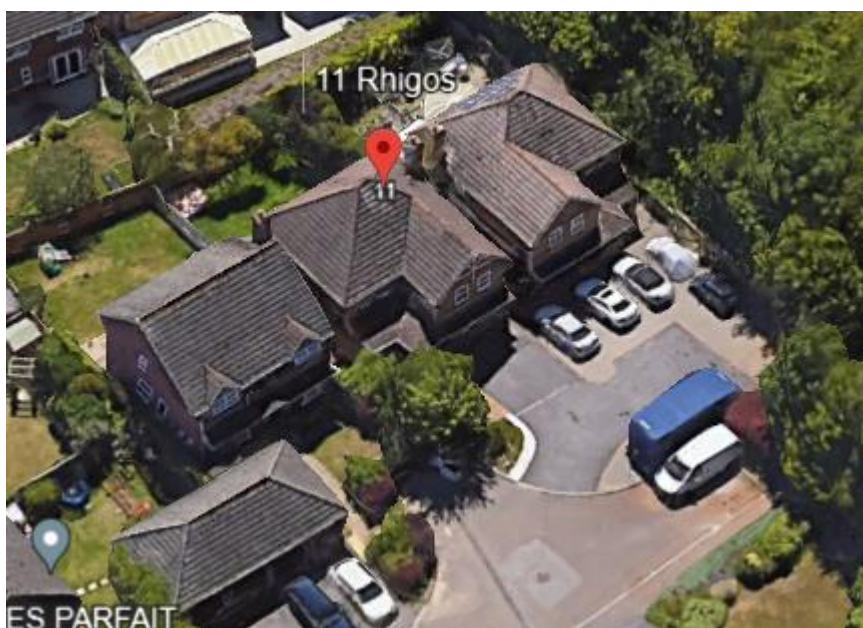
Proposals: Internal, fenestration and elevation alteration to detached dwelling to create two semidetached houses

Case Officer: Marcie Rejwerska

Date received (valid from): 29 April 2024 Target Decision date: 24 June 2024

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site comprises a detached two-storey dwelling within a cul-de-sac in Emmer Green. The ground level slopes down from the street towards the property resulting in a steep driveway. At the rear, the garden is accessed via a raised patio. The application site is just outside the North Reading Dry Valleys and Chilterns Escarpment major landscape feature, and Hemdean Bottom green space - both features are identified as areas of biodiversity interest. The surrounding area is residential, comprised of detached dwellings in similar character.



Aerial view taken from Google Earth.

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Planning permission is sought for subdivision of the property into two self-contained, semi-detached dwellinghouses, and associated internal and external alterations. External alterations to consist of:

- new external doors at the front elevation,
- timber detailing on all elevations,
- extend existing window openings and replace all windows,
- new windows at west elevation on ground and first floor

Measurements of proposed new dwellings:

Unit A GIA = 60.42m²

Double bedroom = 11.54m²

Single bedroom = 7.72m²

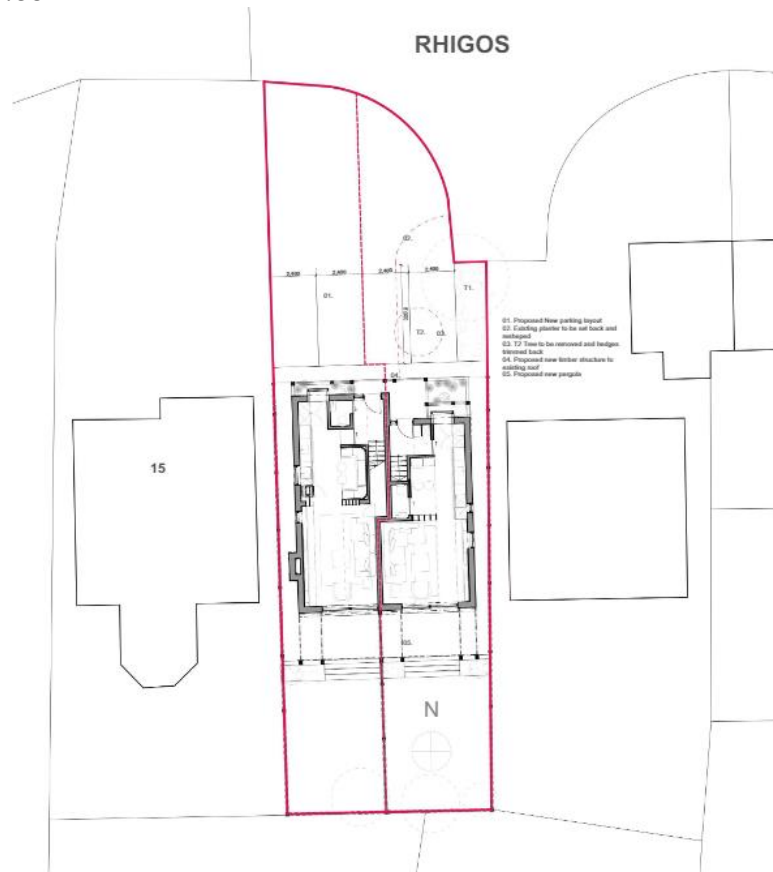
Rear garden = 54.93m²

Unit B GIA = 85.08m²

Double bedroom = 11.5m²

Double bedroom = 19.37m²

Rear garden = 50.35m²



Proposed block plan

Plans considered:

Design and Access Statement, dated 18/04/2024

A.01.1 - Location Plan, dated 09/07/2023

E.01 - Existing Floor Plans and Elevations, dated 09/07/2023

A.01.2 - Proposed Site Plan, dated 09/07/2023

A.02.1 - Proposed Front and Rear Elevation, dated 09/07/2023

A.02.2 - Proposed Side Elevations, dated 09/07/2023

A.01.3 - Proposed Ground Floor Plan, dated 09/07/2023

A.01.4 - Proposed First Floor and Roof Plan, dated 09/07/2023

A.03.1 - Front Illustrative Visuals, dated 09/07/2023

A.03.2 - Rear Illustrative Visuals, dated 09/07/2023

A.03.3 - Living Room Illustrative Visuals, dated 09/07/2023

A.03.4 - Living/Dining Room Illustrative Visuals, dated 09/07/2023

A.03.5 - Bedroom Illustrative Visuals, dated 09/07/2023

Received by the LPA on 30/04/2024

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

171375 - Conversion of garage to habitable rooms. Glazed canopy over patio at rear. - Application withdrawn on 06/10/2017

172260 - Conversion of garage into family room and playroom. Erection of glass canopy to rear. - Application permitted on 29/01/2018; part implemented (garage conversion complete, glass canopy at the rear not implemented)

4. CONSULTATIONS

Non-statutory:

RBC Natural Environment - Insufficient tree information submitted in order to assess application, contrary to Policy EN14 and the RBC Tree Strategy.

RBC Ecology - No objections on ecology grounds, subject to condition to secure biodiversity enhancements.

RBC Transport - Objection to proposed parking layout. Insufficient parking, refuse and EV charging information. This proposal would require a CMS.

Public:

The following addresses were consulted by letter.

4 Cwmcarn, Emmer Green, Reading, Berkshire, RG4 8LE
6 Cwmcarn, Emmer Green, Reading, Berkshire, RG4 8LE
5 Rhigos, Emmer Green, Reading, RG4 8LF
6 Rhigos, Emmer Green, Reading, Berkshire, RG4 8LF
7 Rhigos, Emmer Green, Reading, RG4 8LF
8 Rhigos, Emmer Green, Reading, RG4 8LF
9 Rhigos, Emmer Green, Reading, RG4 8LF
11 Rhigos, Emmer Green, Reading, RG4 8LF
14 Rhigos, Emmer Green, Reading, Berkshire, RG4 8LF
15 Rhigos, Emmer Green, Reading, RG4 8LF
16 Rhigos, Emmer Green, Reading, RG4 8LF
60 Cardiff Road, Reading, RG1 8EP

Letters of representation have been received as follows:

13 objections received citing concerns relating to:

- Proposal not in keeping with local character of detached dwellings
- Smaller dwellings not suitable for families and could become short term lets
- Parking spaces incorrectly represented on submitted plans
- No account for ground level change
- Increase pressure for on-street parking
- Obstruction of the turning space in the street
- No details of refuse storage
- Safety concern for children playing out in the cul-de-sac
- Incorrect statements made within the Design & Access Statement
- No site notice has been displayed
- Encroachment onto plot of number 15 Rhigos
- Impact on house value

5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. The following local and national planning policy and guidance is relevant to this application:

National Policy and Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework
National Planning Practice Guidance

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC1: PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
CC5: WASTE MINIMISATION AND STORAGE
CC6: ACCESSIBILITY AND THE INTENSITY OF DEVELOPMENT
CC7: DESIGN AND THE PUBLIC REALM
CC8: SAFEGUARDING AMENITY
EN12: BIODIVERSITY AND THE GREEN NETWORK
EN14: TREES, HEDGES AND WOODLAND
H1: PROVISION OF HOUSING
H2: DENSITY AND MIX
H3: AFFORDABLE HOUSING
H7: PROTECTING THE EXISTING HOUSING STOCK
H10: PRIVATE AND COMMUNAL OUTDOOR SPACE
TR1: ACHIEVING THE TRANSPORT STRATEGY
TR3: ACCESS, TRAFFIC AND HIGHWAY-RELATED MATTERS
TR5: CAR AND CYCLE PARKING AND ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING

SPD

Affordable Housing (2021)
Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)
Sustainable Design and Construction (2019)

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.

APPRAISAL

The main issues to be considered are:

- I) Principle of development
- II) Character and design
- III) Residential Amenity
- IV) Transport and parking
- V) Biodiversity
- VI) Other matters

Principle of development

Policy H2 (Density and Mix) sets out the needs of Reading borough in terms of housing mix. For market housing, it is identified that there is a particular need for family housing (3+ bedrooms). The existing dwelling is a 4-bedroom property and the proposal would result in 2x 2-bedroom properties. This is not considered acceptable, as the proposal would result in the loss of much needed family housing in the borough, which is expected to be located outside the central core of Reading; a 2-bedroom property in this location would not be considered appropriate.

Overall, the proposal is considered harmful in principle as it would result in the loss of one family-sized dwelling within the borough, contrary to Policy H2.

Character and design

Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) states *“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. The various components of development form, including:*

- *Layout: urban structure and urban grain;*
- *Landscape;*
- *Density and mix;*
- *Scale: height and massing; and*
- *Architectural detail and materials”.*

Policy H10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space) is also relevant and states *“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)”.*

Proposed Unit A falls below the nationally described minimum space standards for a 2-bedroom, 3-person, 2-storey dwelling. Unit B is larger, including both bedrooms being significantly bigger than those in Unit A. This signifies that the proposed development is not appropriate on this site. Furthermore, both rear gardens fall below the GIA of both dwellings - while some provisions are made within Policy H10 for smaller gardens, in this instance it would not be reasonable to accept smaller gardens, given the pattern of size and layout of gardens in the local area, and the unsuitability of the proposal as a whole.

Overall, the proposed development results in unsuitable residential dwellings with poor layout and inadequate private amenity spaces.

Residential amenity

Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) states: *“Development will not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties, in terms of:*

- *Privacy and overlooking;*
- *Access to sunlight and daylight;*
- *Visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development;*
- *Harm to outlook;*
- *Noise and disturbance;*
- *Artificial lighting.”*

There are new windows proposed on the west elevation facing no. 15 Rhigos, however, this is not considered a risk as all proposed new windows would not serve habitable rooms and could

therefore be conditioned to be obscure glazed. Overall, the proposed fenestration layout does not pose a risk of harm to any surrounding neighbour, nor the future occupiers.

Similarly, there are no identified risks in relation to access to sunlight, outlook, noise, nor lighting. The proposal would be in accordance with Policy CC8.

Transport and parking

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 Councils current standards two off road parking spaces should be provided.

As per the Highway Development Control team's feedback, the proposed parking layout is not considered acceptable - the proposed parking bays do not conform to space standards, and are therefore likely to be too small to accommodate two vehicles each, and with two vehicles parked there would be no room for pedestrian access to the front door. It is therefore evident that the application site cannot support the increased requirement for off-road parking. The LPA would not support any increased pressure for on-street parking.

No details have been submitted in relation to cycle storage, EV charging, nor refuse storage, however, these details could be reasonably obtained via condition. As such, it would not be reasonable for this to form a reason for refusal.

Biodiversity

Policy EN12 states "On all sites, development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity and geodiversity, and should provide a net gain for biodiversity wherever possible."

Policy EN14 is also relevant, and states "Individual trees, groups of trees, hedges and woodlands will be protected from damage or removal where they are of importance, and Reading's vegetation cover will be extended."

Insufficient information has been submitted in relation to the existing vegetation and trees on site. Additionally, no landscaping principles have been demonstrated. Overall, there is insufficient information for the LPA to assess the proposal in relation to biodiversity and trees on site. This information was requested from the agent but none had been forthcoming.

This proposal would not require the submission of biodiversity net gain, however, biodiversity enhancements would still be sought to be secured by condition.

Conclusion

The application has been assessed against adopted national and local policies and is considered not acceptable due to the resulting loss of a family-sized dwelling within the borough, and subsequent creation of substandard accommodation in terms of scale and layout.

RECOMMENDATION **REFUSE PERMISSION**

Due to the following reasons:

1. The proposed development is unacceptable due to the loss of family-sized 3 bedroom accommodation, which is identified as the most needed within the Reading Borough. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policy H2 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.
2. The proposed Unit A due to its scale and layout, falls below nationally described minimum space standards, and fails to provide adequately sized private outdoor amenity space, and is therefore harmful to the amenity of future occupiers, contrary to Policies CC7, H10 and H5 of Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.
3. The proposed parking allocation by way of its poor design and layout fails to meet the required off-road parking provision and would result in a frontage dominated by parked vehicles, harmful to the visual amenity of the street and the functioning of the highway. The proposal is therefore contrary to Revised, contrary to Policies CC7 and TR5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and the Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD 2011.
4. Insufficient information has been submitted to demonstrate how the existing trees on site will be protected and/or replaced, with consequent harm to the visual amenity and biodiversity of the area, contrary to Policy EN14 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.