

DELEGATED PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Caversham Heights

App Ref: 231265/FUL

Address: 92 Albert Road, Reading, RG4 7PL

Proposals: Erection of 4no.dwellings following demolition of existing buildings

Case Officer: Mr Anthony Scholes

Date received (valid from): 12 October 2023

Target Decision date: 6 March 2024

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

Site visit date: 16/01/2024

Site visit photos:





The site relates to land to 92 Albert Road, Caversham located on the east side of Albert Road close to the junction with Chelford Way to the south. The site is subject to Tree Preservation Order 40/06, along with the trees next door at No.94 Albert Road and is within a Green Link. The surrounding area is predominantly residential. Whilst the property has been in use as flats, it is currently vacant.

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The proposal as described is for redevelopment of the site to provide 4 dwellings. This would include the demolition of No.92 Albert Road. Associated access, car parking and indicative soft landscaping is shown on the plans. The proposal was revised on 29 December 2023, the assessment below relates to those amended plans.

Plans considered

Bat Activity Binder
 Affordable Housing Statement
 Planning Statement
 Materials Schedule
 PR11 Planning U Value Calculations
 Sustainability Statement
 PR11-101(b) - Existing Block Plan
 PR11-102(b) - Existing Tree Plan
 PR11-103 - Location Plan
 PR11-110 - Local Vernacular
 PR11-201(c) - Proposed Block Plan
 PR11-202 - Proposed plans Plot 1 and 2
 PR11-1203(b) Proposed elevations Plot 1-2
 PR11-204(b)_Plot3_Proposed_Plans_Elevations
 PR11-205(b)_Plot4_Proposed_Plans_Elevations-A2_100
 PR11-206(b)-Landscaping_Plan
 PR11-207-Hardstanding_Parking_Plan
 Preliminary Bat Survey Report
 Arboriculture Method Statement
 4 September 2023

Transport Statement

PR11-206C - Landscape Plan Rev C
12 October 2023

Phase 1 and 2 Ground Investigation - Dated 25 November 2022
Received 26 October 2023

PR11-201 Rev E - Amended site plan
PR11-209 - Street scene
PR11-211 - Tree shading plan June
PR11-210 - Tree shading plan December
PR11-208 - Proposed sections
Received 7 November 2023

PR11-201(f)-Site_Plan-A2_200
PR11-202(c)-Plot1-2_Proposed_Plans-A2_100
PR11-203(c)_Plot1-2_Proposed_Elevations-A2_100
PR11-204(c)_Plot3_Proposed_Plans_Elevations_A2_100
PR11-205(c)_Plot4_Proposed_Plans_Elevations-A2_100
PR11-206(d)-Landscaping_Plan-A2_200
PR11-208(c)_Sectional_Plans-A2_100
PR11-209(c)_Street_Scene-A2_200.
Garden amenity comparison 12.23
Received 29 December 2023

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

920010/FUL (92-00010-FUL) - Conversion of existing building (used as three flats) into five flats incorporating new dormers, and parking area with new crossover. Permitted. Unimplemented

920133/FUL (92-00196-FUL) - Two storey extension and conversion of existing building (used as three flats) into seven flats incorporating new dormers, and parking area with new crossover. Refused

230663/FUL - Erection of hoarding as a means of enclosure to secure an unoccupied building. Under Consideration.

4. CONSULTATIONS

The following addresses were consulted by letter.

100 Albert Road, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7PL
4 Chelford Way, Caversham Reading
94 Albert Road, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire, RG4 7PL
2 Chelford Way, Caversham, Berks
1 Orwell Close, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7PU
88 Albert Road, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7PL
6 Chelford Way, Caversham Reading
3 Orwell Close, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7PU

Letters of representation have been received as follows:

A total of 28 letters of representation were received (at time of writing), which 14 unique addresses making a submission. Of these, 23 objected to the proposal, and 5 letters were received in support.

Full submissions have been reviewed by the case officer, and a summary of all matters is provided below:

Support

Comments received in support of the proposal are summarised as below:

- It is a great area for families to live, grow and become part of the community
- Diligence and engagement with neighbour pre-application was good, and took on some of their views
- We need more houses in Caversham
- Commend design in being compatible with both Albert Road, and Chelford Way
- Proposal would be an improvement on the current situation

Objections

Comments received in objection to the proposal are summarised as below:

- Proposal is overdevelopment of the plot
- Detrimental impacts upon trees, and future pressure to prune
- Small unusable gardens with limited daylight/sunlight from both trees, proposed dwellings, and fencing
- Poor design, living environment, and inappropriate materials (including colour and materiality - 'faux brick')
- Negative impact on setting and out of character with the area
- Houses too close to front boundary of Albert Road, and Chelford Road, lack of attention to building lines of Chelford Way, setback opposite and adjoining the site
- Lack of space to provide meaningful landscaping to Chelford Way
- Overly dominant agglomeration of parking along Chelford Way
- Significant detrimental impact of enclosure of front corner of property for proposed plot 2
- Concern for feasibility of boundary planting along boundary of no.94 (due to being under TPO trees)
- Pre-application removal of vegetation, and continued loss of vegetation potential concerns
- The proposal does not provide a mix of dwelling types (is for 4 x 4-bed dwellings)
- Loss of existing building, which is considered an attractive characterful building set well within its plot and having spacious gardens is a positive
- Concern over accuracy of material provided with application
- Concern over accuracy and breadth of public consultation (by Council)
- Proposal is much bigger than dwellings on Chelford Way, and the proposed semi-detached dwelling is too close to Chelford Way compared to its height
- Amenity and privacy impacts upon no.1 Orwell Close (Daylight and overlooking)
- Tree canopies cover 40% of the site (no light to proposal)
- Concerns over upkeep of corner parcel of land not owned by developer
- Views from surrounding properties significantly changed by removal of vegetation
- Overlooking of plot 3 by plots 1 and 2

- 1.8m high fence along private boundaries is set in front of building line (Chelford Way) is detrimental
- Poor internal layout and privacy to bedrooms, with northern aspect to bedrooms
- Dwellings are oversized demonstrated by exceedance of national space standards
- Plans are difficult to understand
- Need for garden sheds will further reduce useable amenity space
- Reduction in size and number of dwellings is suggested
- Potential impacts on highway safety by additional three (3) dwellings to Chelford Way near busy junction and parks
- Request made for Computer Generate Image (CGI) of proposal once development
- Request that if approval given, restriction on future extensions be placed on dwellings
- Driveway access recommended to be staggered and not combined
- Concern that planning statement does not address impacts to Chelford Way and Orwell Close and views from within it
- Request to apply a covenant to proposal which matches that applied to dwellings in Chelford Way and Orwell Close
- Considered to NPPF requirements for character and appearance of the area
- Does not provide biodiversity net gain to the site
- Lighter colour material should be used in proposal
- Incorrect display of no.4 Chelford Way on proposal plans
- Concern over images and photos supporting proposal
- Object to use of 'fake brick'
- The proposal does not appear as though it would last 100 years as the existing dwelling has
- The applicant did not address comments given by neighbours prior to the application having been lodged
- Provision of patio areas would further introduce hardstanding impacting wildlife and reducing soft landscaping opportunities
- Undue burden on essential services leading to a decline in service quality and accessibility for existing residents

RBC Conservation Advisor

"Objection (Summary) - The proposed development would result in the total loss of non-designated heritage asset 'Chenies' at 92 Albert Road, contrary to Policies EN1, EN4 and EN6 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019), which seeks, amongst other things, to ensure that new development proposals conserve, sustain and enhance designated and non-designated heritage assets, take into account the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the asset and ensure new development is integrated into the historic character and local distinctiveness of the area in which they are located in accordance with the advice in the Framework. In addition, the proposed development would conflict with paragraphs 203 and 209 of the NPPF. "

Natural Environment

"This site was subject to a pre-application (ref. 230083) exploring the suitability of a similar proposal, on which occasion Natural Environment comments raised concerns with regards to the development's impact to (protected) trees - the site is subject to TPO 40/06, along with trees next door at no. 94.

Existing trees.

With reference to the Arboricultural Method Statement Ref. PB/AMS-23/08.08 dated 23 August 2023, the following are noted:

No trees must be removed to enable development, which is an improvement from the layout explored during pre-application stage. However, facilitation pruning of two trees (Sycamore T5 of the survey, T4 of the TPO and Beech T24 of the Survey, T1 of the TPO) is necessary 'to allow for site access and the implementation and construction of the proposals'.

In both cases, it appears that pruning is necessary mainly to create space for the proposed buildings (N-W part of plot 1 building in the case of T5 and E façade of plot 4 building in the case of T24). This is evident on the Tree Protection Plan accompanying the AMS as well as on the Landscaping Plan Drg. No. PR11-206 Rev C dated June 2023, which show the indicative crown extents of these trees touching or overlapping the proposed buildings. The need for facilitative pruning, and thereafter repeated pruning due to proximity, demonstrates that the houses are proposed too close to the trees. The impact is exacerbated for Plot 1 in terms of shading, as can be seen on both Tree Shading Plans, this impacting a principle room (lounge) at the front. Whilst the layout is an improvement on that proposed at pre-app, this does not mean that it should therefore be accepted if the result is future pressure to prune or fell protected trees. I believe the proposal would result in this pressure hence I have concern in this respect. I am happy to discuss this point further to assist you in your balanced decision on this application once you have digested all matters and responses from other consultees.

In addition, a 1% incursion into each of the RPAs of T6 Common Holly and T24 Beech is expected during foundation works on Plots 1 and 4. As with any trenching within the RPA of retained trees, hand digging should be provisioned where the foundation overlaps the RPA. This is currently not provisioned by the AMS as it is not deemed necessary - but it should, as such an amendment to Section 7.5 is necessary.

Section 7.3 discusses mitigation of construction site impact on trees. It correctly states:

'Temporary ground protection must be installed [...] as shown on tree protection plan ref PB/TPP-23/08.08, referenced as "Ground protection - temporary", showing the minimum area, and including the area shown as "Proposed driveway and parking spaces new hard surface - 'No-dig' construction' "until this work has been completed, and must remain in situ for the duration of the works.

However, in cases where the extent of temporary ground protection changes during the development, we require a separate TPP drawing for each of the phases. In this case, a phase 1 TPP drawing should be provided to show the entire area where temporary ground protection will be installed. The current TPP effectively shows phase 2, where the temporary ground protection extent is reduced to allow installation of proposed no-dig construction driveway.

In continuation, I am including a number of brief comments to minor amendments necessary:

- Where the working methods refer to uncovered roots, the stated dimensions should refer to their diameter (i.e. 25mm diameter) - this should be amended because referring to 25mm without stating what this measures is unclear.
- Second bullet point of Section 7.4: The tree protection fence and temporary ground protection must be installed as described in section 7.4, and shown on tree protection plan ref PB/TPP- 23/08.08, and remain in situ until all works activity is completed. - this should be amended to 'The tree protection fence and temporary ground protection must be installed as described in Appendix 2, and as shown on tree protection plan ref PB/TPP- 23/08.08, prior to any demolition or construction works on site and remain in situ until all works activity is completed.'

- Third bullet point of 7.4: Where the barrier has to be temporarily moved to allow works access additional ground protection must be applied.' should be amended to add 'only following approval by the Arboricultural Consultant'.
- During the works described under bullet points 4 through 8 of section 7.4, Arboricultural Supervision should be provisioned. This should be sufficient for the demolition phase.
- Similarly, Arboricultural Supervision should be provisioned during the works described in Section 7.6 (new hard-surface hardstanding driveway and parking spaces).
- Two trees appear to be missing from the TPP - T23 and T17. While T17 is justified (a fallen Common walnut tree), I can't find a reason for T23 Common Hazel to not be shown on the plan. Both trees are included in the Tree Survey at Appendix 5 of the AMS. I do note that the presence of T23 is inconsequential to the tree protection comments as it is entirely within the proposed Construction Exclusion Zone.
- In all cases (both for driveway and parking but also for new patio, bin storage area, and garden paths), when a cellular confinement system is used, a second geotextile membrane should be provisioned between the CCS and the permeable surface or wearing course. Likewise, the final specifications of the wearing course must be stated in the AMS - I note this is mentioned as permeable block paving on the separate Landscaping Plan.
- The final AMS should include drawings for the CCS system to indicate all the elements comprised in the design; should extend to include realistic shaped CCS areas, rather than following a curved RPA and advise how the higher level of a CCS will be married with the level of the surrounding hard surfacing
- Section 7.19 - the statement made in this paragraph regarding the location of all construction site logistics is not realistic, as all the elements mentioned do not fit within the existing hard surfaced driveway. Amendments to indicate realistic planning are necessary.
- Annotated photo showing facilitation pruning of T24 Beech, part of Appendix 6 - the cutting point of the lower branch should be back to the trunk - in line with BS 3998:2010 - I'm not clear why the indicative point just past the fork is proposed

In conclusion, the AMS demonstrates in principle that development impact on trees can be mitigated on all matters, subject to the amendments suggested above, except for the 1 objection referring to the distance of dwellings on plots 1&4 to retained protected trees (T5 Sycamore and T24 Beech). As noted above, we do not feel this objection alone will convince an inspector to dismiss an appeal, as such we reluctantly agree with a positive decision if there are no other objections. The relevant amendments to the AMS should be secured via condition.

Landscaping.

The proposed Landscaping Plan PR11-206 Rev. C is very basic but it does demonstrate landscaping in principle. However, details will have to be secured via condition.

Some comments to the current proposal, which should be addressed with a future submission for discharge of condition are:

- Numbers or densities and size at planting should be provided for all plant stock
- A legend should be provided for all symbols used on the plan
- It is unclear how the bin collection point for plot 1 is suitable, as it implies either carrying the bin across the planting bed or carrying it via public pavement.
- Likewise, the bin store location for plot one is blocked off by one of the parking spaces. How do you get the bin out if a car is parked there?

- There appears to be an opportunity to introduce a broadleaved hedge on the W boundary of Plot 3 with plots 1 and 2, to further increase the biodiversity of gain of the site and the greening provisions.
- A larger tree could be provided in place of the Holly tree on plot 2, however it is acknowledged that there is a consideration for light to the property. Both Tree Shading Plan December and Tree Shading Plan June provided are helpful in considering this matter.
- We need to see information on underground services, which may later create the need for root barriers. We can secure this via condition.
- Likewise, all planting establishment and maintenance schedules should be secured via condition.

In conclusion, the application is supported in terms of landscaping, subject to condition L2 to secure details about the landscaping scheme.

If you intend to grant planning permission, please include conditions L2 and L7, as well as the Soil Informative.

There are trees/shrubs near to the proposed development. You are advised to establish the soil conditions prior to determining foundation design of the approved development in order to ensure that foundations are appropriately designed to take into account soil types that are subject to seasonal volumetric change (high clay content) as a result of the specific trees and vegetation present in the vicinity. Foundation design should take into account the potential effect of adjacent vegetation, based on its dimensions at maturity, in order to minimise the chance of future vegetation-related subsidence and particularly to ensure that no differential movement occurs between the original dwelling/building and the new extension.”

Ecology

“The application site comprises a large residential garden containing a large dwelling surrounded by amenity grassland, tall ruderal vegetation, scattered trees, and areas of hardstanding. It is located within a Green Link as per policy EN12 of the local plan. It is proposed to redevelop the site and erect four new dwellings with associated access, car parking, and landscaping. The site appears from photos within the bat survey reports to have been recently cleared.

Bats:

Building: The bat emergence survey report (Urban Tree Experts, May 2023, ref: SPH/ESR-23/18.05) includes the results of two emergence surveys carried out in quick succession in May 2023. Although one survey was undertaken when air temperature was less than 10 degree C which is not strictly in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust Bat Survey Guidelines, bat activity was recorded during the survey and it is considered that the findings of the report are accurate and that the house is unlikely to host roosting bats.

Trees: The Tree survey (Tree Surveys, PB/AMS-23/08.08) states that one tree will be removed to facilitate the development. We previously asked for an assessment of the bat roosting potential for all trees to be removed which does not appear to have been carried out. As such in the absence of this survey information, the proposals would not comply with Paragraph 99 of the government Circular 06/05: (referred to in the NPPF) which reads:

“It is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted, otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision. The need to ensure ecological surveys are carried out should therefore

only be left to coverage under planning conditions in exceptional circumstances, with the result that the surveys are carried out after planning permission has been granted”

Biodiversity Net gain

The site lies on a Green link as per local Policy EN12 which reads:

*b) 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. Development should: **
Protect and wherever possible enhance features of biodiversity interest on and adjacent to the application site, incorporating and integrating them into development proposals wherever practicable; and

** Provide new tree planting, wildlife friendly landscaping and ecological enhancements (such as wildlife ponds, bird and bat boxes) wherever practicable.*

In exceptional circumstances where the need for development clearly outweighs the need to protect the value of the site, and it is demonstrated that the impacts cannot be: 1) avoided; 2) mitigated or; 3) compensated for on-site; then new development will provide off-site compensation to ensure that there is “no net loss” of biodiversity. Provision of off-site compensation shall be calculated in accordance with nationally or locally recognised guidance and metrics. It should not replace existing alternative habitats, and should be provided prior to development.

Photos from reports appear there has been considerable clearance of the vegetation on site and this is backed up by photos from Google Maps. The applicant would therefore need to demonstrate that the development will demonstrate no net loss of biodiversity as per EN12 - additionally because of the location of the site within a green link, a net gain in biodiversity is required. This should be demonstrated using the latest DEFRA Metric, using the site before the vegetation was cleared as the baseline. This would be in accordance with the NPPG which reads:

“It may also be relevant to consider whether any deliberate harm to this biodiversity value has taken place in the recent past, and if so whether there are grounds for this to be discounted in assessing the underlying value of the site (and so whether a proposal would achieve a genuine gain).”

The calculation needs to be accompanied by a report that describes the site and the habitats therein (their condition and extent) pre-development and the habitats post development (their predicted condition and extent) along with maps showing the habitats before and after development (which should match the landscaping plans).

Without this information the council does not have sufficient information to conclude that the proposals will result in a net gain in biodiversity.”

Environmental Health

“Contaminated Land

The contaminated land assessment demonstrates that no remediation is required for the development, therefore I only recommend a condition regarding unforeseen contamination.

- *CO6 UNIDENTIFIED CONTAMINATION*
- *CO7 Land Gas Risk Assessment*

Construction and demolition phases

We have concerns about potential noise, dust and bonfires associated with the construction (and demolition) of the proposed development and possible adverse impact on nearby residents (and businesses).

Fires during construction and demolition can impact on air quality and cause harm to residential amenity. Burning of waste on site could be considered to be harmful to the aims of environmental sustainability.

Recommended conditions

- ☐ C2 CONSTRUCTION METHOD STATEMENT (TO BE SUBMITTED)
- ☐ C1 HOURS OF CONSTRUCTION/DEMOLITION
- ☐ C4 NO BONFIRES”

Transport

“Original Comments October 2023

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.

This application seeks to demolish the existing building and construct 4 x residential dwellings a net increase of 3 dwellings.

Parking and Access:

In accordance with the adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD the proposed development would require 2.0 off road parking spaces for each dwelling. Dimensions of the proposed parking spaces would need to conform to the Councils current Parking Standards and Design SPD which states 2.5m x 5m.

Plot:

This plot will be served via the existing vehicle crossing located on Albert Rd.

Submitted Proposed Site Plan Layout PR11 201 illustrates 2 off road parking spaces on the drive which is in accordance with the Councils current standards. Illustration of vehicle movements to allow forward entrance and egress have been submitted and are deemed acceptable.

Plot 2 & Plot 3:

Both plots will be served via a new shared vehicle crossing measuring 7.5m from Chelford Way. Visibility splays are acceptable.

The application states that the existing vehicle access is to be reduced in size to provide pedestrian access. This dropped crossing should be fully reinstated and realigned with the footway as there is no practical reason for a pedestrian crossing in this area. A license will be required from the Highways department to undertake all works on the public highway. Revised plans illustrating the reinstatement of the dropped crossing will be required.

Parking provision has been illustrated on the submitted Proposed Site Plan Layout PR11 201 for Plots 2 and 3; proposed provision and layout are deemed acceptable.

Plot 4:

This plot will be served via a new vehicle crossing from Chelford Way, illustrated on the Proposed Site Plan Layout PR11 201. Parking provision is being provided in accordance with the Councils current standards. Access and visibility splays are acceptable.

Water run-off from the proposed dwellings onto the public highway is not permitted. An appropriate method of drainage needs to be provided within the property curtilage including the use of suitable permeable surfacing materials.

Revised comments 18 January 2024

The new layout will require a longer dropped vehicle crossing to facilitate the new layout. The total continual length of dropped kerb should not exceed 10m, this has been identified on the submitted plans.

There are no Transport objections to the new layout. All previous Transport comments remain the same.

Suggested conditions and informatives:

*C2 CONSTRUCTION METHOD STATEMENT (TO BE SUBMITTED)
DC1 VEHICLE PARKING (AS SPECIFIED)
DC3 VEHICULAR ACCESS (AS SPECIFIED)
DC5 CYCLE PARKING (AS SPECIFIED)
DC8 REFUSE AND RECYCLING (AS SPECIFIED)
DC10 ACCESS CLOSURE WITH REINSTATEMENT
DC24 EV CHARGING POINTS
IF3 Highways”*

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.

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
CC2: SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION
CC3: ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE
CC5: WASTE MINIMISATION AND STORAGE
CC6: ACCESSIBILITY AND THE INTENSITY OF DEVELOPMENT
CC7: DESIGN AND THE PUBLIC REALM
CC8: SAFEGUARDING AMENITY
EN1: PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

EN4: LOCALLY IMPORTANT HERITAGE ASSETS
EN9: PROVISION OF OPEN SPACE
EN12: BIODIVERSITY AND THE GREEN NETWORK
EN14: TREES, HEDGES AND WOODLAND
EN16: POLLUTION AND WATER RESOURCES
H1: PROVISION OF HOUSING
H2: DENSITY AND MIX
H3: AFFORDABLE HOUSING
H5: STANDARDS FOR NEW HOUSING
H7: PROTECTING THE EXISTING HOUSING STOCK
H10: PRIVATE AND COMMUNAL OUTDOOR SPACE
H11: DEVELOPMENT OF PRIVATE RESIDENTIAL GARDENS
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)
Planning Obligations Under S106 (2015)
Sustainable Design and Construction (2019)

Equality Act 2010:

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APPRAISAL

Principle of Development

Paragraph 123 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that: *“Planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions. Strategic policies should set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously-developed or ‘brownfield’ land (Previously Developed Land)”*

In addition footnote 27 (Paragraph 52) states *“... strategic policies should promote an effective use of land and optimise site densities in accordance with chapter 11. This is to ensure that homes are built in the right places, to prioritise brownfield and other under-utilised urban sites, to utilise existing infrastructure, and to allow people to live near the services they rely on, making travel patterns more sustainable”*

Previously Developed Land is defined as: *“: Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. This excludes: land that is or was last occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill, where provision for restoration has been made through development management procedures; land in built-up areas such as residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and*

allotments; and land that was previously developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape.

As such, it is clear that the priority for development should be on Brownfield Land. The current site is therefore not the priority for development. Notwithstanding, the Reading Borough Local Plan includes policies which seek to facilitate appropriate development of land which is currently, or was previously contained within residential gardens. As such, subject to meeting the requirements, the principle of development could be acceptable.

In terms of the proposed provision of housing. It is noted that the site was last lawfully in use as three (3) flats. The proposed development would include the demolition of these three dwellings, and re-construction of four dwellings. In accordance with Policy H7 of the Reading Local Plan, planning permission will not be granted for any loss of residential accommodation unless there are exceptional circumstances. In this case, the proposed development would replace the three (3) dwellings with four (4) dwellings, and as such would be acceptable in this regard.

It is noted that the provision of housing would assist with meeting the Council's objectively assessed need. As per the annual monitoring report (2023) there was delivery 888 dwellings in 2022/2023. As such, while the delivery of housing is a noted benefit in all housing schemes, it is afforded limited weight as it is a generic benefit for residential schemes against a backdrop of high housing delivery, as well as all other policy requirements, including design, character, and amenity considerations outlined below.

Design Consideration and Impact on Street Scene

Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) 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 H11 seeks to ensure that development of land which includes land currently or formerly within the curtilage of private residential gardens: make a positive contribution to the character of the area, provide adequate size and dimensions to accommodate the development proposed, provides appropriate access, does not lead to tandem development, minimises exposure of private boundaries to public areas, does not cause significant detrimental impact to the amenity of existing nearby occupants, emphasises the provision of family-sized housing, provides a biodiversity net gain, and does not prejudice the development of a wider area.

The NPPF (Para 126) sets out that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. The National Design Guide identifies 10 key components for good design and of particular note is the characteristic of 'Context' and it states that *"well-designed new development responds positively to the features of the site itself and the surrounding context beyond the site boundary. It should enhance positive qualities and improve negative ones."* Additionally, there is specific reference to 'views inwards and outwards'.

The NPPF (Para 209) states that "The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm of loss and the significance of the heritage asset."

Policy EN1 'Protection and enhancement of the historic environment' of the Reading Borough Local Plan sets out the Council's aspirations for the historic environment, which includes listed buildings, conservation areas, scheduled monuments, historic parks and gardens, and

other features with local or national significance, such as sites and features of archaeological importance, and assets on the Local List.

This policy requires that all proposals to protect and, where possible, enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings, historic character and local distinctiveness of the area in which they are located. It echoes the NPPF by stating, *“Proposals should seek to avoid harm in the first instance. Any harm to or loss of a heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification, usually in the form of public benefits”*.

Policy EN4 ‘Locally Important Heritage Assets’ of the Reading Borough Local Plan states that *“Development proposals that affect locally important heritage assets will demonstrate that development conserves architectural, archaeological or historical significance which may include the appearance, character and setting of the asset.*

Planning permission may be granted in cases where a proposal could result in harm to or loss of a locally important heritage asset only where it can be demonstrated that the benefits of the development significantly outweigh the asset’s significance. Where it is accepted by the Local Planning Authority that retention is not important, recording of the heritage asset should be undertaken and submitted alongside development proposals. Replacement buildings should draw upon heritage elements of the previous design, incorporating historical qualities that made the previous building significant. This may include appearance, scale and architectural quality.”

Policy EN6 ‘New development in a historic context’ also requires *“New development will make a contribution to the historic character of the area by respecting and enhancing its architectural and visual qualities and considering how heritage considerations can influence the design of new development. When determining planning applications for new development, the following factors will be taken into consideration:*

- a. The positive contribution of the development to the existing historic townscape (scale, height, mass, proportion, plot size, street form, materials, significant vistas and views, and open space);***
- b. Sensitivity to historic context;***
- c. Reflection of borough-wide major heritage themes that contribute to local distinctiveness (e.g. patterned brickwork or former worker terraced housing);***
- d. Whether development promotes and/or improves access to previously undiscovered or neglected historic significance.”***

The application relates to a two-storey Edwardian detached house dating 1908 on the corner of Albert Road and Chelford Road in Caversham Heights. The building known as ‘Chenies’ is the work of a notable local architect, Tarras Talfourd Cumming, who was descended from an old Reading family with long associations with Broad Street Congregational Chapel, a fellow of RIBA who won prizes offered by the Reading University Extension College and the Berkshire Archaeological Society.

The site is not located within a conservation area, nor is the property listed building; however, it appears on the OS Map of 1910 (published in 1913) and represents the architecture of a mixture of styles inspired by the traditional English cottage and Neo Georgian details featuring half hip roof and dormers, Flemish bond red brick ground floor and porch, upper floor pebbledash covered, semicircular fan light, sash windows with twelve panes along with casement windows of Revival style. Harmoniously using terracotta details in window heads, cills, and string courses also constitutes important elements of the façade. Set within a large landscaped suburban open plot, on a prominent position and sizeable scale; the building could be considered a non-designated heritage asset.

As appears on the OS maps, the subject property has retained its historic footprint and rural look since the 1910s, although inter-war development included the dense infilling of Caversham Heights, changing the rural character of the surrounding area. As such, the building at 92 Albert Road represents a unique example of a historic and architectural element, a surviving country house from Edwardian Caversham.

As described under the 'relevant heritage assets', the subject building, designed by a well-known local architect, along with its spacious plot, has a distinctive rural character and an image of Edwardian Caversham, which has not been subject to major alterations, on the same footprint marking the architecture of a mixture of period styles. It is a non-designated heritage asset meeting the requirement of local listing criteria of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

The proposal involves the demolition of the existing building and redeveloping the application site by erection of four two-storey dwellings and associated vehicular access and car parking spaces, which would result in the loss of a non-designated heritage asset and change its natural soft landscaping and character of the plot layout significantly.

Contrary to the attractive elevations with rich architectural detailing of the existing dwelling, the proposed buildings would have architectural language copying the neighbouring buildings on Albert Road and Chelford Road, which would bring monotonous forms compared to the existing half-hipped roof, for instance. The proposed buildings would not comprise high-quality, contemporary design and aesthetic appearance, interrupting the historical pattern in this particular prominent position.

Retaining this heritage asset in line with the environmental objective of sustainable development would be more appropriate. Consequently, the proposal would be contrary to Policies EN1, EN4 and EN6 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019), which seeks, amongst other things, to ensure that new development proposals conserve, sustain and enhance designated and non-designated heritage assets, take into account the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the asset and ensure new development is integrated into the historic character and local distinctiveness of the area in which they are located in accordance with the advice in the Framework. In addition, the proposed development would conflict with paragraphs 203 and 209 of the NPPF.

In relation to the above mentioned policies, these will be considered individually by part, and as relevant to the section (i.e. some may be covered in later sections of this report).

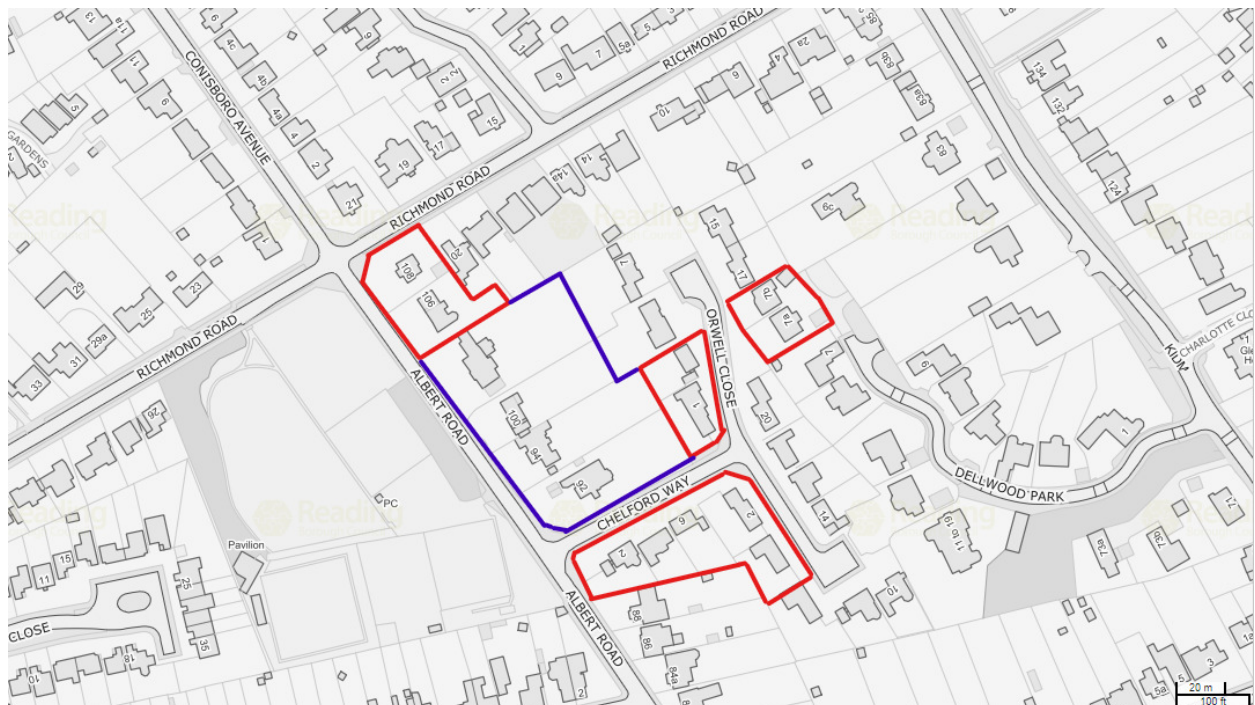
Policy CC7 requires all development to be of high design quality which maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area. As the development would remove the Non-Designated Heritage Asset, it would not maintain the existing character and appearance of the area and as such would need to ensure its various components of form enhance the character and appearance of the area these include:

Layout: Character and appearance of the area

The proposed development would introduce four distinct building plots within the area of the existing single plot. These would include division of the plot by built form, and boundary treatments. The applicant has submitted an assessment of the existing plots and their areas to support their application. This analysis compares the existing plot size and coverage within the area, including garden sizes within the area. These metrics are noted, and amended to reflect the sites around as viewed by Council mapping. For reference, the bold text is added, whereas the strikethrough is deleted.

Address	Length (m)	Garden Area (m ²)	Notes
Proposed Plot 1	11	130 162	
Proposed Plot 2	11	474 92 (rear)	
Proposed Plot 3	11.5 11.7	187	
Proposed Plot 4	12.3 12	335	
Average - Proposed	11.4	207 194	
92 Albert Road	33	914	
94 Albert Road	47	992	
100 Albert Road	43	1426	
102 Albert Road	43	823	
108 Albert Road	9.3	251	
106 Albert Road	11.3 15	408 376	Duplicate of 106
104 Albert Road	9.8	270	No such address
1 Orwell Close	9.5	263	
2 Orwell Close	12.5	365	
3 Orwell Close	16.68	279 283	
4 Orwell Close	9.34 9.8	223 276	
2 Chelford Way	10.9	319	
4 Chelford Way	8.9 13	235	
6 Chelford Way	12.1 21	341	
7a Dellwood Park	12.2	213	
7b Dellwood Park	10.9	160	
Average	11 19.8	252 469	

It is noted that the applicants calculations included properties as indicated in red, whereas the above was calculated including the properties in blue as well.



This exercise, and the review thereof demonstrates that the information provided does not specifically align with the look and feel of the area in which the development is proposed to address. The applicant's version takes smaller properties, whilst excluding those larger properties between some immediately adjacent and between the application site and others

they have chosen, and included properties which have limited active frontage toward the area (7a & 7b Dellwood Park).

Though the calculations and looking at the mix and size of other spaces is useful. It is more clear to view the areas above as the existing urban structure and urban grain. The application site is a generous corner plot which addresses Albert Road as its primary frontage, and Chelford Way as a secondary area. The properties within Albert Road (both to north and south) are generally larger dwellings set within larger plots. Whereas other developments within the area, including Chelford Way are relatively smaller in depth, though are often provided with significant width. As such, the site, and its current garden is a transitional area from lower density to higher density.

It is considered that the relative development intensity and plot coverage of the site as transition between a looser urban grain to a tighter urban grain is a positive aspect of the proposal. The proposal, as below, would be a significant change to the character and appearance of the area and be detrimental to the overall spaciousness and openness presented between the distinctly different areas in which the site is related to. Therefore the proposal is considered to be overdevelopment in scale and form of the proposed site, and would therefore not be considered to be in conflict with Policy CC7 of the Reading Local Plan (2019).



It is noted above the proposal is considered overdevelopment of the plot. In addition to the layout of plots the following are also considered indications of the overdevelopment of the land.

Site frontages

Chelford Way is provided with open front gardens served by individual driveways to the three (3) existing dwellings, including two (2) double width driveways, and one (1) single width driveway. The proposed development, by virtue of its location and layout, with ~6m setbacks and the provision of carparking for each dwelling within the site results in dominance of the site frontage, particularly Chelford Way, by carparking areas. The proposal includes a combined 10m dropped kerb to serve proposed plots 2 and 3. With four (4) side-by-side

parking spaces, and one (1) tandem parking space. Though it is acknowledged that the proposal would seek to replicate open frontages in the proposal to those dwellings opposite, by virtue of the corner semi-detached dwelling having a prevailing frontage to Chelford Way, and therefore its parking, these combined result in a poor design outcome to Chelford Way.

Furthermore, the proposal includes provision of private open space at proposed plot 2 and 4 fronting Chelford Way with a 1.8m high closed boarded fence. Plot no.2 is also provided with an 'area laid to lawn' which would appear to be sought as private amenity space. This would appear to have a means of enclosure surrounding it, assumed to be a close boarded fence. Firstly, in relation to fencing along Chelford Way. The fencing proposed is set in front of the building line of proposed plots 3 and 4. This enclosure could be offset through landscaping, though had permission been recommended to be granted conditions could secure its materiality (i.e. brick to match those at Orwell Close) the current location is not considered acceptable. Further locating the fencing back would reduce the private amenity space within plot no.2. The proposed 'amenity space' to the Albert Road side of plot no.2 is considered an inconsistent arrangement of space for the area. It would introduce a private fences area at the corner which transitions to an open front garden and parking area for proposed plot 1. This is inconsistent with other frontages to the north of the site. It is also starkly different to the open corner at no.2 Chelford Way which transitions to a brick fence closer to no 88 Albert Road which also contains a similar height front brick fence. There would be limited space to provide any landscaping in front of this wall, or within the area of land held back by the previous owner.

Amenity Considerations

Policy CC8 and H11 of the Reading Local Plan relate to protection of, and provision for, amenity of residents. The proposed development would, as it is infill development would introduce new dwellings, windows, and potential concerns for the amenity of existing and proposed residents. Plots 1 and 2 are located with two-storey rear windows facing directly toward the garden of no.3, these would be a minimum of 11, and 14.2m from the side facing elevation. This would be closer than any side-to-rear distance that exists within the immediate vicinity. Given the potentially limited access to daylight/sunlight as a result of tree cover and shading from the dwelling itself (discussed further below), the primary outdoor sitting area is likely to be closer to plots 1 and 2. As such, it is not considered that plot 3 will have sufficient privacy to its open space, contrary to the above mentioned policies.

Plots 3 and 4 will also be located in close proximity to the rear garden of the existing dwelling at no.94 Albert Road. Windows at first floor level will be 11.7m from the boundary, with established and protected trees lining the closer part of the boundary to the rear amenity space of this garden. Notwithstanding, it is clear from inside the adjoining property that due to the height of the tree canopy (which is sought to be raised to enable the development) that there would be clear views into the existing primary outdoor amenity space of no.94, predominantly from proposed plot no.3. As such, it is considered that there would be a significant detrimental impact on existing residents in this regard. This lack of sufficient daylight/sunlight to the amenity space would also result in increased pressure on the LPA to allow further pruning of the TPO vegetation, which would be contrary to Policy EN15.

Plot 4 is located a similar distance to the side boundary of no.94 Albert Road, however would not look directly onto a primary outdoor space, and as such would be acceptable. Plot 4 would be 19.3m from no.1 Orwell Close, and would equally not impact on privacy. It would also not, by virtue of its height have an overbearing impact upon the rear garden, nor impinge significantly on light to that dwelling.

Concerns were raised by neighbours, across Chelford Way in relation to impacts on amenity from new second floor windows across the road to their front sitting rooms. As these are not shielded from view from the public footway or road, and as a common relationship in residential areas (i.e. front to front across a highway) would not be considered to impact privacy in this regard.

The above policies also relate to the quality of the outdoor amenity space serving the future occupants. Not only would the garden areas be significantly smaller than the gardens sizes of Albert Road to the north and south, as noted within the natural environment officers comments above, and as identified with the applicants shading plans, the gardens of all properties will be significantly shaded by the trees on the site. In addition, the plans have not illustrated the shading given by the dwellings themselves as south facing gardens. This would mean that in addition to the shading shown, particularly at proposed plots 3 and 4, there would be significant shading across these gardens all year round. The proposed gardens are not considered to offer the quality of outdoor amenity space that is characteristic to Albert Road.

Transport

Policy TR5 of the Reading Local Plan (2019) states that: *“Development should provide car parking and cycle parking that is appropriate to the accessibility of locations within the Borough to sustainable transport facilities, particularly public transport.”* It is noted that the proposed development seeks to provide 10 parking spaces for the proposed development. The parking provision in this instance is over that outlines within the Revised Parking Standards and Design Supplementary Planning Document (2011) which states that 2 parking spaces per dwelling is required for a 3 and 3+ bedroom dwelling. As such, it is considered that the parking provision is over parking for the proposal contrary to policy TR5. This is combined with the fact that the area proposed for parking would harm the visual character of the area with the excess combing width and hardstanding associated with parking. This is a further representation of the over development of the site.

It is noted that objections received from the public relate to highways safety and impacts of the junction. As per the transport comments above, it is not considered that the addition of 3 dwellings accessed via Chelford Way would result in significant impacts on highways, or highways safety.

Affordable Housing

Policy H3 of the Reading Local Plan (2019) requires all development to contribute toward the provision of affordable housing within the Borough. For sites of 1-4 dwellings, an off-site contribution of 10% of the GDV would be required. The applicant has advised that they would be willing to contribute a policy compliant figure. No valuations appear to have been included with the application to determine this figure. Notwithstanding, as refusal is recommended based on the remainder of the report, failure to secure an affordable housing contribution will form a reason for refusal. Albeit that this reason could be overcome, if an otherwise acceptable proposal were put forward.

Sustainability

In accordance with Policies CC2, and H5 of the Reading Local Plan (2019) all development would be required to demonstrate how it is proposing to be constructed to address climate change. In this instance, the proposal is sought to be built to passivhaus standards. As such, should the recommendation had been to approve, a condition would have been attached to

secure post construction certification that an appropriate standard had been met in line with the appropriate passivhaus standard.

Ecology

The subject site comprises a large residential garden, which has been cleared of most vegetation prior to the application having been lodged. The site is within an identified green link as per policy EN12 of the Local Plan (2019). In accordance with Policy EN12, all development would be expected to provide a biodiversity net gain. Any net gain should be provided against the site in its pre-cleared state as per the Ecology consultation above. In sufficient information has been provide at present to determine if the proposal would comply with this requirement, as such, a reason for refusal will be included which relates to this.

Waste

The proposal includes bin storage allocated within the gardens of all properties, and waste collection would be presented to the highway on collection days. This would be considered acceptable. No bin collection pads would be supported, and a suitable worded condition could be attached to a permission should approval have been recommended.

CIL

The proposed development would have been CIL liable should the recommendation have been for approval. The applicant has submitted a CIL social housing relief form for 20% relief. It is unclear what this form was submitted for, as it included being for 9 dwellings. Additionally, 1 dwelling being social housing would equate to 25%. As such, this form has been considered an error, and the whole development would have been CIL liable.

Other

A number of comments have been received in relation to matters which are addressed in this section.

Concerns over accuracy of material submitted

As per the sections above, a review of the submitted information noted some discrepancies from the amenity area calculations prepared in support of the application, and those measured by Council using OS maps. Though it is noted that the numbers are painting a picture, those a not determinate in themselves, and the wider context, including relative size, and form are considered.

Consultation undertaken by council was insufficient

It should be noted that Council consulted beyond the statutory requirements, however not all interested parties were informed by letter. It appears that though no letter was received by some parties, a number of responses were still received, as such, many parties were informed of the planning application, not prejudicing any objections/support.

Upkeep of corner parcel

A small parcel of land at the corner of Albert Road and Chelford Way is not within the red line plan, nor it appears, the ownership of the applicant. Though upkeep may be a concern, this is not a material consideration relative to this application, and other tools could be used by Council should this become an issue in the future.

Extra garden sheds minimising use of gardens

It is noted that additional garden sheds may

CGI image should have been provided

No CGI was provided with the application, as this not a validation checklist item this could not be required by the Council.

Apply covenant which matches other properties

Applying matching covenants is not a matter in control of the Council, and not a matter which can be applied to a planning permission.

Undue burden on essential services leading to a decline in service quality and accessibility for existing residents

Sustainable development principles suggest that consolidation of residential, in lieu of expansion would facilitate consolidation of services and better provision overall. As such, in fill residential development could be considered acceptable subject to all other material considerations.

Conclusion

The existing building, within its plot is considered to be a non-designated heritage asset under the NPPF. As such, its loss would only be acceptable where significant weight could overcome this. In this instance, there is no specific benefit attributed to the development that could overcome this loss. In addition, the proposal, as noted elsewhere in the report would fail to represent a high quality development which fits with the existing urban layout and urban grain, and would represent overdevelopment of the plot on a number of matters. The impacts of the proposal on trees, and potential for further impacts to trees as a result of the poor quality of outdoor amenity spaces which is significantly overshadowed by them could result in further loss of vegetation. The applicant has failed to demonstrate no biodiversity net loss as part of the proposal. In addition, by virtue of not progressing toward approval (despite agreement to do so) has not been party to a legal agreement for an off-site contribution toward affordable housing elsewhere in the Borough. As such, the proposed development of four dwellings is recommended for refusal.

RECOMMENDATION

Refuse