

Planning, Heritage, Design and Access Statement

for:

Application for proposed cycle store and pergola with
raised decking

at:

1 The Gardeners
Emmer Green
Reading
RG4 8EZ

March 2024

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Statement accompanies a householder planning application proposing a timber pergola with raised decking and cycle store within the garden of 1 The Gardeners.
- 1.2 The application property has been constructed following the granting of permission of application 190040. The permission related to the redevelopment of the former Gardeners Public House of Surley Row, Emmer Green.
- 1.3 The property benefits from having a good sized garden, with a side access.
- 1.4 Whilst there is planning history associated with the former Public House, it is of no relevance to the residential properties now located on the site.
- 1.5 The property is semi-detached and is located within the built-up area of Emmer Green. In addition to this, the property is also located within the Surley Row Conservation Area.
- 1.6 Located on the east side of Surley Row, the property is a new build. The planning permission for the redevelopment of the site had a condition removing permitted development rights to extend the properties through Classes A and B. However, the permission did not remove the ability to construct outbuildings and other means of enclosures through permitted development. In this instance however, due to the sites setting within the Conservation Area, certain works are limited through permitted development and subsequently require planning permission.

2.0 Planning Analysis

Nationally

- 2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in March 2012 and revised in July 2018, February 2019, July 2021 and again in September 2023, with the latest revisions issued in December 2023.
- 2.2 The NPPF provides the Government's framework for delivering sustainable development and facilitating economic growth through the planning process. Planning applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF is a material consideration in planning decisions.
- 2.3 Paragraph 8 states that there are 3 dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. Development which helps to build a strong, responsive and competitive economy whilst supporting vibrant and healthy communities, providing housing to meet current and future requirements is to be achieved in a manner which protects the natural, built and historic environment.
- 2.4 The NPPF states at Paragraph 11 that at the heart of the document is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision taking this means approving development proposals which accord with the development plan without delay and local planning authorities should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of the area. The presumption in favour of sustainable development is reiterated at Paragraph 49.
- 2.5 Paragraph 38 sets out that the Local Planning Authority should approach applications in a "positive and creative way" and should work collectively with the applicant to ensure that development is delivered to benefit the area socially, economically and environmentally.

- 2.6 Paragraph 47 states that applications should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 2.7 Paragraph 104 of the NPPF sets out that transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of development proposals, so that, inter alia, opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use are pursued.
- 2.8 With regard to transport implications paragraph 115 is very clear in stating that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.
- 2.9 Section 12 of the NPPF highlights the need for achieving well designed places.
- 2.10 The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve.
- 2.11 Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities is discussed in paragraph 131.
- 2.12 Paragraph 135 points to the fact that development should sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change.

2.13 The key points from Paragraph 135 where it sets out that Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change;
- d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of spaces, to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
- e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
- f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

2.14 The significance of a heritage asset is defined in Section 16 of the NPPF as being made up of four main constituents: architectural interest, historical interest, archaeological interest and artistic interest. The assessments of heritage significance and impact are normally made with primary reference to the four main elements of significance identified in the NPPF.

2.15 The setting of a heritage asset can contribute to its significance. Setting is defined in the NPPF as follows:

“The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.”

2.16 Historic England has produced guidance on development affecting the setting of heritage assets in *The Setting of Heritage Assets* (second edition, December 2017), better known as GPA3.

2.17 The guidance encourages the use of a stepped approach to the assessment of effects on setting and significance, namely (1) the identification of the relevant assets, (2) a statement explaining the significance of those assets, and the contribution made by setting, (3) an assessment of the impact of the proposed development on the setting and significance of the assets, and (4) consideration of mitigation in those cases where there will be harm to significance.

2.18 Paragraph 200 of the NPPF places a duty on the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected by a proposal, providing a proportionate level of detail. The effects of any development on a heritage asset therefore need to be assessed against the four components of its heritage significance: its archaeological, architectural, artistic and historic interests.

2.19 Paragraph 201 of the NPPF notes that local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise.

- 2.20 It continues by stating that they should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.
- 2.21 Paragraph 203 explores how LPAs are required to take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation. The paragraph also notes "the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness" which recognises the fact that new development is capable of positively contributing.
- 2.22 Paragraph 205 applies specifically to designated heritage assets. It states that great weight should be given to their conservation and it requires a proportionate approach (i.e. the more important the asset, the greater the weight attached to its conservation). Conservation (for heritage policy) is defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF as: "The process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance".
- 2.23 Paragraphs 206-208 of the NPPF relate to designated heritage assets.
- 2.24 The paragraphs highlight the need to consider the impact of a proposed development on a designated heritage asset, and whether the benefits of the development would outweigh the harm.
- 2.25 Harm is defined by Historic England as a change which erodes the significance of a heritage asset.
- 2.26 The importance and relevance of this definition is that it does not suggest conservation to be the same as preservation. Indeed, what sets conservation apart is the emphasis on proactively maintaining and managing change and not on a reactive approach to resisting change. In its simplest interpretation conservation could amount to a change that at least sustains the significance of a heritage asset.

Locally

- 2.27 The application site is located within Reading Borough Council.
- 2.28 This application should be assessed against the Reading Borough Council Development Plan which consists of, amongst other planning documents, the Local Plan and a number of supplementary planning documents (SPDs). The Local Plan was adopted in November 2019. The most relevant SPD is the Design Guide to House Extensions which was adopted in March 2021.
- 2.29 The policies of the current Local Plan which are relevant to this application includes: Policy CC1 (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development); CC2 (Sustainable Design and Construction); CC7 (Design and the Public Realm); CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity); EN1 (Protection And Enhancement Of The Historic Environment); EN3 (Enhancement of Conservation Areas); EN6 (New Development In A Historic Context); and H9 (House Extensions and Ancillary Accommodation);
- 2.30 Policy CC1 of the Local Plan states that a positive approach to considering development proposals will be taken that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Where appropriate, the Council will work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible.
- 2.31 With regards to sustainable design, Policy CC2, the redevelopment and refurbishment of existing building stock, will be acceptable where the design of buildings and 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.

- 2.32 The Council state that all development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area. Policy CC7 states that developments will be assessed to ensure that they respond positively to their local context and create or reinforce local character and distinctiveness, including protecting and enhancing the historic environment of the Borough and providing value to the public realm and are visually attractive as a result of good high quality built forms and spaces, the inclusion of public art and appropriate materials and landscaping.
- 2.33 Safeguarding amenities is covered in the wording of Policy CC8. It states that development should not cause detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties.
- 2.34 Consideration should be given in respect of privacy and overlooking, access to sunlight and daylight, appearance and whether it would have a visual dominance or overbearing effect, and harm to outlook.
- 2.35 The protection and enhancement of the historic environment is considered within Policy EN1. It refers to the fact that all proposed will be expect to protect and, where possible, enhance the significance of a heritage asset and its settings. Proposals should see to avoid harm in the first instance.
- 2.36 The Local Plan also states through the wording of Policy EN3 that there should be the enhancement of Conservation Areas, and that the special interest, character and architecture of Conservation Areas should be conserved and enhanced. Development proposals should make a positive contribution to the local character and distinctiveness.
- 2.37 New development should make a positive contribution on the area in respect to its scale, height, mass etc, and this is covered within the wording of Policy EN6.

- 2.38 Policy H9 covers extensions to dwellinghouses and ancillary accommodation. Developments of this nature will be considered acceptable where it would respect the character and appearance of the house in terms of scale, location, materials and design.
- 2.39 Development should also respect the character and appearance of the area as a whole, as well as the character of the neighbouring properties, and it should not present an overbearing impact on the neighbouring properties or their amenities.
- 2.40 The Design Guide provides further clarity on the acceptability of householder developments.
- 2.41 It states that proposals which have a bulky appearance in relation to the existing dwelling would not be considered favourably, and that the size and scale of the proposal would need to be deemed as being subservient to the existing dwelling.
- 2.42 There is also further wording in respect to how the proposal should not be disproportionate in size as this could have further impact on the neighbouring properties and wider area, and not just the host dwelling.
- 2.43 The design guide highlights how the development should take into consideration separation distances to boundaries with neighbouring properties and how to address the impact on overlooking, overshadowing and overbearingness.
- 2.44 There is a section within the design guide that focuses on buildings in the garden. This is section 7.6 and states that new buildings should complement the appearance of the main house by reflecting the age and design features. The proposal should not, however, have a detrimental effect on of the neighbouring properties.

Key Planning Considerations

2.45 The key planning considerations are the following:

- i. Impact on the character of the area
- ii. Relationship with neighbouring properties
- iii. Other Planning Matters

i) Impact on character of the area

2.46 The application site is located within the built-up area of Emmer Green where proposals for development will be acceptable in principle subject to there being no conflict with any other policy in the Local Plan. Proposals should be compatible with the character of the area by respecting scale, siting, height and character of buildings in the locality.

2.47 As already mentioned, the application site is located within the Surley Row Conservation Area and therefore consideration has needed to be given as to how the development would relate to this setting.

2.48 In addition to this, the site is part of a recent new build development, where detached structures were constructed with timber as the main material.

2.49 The gardens of the neighbouring properties that are part of the new development back on to each other.

2.50 Whilst the application plot itself is relatively flat, the northern boundary is raised above the finished floor level of the dwelling, and the eastern boundary, which fronts onto Surley Row, is set down from the main road.

2.51 A boundary fence screens much of the rear garden from view, when viewing the front of the plot and house from Surely Row. In addition to this, new vegetative screening is beginning to establish itself along the front of the larger site and in front of the application property.

- 2.52 The proposed bicycle store and the pergola with raised decking will be constructed using a timber material.
- 2.53 The reason for proposing the material as timber is based on the fact that the boundary treatments and car ports located within the wider development are all constructed out of timber. Consequently, it is considered that using such materials in the construction of the proposed garden structures would respect the appearance of the main dwelling and would also be in keeping with the wider development recently constructed.
- 2.54 The pergola, being set at the back of the garden, would have very limited impact on the street scene as it would, despite the level differences between the highway and the application site, be partially screened by the vegetative screening which is becoming established, and also due to the proposed materials it will be built out of.
- 2.55 Although the bicycle store would be positioned closer to the front boundary, and on the higher ground level it would, due to the height of the front boundary fence, be mostly screened from view from the highway. Moreover, the proposed materials will ensure that it would blend in with the existing timber boundary treatments, so as not to appear out of character or affect the wider setting.
- 2.56 Both the structures are of appropriate scale and would not dominate the plot or appear as being overbearing to the host dwelling or the wider setting. Accordingly, the proposed structures would adhere with the wording set out within Section 7.6 of the design guide.
- 2.57 Moreover, the structures would comply with the requirements of Policy H9 of the Local Plan, and also the wording of paragraphs 131 and 135 of the NPPF when considering the design of the proposed works.

2.58 The two structures have been designed with consideration given to the proposed materials to ensure that the development would be of benefit to the property and the wider area, not just for the short term, but for the lifetime of the development.

2.59 The choice of materials, and scale of proposed structures, was also led by the application sites setting within the Surely Row Conservation Area. The development was designed so as to accord with the wording of Policies EN1, EN3 and EN6, as well as Section 16 of the NPPF.

2.60 The high standard design that has been proposed also ensures that the development has addressed the requirements of Policy CC7 where development should maintain and enhance the character and appearance of the area. This scheme maintains the character of the area through the choice of materials and scale of development proposed.

ii) Relationship with Neighbouring properties

2.61 Due to this being the redevelopment of a former Public House and the scheme made efficient use of the land, it has meant the layout of the site provides for a closer proximity of amenity provisions for each new dwelling.

2.62 The siting of the bicycle store will have no impact on the neighbouring properties.

2.63 The pergola with the raised decking is to be sited in the north west corner of the application site. This is set away from the neighbouring properties. It is of a scale and height that would not appear overbearing to the neighbouring properties. It would also not result in any loss of light to their amenity areas.

2.64 In this regard, the proposed structures would not have a detrimental impact on the neighbouring properties amenities.

2.65 Furthermore, the structures would not affect the enjoyment of the amenities of the host dwelling, as the garden size would still be substantial.

2.66 The proposed development would therefore be compliant with Policy CC8 of the Local Plan, and also paragraphs 131 and 135 of the NPPF.

iii) Other Matters

Trees and landscaping

2.67 The proposed structures would have no impact on any trees, as none are located within the site, and the structures would not affect any trees located outside of the development site.

2.68 There would be limited impact on the landscaping within the rear garden, and the dwellinghouse and any future occupants would still benefit from a substantial sized garden.

Flood Risk and Drainage

2.69 There are no flood risk or drainage concerns within the site or adjacent to it.

2.70 It is therefore not considered necessary for the proposed works to provide any drainage details.

Biodiversity

2.71 As there is very minimal change to the site as a result of the proposal, the proposed development would not impact on biodiversity or green infrastructure.

Parking and Access

2.72 The proposed development would not result in any additional habitable rooms being proposed and would therefore not affect the amount of parking required at the property. The scheme would accord with the wording of paragraph 115 of the NPPF.

3.0 Conclusion

- 3.1 The development complies with the Policies of the Local Plan and Core Strategy, as well as the wording of the NPPF.
- 3.2 Of particular note is that the proposed timber structures, due to being of a high quality design, and of an appropriate scale to the host dwelling, would not be an incongruous or intrusive form development within their setting.
- 3.3 Consequently, the proposed development would not impact on the character of the area or the Heritage Asset, that being the Conservation Area, it is located within.
- 3.4 Therefore, the application is considered to accord with the wording of paragraphs 131 and 135 of the NPPF, Section 16, as well as the aforementioned policies within the Local Plan.
- 3.5 Taking the above into account, this Planning Application should be granted permission.