

DELEGATED PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Kentwood

App Ref: 240095/FUL

Address: 16a Kentwood Hill, Tilehurst, Reading, RG31 6DE

Proposals: side and rear extensions to 2no. existing flats to convert them into 2no. self-contained dwellinghouses

Case Officer: Mr Anthony Scholes

Date received (valid from): 2 February 2024 Target Decision date: 24 May 2024

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

Site visit date: 09/02/2024

Site visit photos:



The site is a two storey end of terrace property located on the south east side of Kentwood Hill, opposite the Victoria Recreation Ground. The surrounding area is largely residential; however, the Tilehurst Social Club is located adjacent the property to the south west. The property is in use as 2 flats.

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The application seeks full planning permission for side and rear extensions and conversion of 2 flats to create 2 x 2-bed dwellinghouses.

Plans considered

Location Plan

Dwg No. 1333/1/1 - Existing

Dwg No. 1333/3/c - Proposed Block Plan

Dwg No. 1333/30 - Proposed Plans

Received 25 January 2024

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

230764/FUL - Side and rear extensions to 2no. existing flats to convert them into 2no. self-contained dwellinghouses. REFUSED 6/11/2023.

The Reasons for Refusal were:

1. The proposed development, due to its scale, plot coverage and layout would represent a cramped, visually stark, form of development within the site which fails to accommodate buildings, parking areas and landscaping in a manner that enhances the character and appearance of the area. For these reasons, the proposals would result in overdevelopment of the site. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies CC7 (Design and The Public Realm) and H11 (Development of Private Residential Gardens) of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

2. The proposed development, due to its incongruous and contrived form, massing and appearance fails to provide a high quality design with consequent harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) and H11 (Development of Private Residential Gardens) of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

3. The proposed development is considered to provide an unacceptable standard of accommodation due to its unsatisfactory internal space and head height, resulting in cramped accommodation, which, combined with poor light levels will adversely impact upon the level of amenity with consequent harm to the quality of living accommodation for future occupiers. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) and H5 (Standards for New Housing) of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

4. In the absence of a completed legal agreement to secure a resultant acceptable contribution towards the provision of Affordable Housing, the proposal fails to contribute adequately to the housing needs of Reading Borough, contrary to Policies H3 (Affordable Housing) and CC9 (Securing Infrastructure) of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and the Council's Adopted Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document 2021.

4. CONSULTATIONS

The following addresses were consulted by letter.

62 Ringwood Road, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 6TX

18 Kentwood Hill, Tilehurst, Reading, RG31 6DE

12-14 Kentwood Hill, Tilehurst, Reading, RG31 6DE

3 Macarthur Close, Tilehurst, Reading, RG30 4XW

22 Kentwood Hill, Tilehurst, Reading, RG31 6DE

19 Ellis Road, Crowthorne, RG45 6PS

Letters of representation have been received as follows:
One objection was received stating:

- "1) Disturbance and loss of endangered bat's*
- 2) Parking will be even more limited than now.*
- 3) The new property's will not match the original buildings i.e brickwork and roof tiles.*
- 4) More hard standing concrete will take away drainage for water.*
- 5) House number 22 does not have front dogmer ref the design and access statement.*
- 6) As yet bus number 18 is not in service for more updates speak to kentwood Councillor Rag Singh.*
- 7) In the statement saying there is a pedestrian access from the rear of property's between 16 and 18 the wall has been in decline for many years at the bottom of the garden.*
- 8) The unadopted and unmade road is access for the vehicles to the garages only it is unlit unmade and is also very narrow."*

The following internal consultation responses were received:

RBC Transport

No objection subject to conditions, discussed below.

Ecology

No objection, subject to conditions. Discussed below.

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

The relevant sections of the NPPF are:

- Section 2 - Achieving Sustainable Development
- Section 8 - Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities
- Section 9 - Promoting Sustainable Transport
- Section 11 - Making Effective Use of Land
- Section 12 - Achieving Well-Designed Places

Section 15 - Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment

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
CC9: Securing Infrastructure
EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network
EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodland
EN15: Air Quality
H1: Provision of Housing
H2: Density and Mix
H3: Affordable Housing
H5: Standards for New Housing
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

Supplementary Planning Guidance

Affordable Housing SPD (2021)
Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011)
Revised SPD on Planning Obligations under Section 106 (2019)
Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2019)
Employment Skill and Training SPD (2013)
Tree Strategy (2021)
Biodiversity Action Plan (2021)

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APPRAISAL

Design Considerations

Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) states that all development must be of high design quality that maintains the character and appearance of the area within which it is located including layout, landscape, density, scale and architectural detail and materials. of similar spaces in the vicinity.

Paragraph 135 of the NPPF (as amended) details that decisions should ensure that *“developments ... are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping; are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities)”*.

The National Design Guidance 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 front of the site would be dominated by hard surfacing to facilitate vehicle parking for 3 no. cars. Furthermore, the proposed side extension would result in built form near on the entirety of the width of the plot. This would result in a cramped layout with a frontage that would be overly dominated by vehicle parking and built form and with little relief to the side boundary. Due to the narrow width, the front door for the property would be provide to the side elevation, and provide limited space within that area, though front doors in the main elevation are common, the end of terrace (no 22 Kentwood Hill) provides a front facing door within a side porch arrangement. Further, due to the narrow width of the plot, and tapering side boundary, the design of the roof form and house would step in at various points resulting in a contrived and convoluted appearance.

The proposal would also be an overly dominant side extension to the end of the terraced row, with a continuation of the front wall, and roof line to match the existing, it would be harmful, by way of dominance and lack of subservience to the host dwelling and terrace contrary to the abovementioned policies.

In overall terms, the proposal appears overdeveloped with limited space within the frontage to provide complimentary garden space. The proposal would result in an incongruous appearance, which would not be of high quality design and would be out of keeping with the character of the street scene. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies CC7 and H11 of the Reading Borough Council Local Plan 2019 or section 12 of the NPPF.

Amenity of Future Occupiers

Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) states that development will not cause unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties and H5 (Standards for New Housing) seeks that all new housing is built to high standards. Policy H10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space) seeks that residential developments are provided with adequate private or communal outdoor amenity space. Policy H11 (Development of Private Residential Gardens) outlines requirements for development of land within the curtilage of existing or former dwellings.

Para 135 (f) of the NPPF states: *“development ... 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 users⁵²; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience”*(Note: Footnote 52 notes that policies may make use of the nationally described space standards).

The proposed extension, would contain some 67m² of gross floor area, as measured to exclude areas less than 1.5m in head height. This would be acceptable in terms of the nationally described space standards, albeit a three storey 1-bed dwelling is not envisaged within it.

Policy H10 deals specifically with private and communal space and requires such space to allow for sitting out, children's play areas, home food production, green waste composting, refuse storage, drying space. "The design of outdoor spaces will respect the size and character of other similar spaces in the vicinity". Para 4.4.87 of the RBLP sets out that "in the past, the Council has sought the following minimum provisions for private or communal outdoor space for each type of accommodation, and they provide a useful guide for proposals: (b) Flats outside central Reading: 1 and 2-bedroom: 25 sq m per flat..".

The existing garden would be divided into 2 and given the depth, this is considered acceptable, noting access to nearby open space.

Impact on Neighbouring Amenity

Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) requires developments to not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing properties in terms of: Privacy and overlooking; Access to sunlight and daylight; Visual dominance and overbearing; Harm to outlook; Noise and disturbance; Artificial lighting; Vibration; Dust and fumes; Smell; and Crime and safety.

The neighbouring properties potentially most affected by the proposals are The Tilehurst Social Club and No.18 Kentwood Hill located to the south west and north east of the site respectively.

With regard to the Tilehurst Social Club, whilst a first floor window is proposed on the flank elevation facing this property, as it would appear to serve a landing area, this could have been conditioned to be obscurely glazed. A condition could also have been attached stipulating no additional first floor windows on the flank elevation. As such, no material loss of privacy is considered to arise. The proposals would clearly be visible to users of the Social Club; however, given the distance to common boundary and nature of the Club itself, no significant materials overbearing effects are considered to arise.

With regard to No.18 Kentwood Hill, the proposed upper floor windows and dormer windows would face down the garden of the existing property and any views towards No.18 would be at an oblique angle (and noting position of balcony with limited views). As such, no material loss of privacy is considered to arise. The majority of the proposals would be sited to the south flank of No.16a. The element of the proposals closest to No.18 would be single storey and no significant materials overbearing effects are considered to arise.

Transport

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

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. Double yellow lines are present on the opposite side of the carriageway preventing on street parking.

Parking & Access

In accordance with the Council's current adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD, each dwelling would require 2.0 on-site parking spaces. The proposal provides for 3no. on-site parking spaces located at the front of the property. However, not all the dimensions of the parking spaces conform to current standards, the space closest to the boundary with the Tilehurst Social Club does not comply; spaces should be a minimum of 2.4m x 4.8m (currently 4.7m x 2.3m). The Council's Transport officer has confirmed that this could be overcome with amended plans and does not form a reason for refusal.

Plans indicate that the existing vehicle dropped crossing serving the property is to be extended to access and provide parking along the frontage of the site. Images identify a utility cover located in the footway which would need to be illustrated on plans. If relocation or alterations to the footway are required, the cost of this would be fully met by the applicant. A license will need to be applied for from the Council's Highways Department to undertake all works on the public highway.

Water run-off from private property 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.

Policy TR5 includes a requirement for each new house to be provided with an electric charging point. Whilst not shown, the Council's Transport officer has confirmed that this could be overcome with amended plans and does not form a reason for refusal.

Cycle Storage

In accordance with the Council's current standards a minimum of 2 cycle spaces would be required for each dwelling; in a development of this nature a secure garden shed can be used in each dwelling's private amenity area. Cycle storage has been illustrated in the rear garden of each dwelling which is considered acceptable.

Refuse Storage and Collection

Bin storage should not be located further than 15m from the access point of the site to avoid the stationing of service vehicles on the carriageway for excessive periods and should comply with Manual for Streets and British Standard 5906: 2005 for Waste Management in Buildings to avoid the stationing of service vehicles on the carriageway. Plans illustrate an area of hardstanding for bins located at the front of each dwelling; however, it is not clear where bins would be presented for collection as the parked cars would obstruct access and it is not permitted for bins to be stored on any part of the public highway. The Council's Transport officer has confirmed that this could be overcome with amended plans and does not form a reason for refusal.

The construction phase of the proposed development would be likely to impact the surrounding highway network given the prominent location. Should the application have otherwise been considered supportable, a condition would have been attached to secure submission, approval and implementation of a detailed Construction Method Statement.

Ecology

Policy EN12 (Biodiversity and the Green Network) seeks that development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity and should provide for a net gain of biodiversity wherever possible by protecting, enhancing and incorporating features of biodiversity on and adjacent to development sites and by providing new tree planting and wildlife friendly landscaping and ecological enhancements wherever practicable.

A bat survey report accompanied the previous application, along with a bat emergence survey carried out in August 2023. No bats were seen to emerge from the building and the Council's Ecologist agrees with the conclusions of the report that the building is unlikely to host roosting bats. However, as noted in the bat survey report, evidence of current bird nesting activity was found within the roof void. This area would be affected by the works and should the proposals have otherwise been recommended for approval, a condition would have been attached to ensure that these birds would not be harmed during works.

Given the nature of the scheme, it would also have been appropriate to ensure that ecological enhancements were provided, namely bird/bat boxes and wildlife friendly landscaping. This could have been secured by way of condition in compliance with Policy EN12 had the proposal been able to be supported.

Natural Environment - landscaping

Policy EN12 (Biodiversity and the Green Network) seeks that development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity and should provide for a net gain of biodiversity wherever possible by protecting, enhancing and incorporating features of biodiversity on and adjacent to development sites and by providing new tree planting and wildlife friendly landscaping and ecological enhancements wherever practicable. Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) sets out that good design should incorporate appropriate landscaping.

Whilst there are trees on site, given their location towards the rear, they are unlikely to be affected by the proposals. If the scheme was otherwise acceptable, details of landscaping proposals would have been secured by way of condition.

Sustainability

Policy CC3 (Adaptation to Climate Change) requires that development proposals incorporate sustainable design practices to take account of climate change. Policy H5 (Standards for New Housing) requires that all new housing is be built to the higher level of water efficiency standards under Building Regulations and achieves at a minimum a 19% improvement in the dwelling emission rates above the Building Regulations standards.

Should the application have otherwise been recommended for approval, conditions would have been recommended to ensure the development meets the following requirements:

- Higher water efficiency standards of 110 litres per person per day; and
- A 19% improvement over building regulations energy requirements

Although secured by planning condition, these new requirements would have been administered through the Building Regulations, with confirmation of compliance submitted to the LPA to discharge the condition.

Affordable Housing

Policy H3 (Affordable Housing) requires that for schemes of 1-4 dwellings a financial contribution to enable the equivalent of 10% of the housing to be provided as affordable housing elsewhere within the Borough. In accordance with the adopted Affordable Housing SPD 2021 this equates to contribution equivalent to 5% of the GDV of the development.

The applicant stated they agreed in principle to enter into a legal agreement to secure financial contribution. However, no formal valuations have been submitted (noting the agent's suggested contribution). Given that the proposal is not considered acceptable in other planning terms, the Council has not pursued the S106 legal agreement to secure the financial affordable housing provision. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies H3 and CC9 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

An informative will specify that this reason for refusal could be overcome, in the context of an acceptable scheme in all other respects, by entering into a s106 or unilateral undertaking.

Community Infrastructure Levy

The proposal would be a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) liable development. The applicant has provided the CIL Additional Information Form. If the scheme had been acceptable an informative would have been attached to the decision notice to advise the applicant of their responsibilities in this respect.

Conclusion

The proposed development is for an extension of, and conversion of two flats, into two dwellings. This is facilitated by a side extension which would take the built form to the entire width of the plot with a small gap between the tapering boundary and the proposed dwelling.

The proposal would result in a three bed dwelling, and a one bed dwelling from the existing two x 1-bed flats. This would be an improvement on the size of accommodation, though would not specifically result in additional dwellings within the borough that could contribute to overall need. Notwithstanding, the increased size of 1 dwelling to a three-bed dwelling would be a highly needed dwelling size within the Borough as detailed within the Berkshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2016). Given the contribution toward an improved level of accommodation within the Borough, this is given positive weight.

The proposed development, as outlined above, would introduce an extension to the terrace with a roof and front wall which is a continuation of the building. The extension would also extend to the width of the plot, with a gap of <1m to the 'Tilehurst Club' site next door. This

would be out of scale with that of the main dwelling to the detriment of the character and appearance of the host properties, and the character and appearance of the area as a whole.

The sites would provide 3no. parking spaces (reduced by 1 from the previous refusal) which would remain a dominant aspect of the proposal uncharacteristic of dwellings within the immediate vicinity.

The applicant has sought to provide a policy compliant level of affordable housing. However, due to the proposal having been considered unacceptable this has not progressed, nor has a figure been specifically agreed. As such, this will form a reason for refusal which would be able to be overcome by a suitable section 106 agreement.

RECOMMENDATION

Refuse