
PLANNING AND DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

0.0 Executive Summary

0.1 The Statement accompanies an application submitted to Reading Borough Council for full planning permission for the erection of a detached dwelling with parking and amenity space on land at Berkeley Avenue, Reading, Berkshire.

0.2 In the context of Section 38(6) of the Act and, in particular, the terms of relevant Development Plan policy, advice in the Framework and all other material considerations (including the planning history of the site) the Statement concludes that **planning permission should be granted** for the development, noting the following:

- That the principle of the proposed development is acceptable in this location (Paragraph 6.2)
- That the proposals would make an appropriate contribution towards affordable housing (Paragraphs 6.3 – 6.4);
- That, by comparison with the previous scheme – and noting the availability of permitted development rights to erect a detached outbuilding to the side of the existing dwelling in a location comparable to that proposed - the modifications to the layout, scale, design and form of the proposed dwelling, are such that the scheme would appropriately respect and reflect the character and appearance of the area, and be comfortably integrated in to the developed surroundings (Paragraphs 6.5 – 6.11);
- That the scheme would not have an unacceptably adverse impact on neighbouring residential amenity (Paragraphs 6.12 – 6.19);
- That an appropriate quality living environment would be created for future occupiers of the dwelling (Paragraphs 6.20 – 6.21);
- That there are no landscaping constraints or limitations to the proposed development (Paragraphs 6.22 – 6.24);
- That the proposed access and parking arrangements are acceptable; (Paragraphs 6.25 -6.29); and
- That there are no flooding or drainage constraints to the development (Paragraphs 6.30 – 6.31)

1.0 Introduction

1.1 As noted in the Executive Summary, the Statement accompanies an application submitted to Reading Borough Council for full planning permission for the erection of a detached dwelling with parking and amenity space on land at Berkeley Avenue, Reading, Berkshire.

1.2 The Statement is structured as follows:

- The Site and Surrounding Area
- Planning History
- The Proposal
- Planning Policy Context
- Planning Assessment
- Conclusions

2.0 The Site and Surrounding Area

- 2.1 The site is located on the eastern side of Berkeley Avenue, a short distance to the south of the junction with Bath Road and, in its totality, comprises a broadly wedge-shaped section of land extending to an area of approximately 0.10 hectares. Located broadly centrally in the site is a detached two-storey dwelling (104 Berkeley Avenue) of predominantly brick construction (with rendered sections) under a pitched, tiled roof. A new dwelling (see Section 3.0) is currently under construction on the northern section of the site. Access to the site is via a driveway located in the north-western corner of the site and which extends off a short spur road leading from Berkeley Avenue. The principal area of amenity space serving the original dwelling is located to the south of the property.
- 2.2 The site is located in a predominantly residential area. To the north of the site is 106 Berkeley Avenue, also a detached two-storey dwelling, albeit positioned closer to the western boundary (with Berkeley Avenue) than No 104. To the east is 102 Berkeley Avenue, a detached single storey dwelling – a form of development that continues eastwards of the site - with Benyon Mews, a relatively modern development comprising two-storey terraced dwellings with gardens extending up to the site boundary, located to the north-east of the site. Further to the north are a range of more extensive residential buildings at the junction of Berkeley Avenue with Bath Road.
- 2.3 The extent of the site is shown outlined in red on the site location plan accompanying the application and, for planning policy purposes, is not the subject of any specific designations.

3.0 Planning History

- 3.1 In November last year an application (231643/FUL) was submitted for the erection of a detached two-storey dwelling with parking and amenity space on the southern section of the wider site. That application was withdrawn last month, prior to determination.
- 3.2 Prior to this an application (220413/FUL) was submitted on the wider site of 104 Berkeley Avenue in March 2022 for works comprising demolition and the erection of a detached two-storey dwelling with parking and amenity space. That application, which related to the erection of a two-storey dwelling located to the north-west of the original property, was approved and has subsequently been implemented, with a copy of the approved site plan attached at **Document 1**.

4.0 The Proposal

- 4.1 The application seeks full planning permission for the erection of a detached dwelling with parking and amenity space, with full details of the scheme set out in plans 001 – 010 (inclusive) and 016, 017 and 018.
- 4.2 As shown on plan 005, the proposed dwelling would be located on land to the south-east of the original 104 Berkeley Avenue. The dwelling, which would be off-set from the south-east (flank) elevation of 104 Berkeley Avenue by approximately 3.4m, would have a broadly rectangular plan form, save for a small projection on the front (west) elevation.
- 4.3 The main part of the dwelling, the slab level of which would be some 0.26m below that of the original 104 Berkeley Avenue, would provide single level accommodation incorporating an open plan kitchen/lounge, with bedroom and bathroom. The dwelling would be finished with a mixture of brickwork and vertical timber to the external elevations, under a pitched half-hipped tiled roof that would incorporate a cat-slide section to the rear (east).
- 4.4 Parking to the proposed dwelling would be located to the front (west) providing two tandem parking spaces, with turning in the area between the proposed dwelling and 104 Berkeley Avenue. Two parking spaces are shown to the front of the original 104 Berkeley Avenue.

5.0 Planning Policy Context

- 5.1 Under the provisions of Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 there is a statutory obligation to determine planning applications in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.2 Having regard to the planning designations affecting the site, this section of the Statement outlines the thrust of related National Planning Policy advice before going on to summarise the relevant Development Plan policies in the context of Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 5.3 The NPPF was first published on 27 March 2012 and, with immediate effect, replaced a raft of advice and guidance contained in various Planning Policy Guidance notes (PPGs), and Planning Policy Statements (PPSs). In July 2018 a revised version of the NPPF was issued (NPPF2), followed by further revisions in February and June 2019 (NPPF3). In July 2021 a further set of revisions to the Framework were published (NPPF4). Minor modifications were then published in September 2023 (NPPF5) with the latest version published in December 2023 (NPPF6).
- 5.4 As with the original (2012) NPPF, sustainable development remains at the heart of the Framework, with three interdependent and overarching objectives – economic, social and environmental – driving the achievement of sustainable development. In order to ensure that sustainable development is pursued in a positive manner, the Framework embodies, in paragraph 11, a presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- 5.5 For decision-taking – in respect of applications for planning permission – the presumption in favour of sustainable development means (paragraph 11):
- (c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or

(d) where there are no development plan policies or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting planning permission unless:

(i) the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas of assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or

(ii) any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

5.6 In addition, paragraph 38 advises that Local Planning Authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way, and that decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

Housing

5.7 In terms of housing, paragraph 60 re-affirms that, in order to support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, *'it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed'*. Paragraph 70 recognises the value and contribution that small and medium sized sites can make to meeting housing requirements and states that, through the development plan, land to accommodate at least 10% of housing requirements should be on sites no larger than one hectare.

Promoting Sustainable Transport

5.8 Insofar as it relates to matters of sustainable transport, paragraph 109 advises that significant development should be focused on locations that are, or can be made, sustainable. However, the Framework recognises that *'opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be taken into account in both plan-making and decision-making'* (paragraph 109). Furthermore, paragraph 115 advises that *'development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe'*.

Making Effective Use of Land

- 5.9 Paragraph 123 advises that planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses. Paragraph 128 goes on to state that support should be given for development that makes efficient use of land, taking account of factors that include the desirability of maintaining an area's prevailing character and setting, and the importance of securing well-designed and beautiful, attractive and healthy places.

Achieving Well-Designed and Beautiful Places

- 5.10 Paragraph 131 highlights that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development by creating better places in which to live and work, with paragraph 135 seeking developments that:

- will function well and add to the overall quality of the area;
- are visually attractive as a result of good architecture;
- are sympathetic to local character and history;
- establish or maintain a strong sense of place;
- optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development; and
- create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

- 5.11 Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking in to account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents (paragraph 139). Conversely, the paragraph (sub-section (a)) advises that significant weight should be given to '*development which reflects local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes*'.

Development Plan

- 5.12 For the purposes of this application, the Development Plan comprises the Reading Borough Local Plan, which was adopted in November 2019, and replaced the Core Strategy, Reading Central Area Action Plan and the Site

and Detailed Policies Document. The most relevant policies of the Reading Borough Local Plan¹ are considered to be:

- 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
- EN9 Provision of Open Space
- EN14 Trees, Hedgerows and Woodland
- H1 Provision of Housing
- H2 Density and Housing Mix
- H3 Affordable Housing
- H5 Standards of New Housing
- H10 Private and Communal Outdoor Space
- H11 Development of Private Residential Gardens
- TR1 Achieving the Transport Strategy
- TR2 Major Transport Projects – Cycle Network
- TR3 Access, Traffic and Highway-related Matters
- TR5 Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging

Other Matters

5.12 In addition to the Local Plan policies outlined above, the following Supplementary Planning Documents are also of relevance to the proposals:

- Affordable Housing SPD
- Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD
- Sustainable Design and Construction SPD

¹ Which was subject to a review in March 2023 that identified a need to update 45 of the 90 policies, to be undertaken as part of a formal partial update to the Local Plan.

6.0 Planning Assessment

6.1 This section of the Statement considers the principal planning considerations having regard to the following factors:

- The principle of the proposed development;
- Affordable Housing and Housing Mix
- The impact on the character and appearance of the area;
- The effect on neighbouring residential amenity;
- The quality of living environment for future occupiers;
- Existing and Proposed Landscaping;
- Highways, Access and Parking; and
- Flooding and Drainage

The Principle of the Proposed Development

6.2 The site is located in the built-up area of Reading where the adopted Local Plan accepts the principle of additional residential development, with no site-specific constraints or limitations to the re-development of the site for such purposes. Indeed, the principle of additional residential development on the site has previously been accepted by the Council (220413/FUL), and was, equally, identified as acceptable in relation to the most recent (withdrawn) application (231643/FUL)

Affordable Housing and Housing Mix

6.3 Whilst the scale of the proposed development falls below the threshold for the provision of affordable housing as detailed in the National Planning Policy Framework, the terms and requirements of Policy H3 of the adopted Local Plan (and related SPD) are noted – insofar as such seeks a financial contribution towards affordable housing provision from schemes of the proposed scale. Accordingly, the application is accompanied by a draft/framework Planning Obligation providing the basis for the required financial contribution.

6.4 In terms of housing mix, there are no specific policy requirements relating to schemes of this size. Nevertheless, the sub-text to Policy H2 indicates an on-going need for small units of market housing to which the proposals would positively contribute.

Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Area

- 6.5 As detailed in Section 2.0, the site is located in a predominantly residential area of mixed character, comprising a series of detached, semi-detached and terraced units, together with apartment buildings. In addition, there is a wide variation in scale, including single-storey properties, chalet-style dwellings and two-storey buildings, with larger scale buildings a short distance to the north of the site at the junction of Berkeley Avenue and Bath Road. There is a similarly wide variety in the architectural style, design and treatment of buildings. Accordingly, there is no clear consistency or uniformity to the pattern and character of development in the area to which development on the site should conform.
- 6.6 In terms of siting/layout, the proposed dwelling would be located to the south-east of the existing property on the site, on an area of generally open land that extends up to Berkeley Avenue, which follows a gently curved alignment at this point. Although the adjoining 102 Berkeley Avenue is set well back from the road edge, the properties further to the east step forward on a staggered alignment with, in effect, the whole of 100 Berkeley Avenue positioned forward of 102 Berkeley Avenue. That being so, whilst – in the position proposed – the dwelling would ‘sit’ forward of 102 Berkeley Avenue, it would be set back from the front of 100 Berkeley Avenue and the dwellings further to the east. That being so, it is considered that the layout of the scheme would appropriately respect and reflect the pattern and rhythm of development in the area.
- 6.7 Nevertheless, it should be acknowledged that the existing property benefits from permitted development rights that would allow the construction of a detached outbuilding in – to all intents and purposes – the same position as the proposed dwelling. Although it is recognised that such a building would be limited in height to no more than 4.0m, it is nevertheless the case that the net effect (on the character of the area) of the provision of such a building would not be materially different to that of the proposed scheme, and is a factor that should be weighed in the overall planning balance.
- 6.8 In terms of scale, the proposed dwelling – the floor level of which would be set approximately 0.26m below that of 104 Berkeley Avenue – would be single-storey with a ridge height some 2.25m **lower** than the existing dwelling on the site. Indeed, the building would be comparable in height to 102 Berkeley

Avenue to the east of the site. Given that there is a pre-existing visual relationship and scale differential evident in the street scene between 102 and 104 Berkeley Avenue, the differential (in scale) that would exist between the proposed dwelling and 104 Berkeley Avenue would not be at odds with, nor detract, the established character and visual amenities of the area.

- 6.9 Furthermore, whilst it is recognised that the proposed building would be evident in the street scene, in the context of the pattern and scale of surrounding development, and the mixed residential characteristics of the locality, it is not considered that the visual presence of the building in the street scene would be of detriment to the character and qualities of the area².
- 6.10 In terms of design/style the locality has a varied and mixed built character. The proposed dwelling, which would follow some of the features of the architectural styling of the dwelling approved to the north-west of 104 Berkeley Avenue, would contribute positively to the established mixed character of the surroundings. Indeed, whilst the scheme incorporates contemporary elements in the detailing and external finish of the building, the overall form of development would integrate comfortably with the existing developed/built surrounds.
- 6.11 Taken in combination, therefore, it is considered that the proposals would appropriately respect and reflect the character, pattern and appearance of the area, and thereby comply with related Development Plan policy. In addition, it should be acknowledged that this is achieved in a manner that would make a more efficient and effective use of land and deliver an additional unit accommodation, with these factors weighing positively in support of the scheme.

Effect on Neighbouring Residential Amenity

- 6.12 As detailed in section 2.0, the site is surrounded by residential development with the impact on surrounding properties (including the existing, retained dwelling) considered in turn below.

² Noting the point in paragraph 6.7 that permitted development rights are available to erect an outbuilding on this section of the site.

102 Berkeley Avenue

- 6.13 102 Berkeley Avenue is a detached single-storey dwelling the long (flank) elevation of which runs parallel to the eastern boundary of the site, with garden area to the rear (north). As such, the principal habitable room windows are contained in the front (south) and rear (north) elevations of the property, facing away from the boundary of the application site.
- 6.14 As shown on the site plan, the proposed dwelling would be off-set from the eastern site boundary with 102 Berkeley Avenue by approximately 3.2m. Whilst the position of the proposed dwelling would step forward of No 102 and would be visually evident to the front of No 102, the relationship is such that the physical presence of the building – given that it would be single-storey in scale - would not unacceptably impact on light/outlook from the window in the front (south) gable elevation of No 102.
- 6.15 Furthermore, given the single-storey scale of the proposed dwelling and the fact that window openings in the facing (east) elevation would be at ground floor level only, there would be no adverse effect on privacy.
- 6.16 For these reasons, therefore, it is considered that the amenities of the occupiers of 102 Berkeley Avenue would be respected and preserved by the proposals.

104 Berkeley Avenue

- 6.17 As shown on the site plan, the proposed dwelling would be located to the south-east of the existing property where the layout and arrangement of rooms and related openings are such that the siting and single-storey scale of the proposed dwelling would not impact adversely on matters of light/outlook³. Furthermore, the location of window openings in the proposed dwelling are such that the privacy of the occupiers of 104 Berkeley Avenue would not be adversely affected.
- 6.18 Furthermore, whilst the proposals would result in a reduction in the size of the garden area serving 104 Berkeley Avenue, the scale of the garden that would be retained would meet, and exceed, the Council's standards in connection

³ Noting that whilst there is a bedroom window in the first-floor south elevation of the existing dwelling, the position of this opening, combined with the single-storey scale of the proposed dwelling and roof form, is such that there would be no adverse effect on light/outlook from this opening.

with the same.

- 6.19 No other properties would be adversely affected by the proposed development.

Quality of Living Environment for Future Occupiers.

- 6.20 For the following reasons it is considered that the proposals would deliver an appropriate standard of amenity for future occupiers of the development:

- For comparable reasons to those detailed above, the relationship between the existing dwellings/buildings surrounding the site and the proposed dwelling is such that these (existing buildings and structures) would not unacceptably impact on future amenity with reference to factors such as light, outlook and privacy.
- The internal floorspace of the proposed dwelling would meet (and exceed) the nationally described space standards and would thereby comply with Policy H5 of the adopted Local Plan.
- The amenity area to the proposed dwelling – which would be some 140qm – would (in quantitative terms) provide an appropriate standard of amenity for future occupiers of the dwelling and would respect the size and character of other similar spaces in the vicinity of the site. Given such, the extent and form of amenity space provision would accord with the Council's guidelines and the requirements of Policy H10 of the adopted Local Plan

- 6.21 Accordingly, it is considered that an appropriate standard of amenity would be provided for future occupiers of the development.

Existing and Proposed Landscaping.

- 6.22 There are no existing landscape features on the site that make a significant or meaningful contribution to the character and visual amenities of the area and, that being so, there are not considered to be any landscape constraints to the proposed development. Notwithstanding such, the layout and form of the proposed development would facilitate the planting of an indigenous

hedgerow/trees along the eastern and south-western boundaries of the site that, in the context of the suburban residential characteristics of the locality, would appropriately integrate the development in to the wider context of the site in landscape terms. In addition, there remains wide scope for additional tree planting in the garden of the existing and proposed dwelling (all of which could be controlled by planning condition) that would ensure an appropriate level of tree canopy coverage and compliance with the principles of Policy EN14.

6.23 Accordingly, the following landscape framework is proposed as part of the development

- Garden area (to the existing and proposed dwelling) to be mainly laid to lawn, save for pathways and patio sections;
- Garden area between the existing and proposed dwelling to be contained by 1.8m high close-boarded fencing and hedgerow (and the flank elevation of the proposed dwelling);
- Remaining site boundaries to incorporate newly planted indigenous hedgerow (potentially backed (internally within the site) by fencing) and trees;
- Additional tree planting (as necessary) in the garden of the existing and proposed dwelling; and
- Parking and circulation areas to be either porous tarmac or porous paving, or a combination of both.

6.24 Given the above, and the generally urban characteristics of the surroundings, this approach to site landscaping would ensure a development that is appropriately integrated in to the surroundings and, through condition, would reflect the requirements of Policy EN14 of the adopted Local Plan.

Highways, Access and Parking

6.25 As shown on the site plan, access to the proposed dwelling would be via the existing entrance that extends off the minor spur road that serves only 104 and 106 Berkeley Avenue (and the approved dwelling noted in Section 3.0). The ability, as proposed, to access on to the spur road would facilitate safe access on to the wider highway network, including Berkeley Avenue. That being so, there are no access constraints or limitations to the proposed development.

Indeed, it is material to note that no objections were raised in this regard by the Council's Transport Development Control Officer to the comparable arrangements proposed in the most recent application.

6.26 As shown on the site plan, both the existing and proposed dwelling would be provided with two parking spaces. This level of provision, for a site situated in Zone 2, would comply with the requirements of the Revised Parking and Design Standards SPD. In addition, the layout of the parking spaces within the site would facilitate safe turning of vehicles so that they can enter and leave the site in forward gear, all as shown in the submitted plans and, again, a comparable arrangement to that previously deemed acceptable by the Council's Transport Development Control Officer.

6.27 In addition, the following should be noted:

- The garden areas of the existing and proposed dwelling would appropriately accommodate cycle parking provision;
- Electric charging point(s) would be provided as part of the scheme;
- Porous surfacing materials would be used for the parking areas and driveway; and
- Bin storage (on collection days) to the front of the existing and proposed dwelling would be within accepted carry distance of the site access.

6.28 Given such, there are no highways or parking limitations to the development.

6.29 Furthermore, whilst the highway land directly to the front (west) of the site is identified in the adopted Local Plan Proposals Map for a 'Major Transport Project' that project relates to cycleway provision, and the proposed development would not compromise or prejudice that scheme.

Flooding and Drainage Implications

6.30 Data held by the Environment Agency indicates that the site is located in Flood Zone 1 for fluvial flooding purposes and, therefore, is acceptable as a

matter of principle for additional residential development.

- 6.31 In addition, the Environment Agency data indicates that there are no constraints in respect of surface water flooding, nor flood risk from a reservoir breach. Given such, there are not considered to be any flooding constraints or limitations to the proposed development.

7.0 Conclusions

7.1 This Statement has been prepared to accompany an application submitted to Reading Borough Council for full planning permission for the erection of a detached dwelling with parking and amenity space on land at Berkeley Avenue, Reading, Berkshire.

7.2 For the reasons set out, the Statement has demonstrated:

- That the principle of the proposed development is acceptable;
- That the proposals would make an appropriate contribution towards affordable housing;
- That the layout, scale, design and form of the proposed development would respect and reflect the character and appearance of the area;
- That there would be no adverse impact on neighbouring residential amenity;
- That an appropriate quality living environment would be created for future occupiers of the development;
- That there are no landscaping constraints or limitations to the proposed development;
- That the access and parking arrangements are acceptable; and
- That there are no flooding or drainage constraints to the development.

7.3 Given the above, the Statement demonstrates that the proposals would be fully compliant with Development Plan policy and all other material considerations, and that planning permission should be granted accordingly.

DOCUMENT 1

