



PLANNING, DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

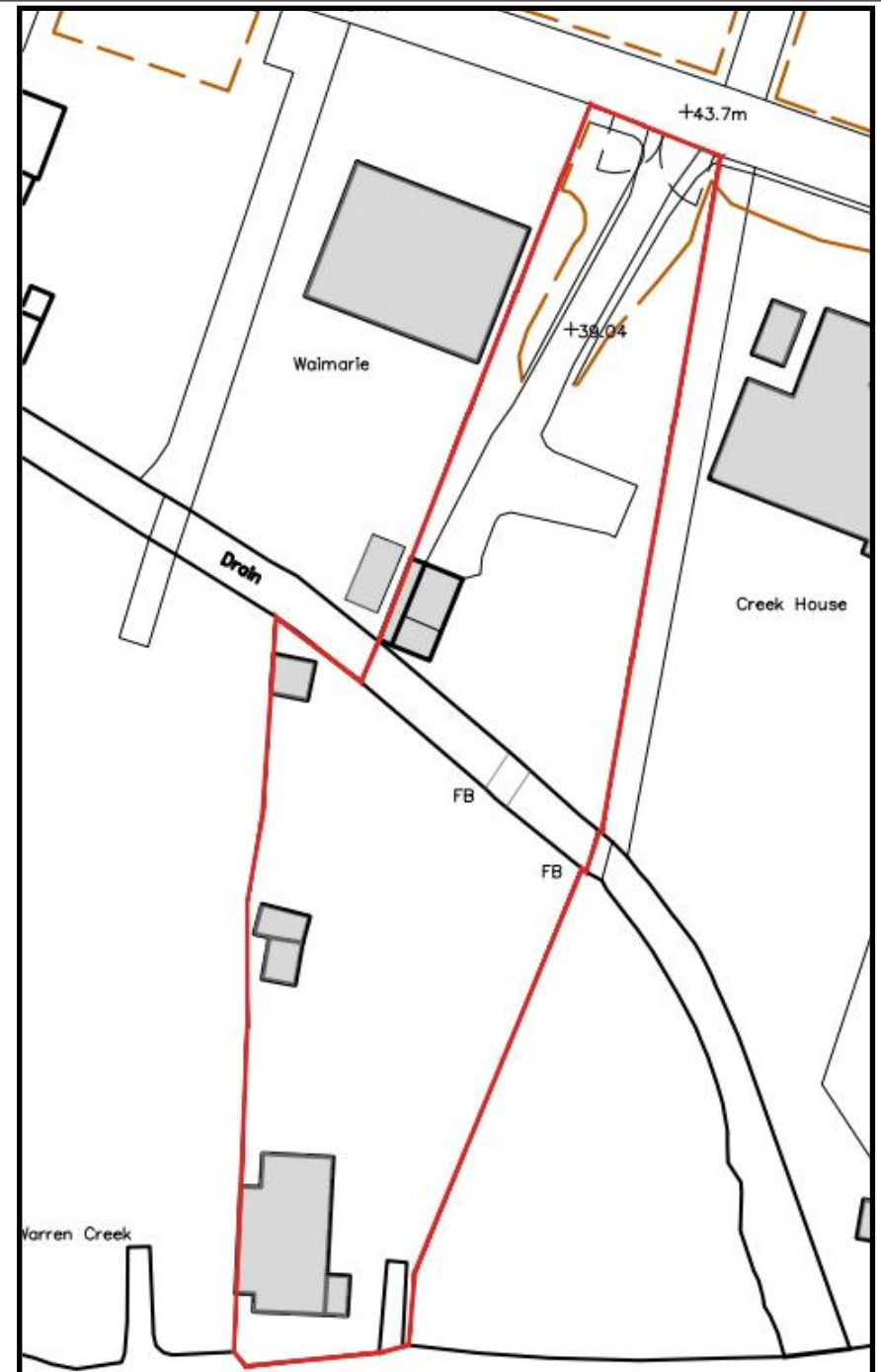
**Demolition of an existing
dwelling and outbuildings,
and the erection of one 4-
bed detached dwelling and
garage**

**Warren Creek,
The Warren, Reading
RG4 7TQ**

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Location Plan



1. INTRODUCTION

This Planning, Design and Access Statement has been prepared by STL Architecture and Planning. It supports a full application for the demolition of an existing dwelling and outbuildings, and the erection of one 4-bed detached dwelling and garage at Warren Creek, The Warren, Reading, RG4 7TQ.

Planning permission is sought on the area of land shown by the red outline in Figure 1.

This statement is accompanied by technical assessments and uses their findings to support this application. They are as follows and should be read in conjunction with this statement:

- Flood Risk Assessment - Nimbus Consulting
- Preliminary Ecological Assessment and Roost Assessment - Arbtech
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment - Duckworths Arboriculture
- Energy Statement - Melin

2. SITE CONTEXT

The site is located on at the western extent of Caversham, an area of Reading north of the River Thames. The Warren runs from east to west and is bounded by the river to the south and a wooded escarpment to the north.

The Warren serves a number of houses which back on to the river; Warren Creek is the penultimate house as the road continues west, serving a further 12 houses beyond. The site is bounded by residential dwellings on both sides.

There is a designated public cycleway running along the full extent of The Warren, while a public footpath runs alongside the southern side of the River Thames.

The site is located within the designated “Thames Valley Major Landscape Feature” area and is bordered to the north and south by an area of “Identified Biodiversity Interest”, however the site itself does not fall within this designation.

Given it’s proximity to the River Thames, the large majority of the site is in Flood Zone 3. A small part of the access road is in Flood Zone 1. Part of the site also has a high risk of surface water flooding due to a drainage creek running through it to the River Thames.



Site Context



3. PLANNING HISTORY

The Site

- **201348** **Approval: October 2020**
TPO Application: Oak - crown clean and crown clearance
- **230124** **Pre-app: March 2023**
Pre-application advice sought for replacement dwelling incorporating a detached double garage and associated works

Nearby Applications

- **212017** **Approval: August 2022**
Willowbrae, The Warren, Reading, RG4 7TQ
Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of replacement dwelling
- **09/0572 & 09/0766** **Approval: July 2009**
137 and 139 The Warren, Reading, RG4 7TQ
Erection of two detached 5-bedroom dwelling houses and detached double garages

4. PLANNING POLICY

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework 2021

National Planning Policy Guidance 2014 onwards

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC1: Sustainable Development

CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction

CC7: Design and the Public Realm

CC8: Safeguarding Amenity

H5: Standards for New Housing

H7: Protecting the Existing Housing Stock

H10: Outdoor Space

H11: Development of Private Residential Gardens

EN11: Waterspaces

EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network

EN13: Major Landscape Features

EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodlands

EN16: Pollution and Water Resources

EN18: Flooding and Drainage



Application Site



5. APPLICATION SITE

The site is approximately 0.21ha in area and sits between The Warren to the north and the River Thames to the south.

The existing 2-bedroom dwelling sits at the southern end of the application site, with the driveway accessing the site from the north, serving a small garage and area of hard standing in the central part of the site. The site is bordered with dense, mature trees and vegetation on its eastern boundary and part of its western boundary, giving it an enclosed feel.

The dwelling itself is single storey and is of brick and timber construction. The front door is accessed from the north elevation (as can be seen in the application site photos on the previous page).

The garage and other outbuildings are also of timber construction. The concrete driveway runs downhill from The Warren, which is raised at a higher level.

The formal residential garden to the north of the existing building is well kept and is mown regularly. There is a drainage creek running through the site feeding into the River Thames, which is crossed by a wooden bridge. Other small outbuildings sit on the western boundary.

The house was built in 1940 and has been continuously occupied as a residential property since then. It is registered under Council Tax band F.

6. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

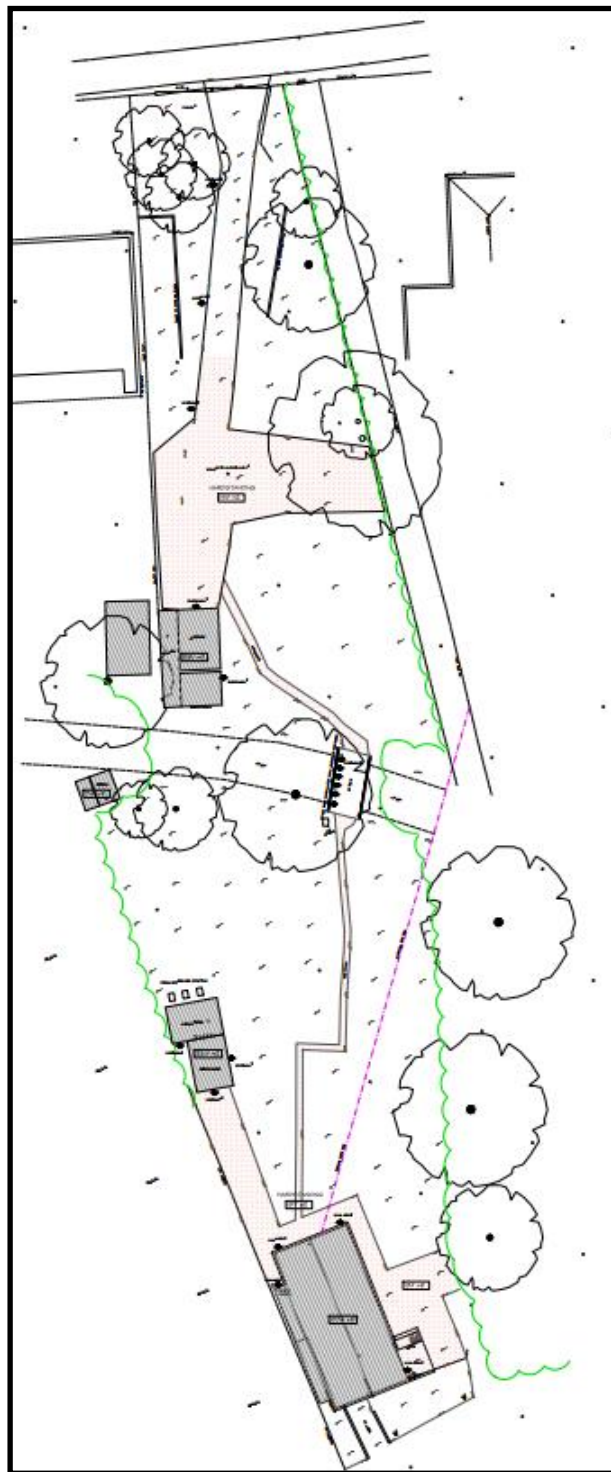
The proposed development is for the demolition of an existing dwelling and outbuildings, and the erection of one 4-bed detached dwelling and garage.

The proposed new dwelling will still be situated in the southern part of the site, but will be further set back from the river compared to the existing dwelling. The two storey, four bedroom property will be constructed with floodable voids beneath, while the finished floor level will be situated at 39.17m AOD. This is above the 1% AEP flood level plus the allowance for climate change.

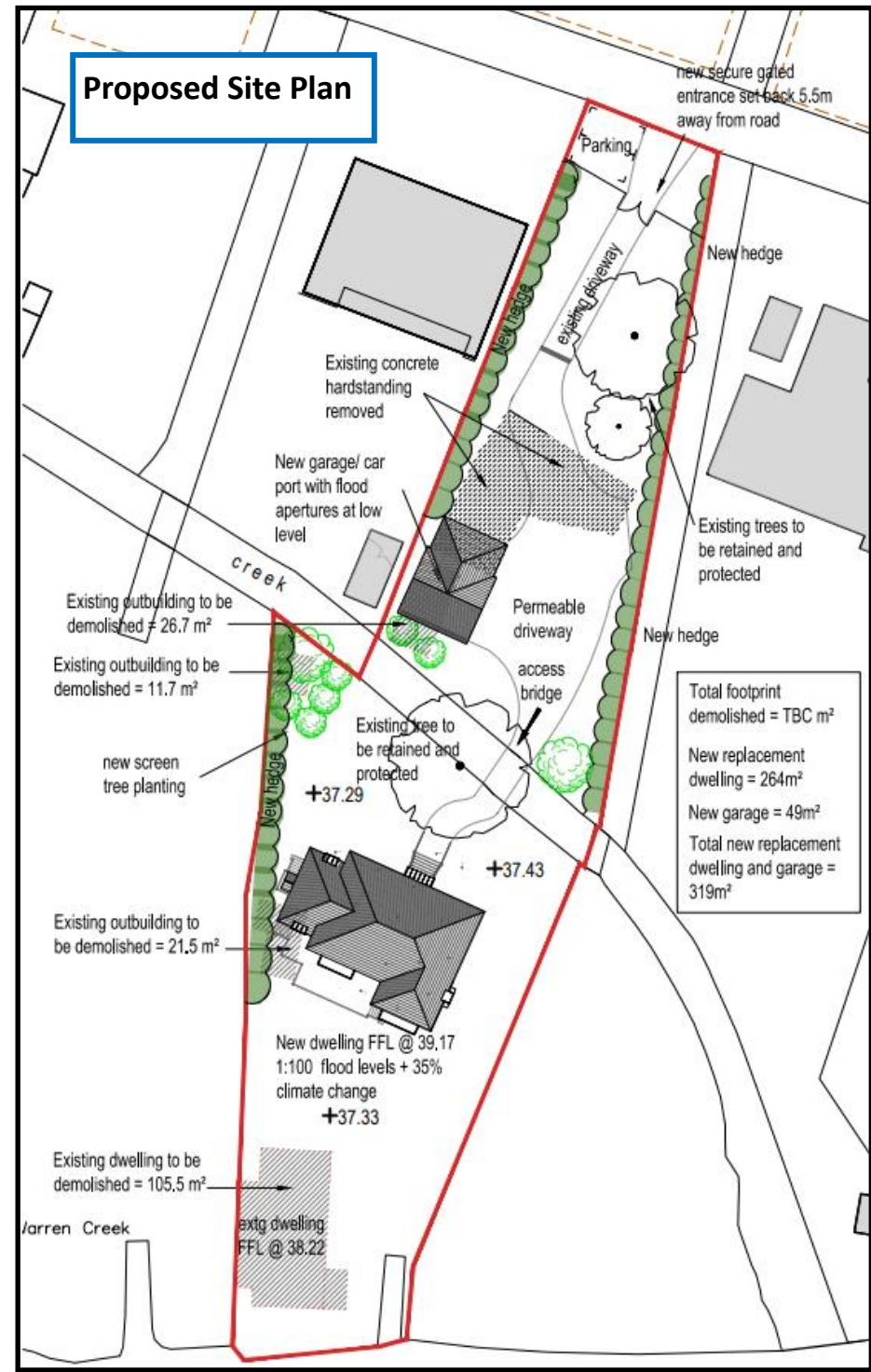
The access from The Warren and accessway into the site are to remain the same. The concrete hardstanding forming the existing parking area will be removed and replaced with a permeable driveway which will now extend down to the wooden bridge over the creek. The new driveway will also serve a newly erected garage built to replace the existing garage.

New hedge screening will be planted along the western boundary to soften views of the new dwelling. No trees are proposed for removal as part of the development.

Existing Site Plan



Proposed Site Plan



7. POLICY ASSESSMENT

Principle

This proposal seeks to replace the existing outdated dwelling with a new family friendly, energy efficient dwelling. The replacement of an existing dwelling with a new dwelling is a suitable form of development within the built limits of the Borough. Local Plan policy H11 sets out that proposals for new residential development that includes land within the curtilage of private residential garden will be acceptable where proposal comply with the a list of 9 criteria. This proposal's compliance with each policy criteria is set out below:

1) *The proposal makes a positive contribution to the character of the area in terms of:*

- the relationship of the existing built form and spaces around buildings within the surrounding area;

The existing house is located in very close proximity to the river. It's location differs considerably from the existing built form along The Warren which sits closer the road. The proposal seeks to relocate the dwelling further away from the river in order to reflect the prevailing character of the area. Although the proposed dwelling is now closer to neighbouring dwellings, the proposed distance of more than 40m will maintain the existing space around buildings in the area.

- a layout which integrates with the surrounding area with regard to the built up coverage of each plot, building line(s), rhythm of plot frontages, parking areas, and existing pattern of openings and boundary treatments on the site frontage;

As discussed above, the revised dwelling location seeks to improve the relationship between the building on this site and the existing building line. In terms of built up coverage of the plot, the existing built form proposed to be demolished has a combined built footprint of 168.6m². The proposed dwelling and garage have a combined built footprint of 190m². This is only a 12.5% increase. As such, there will only be a minor increase built up coverage of the plot. The existing pattern of an open frontage onto the river with vegetated side boundaries will remain unchanged.

- providing appropriate hard and soft landscaping, particularly at site boundaries. This includes features such as the variety of trees, hardstanding/lawns and hedges, etc;

The existing hardstanding forming the concrete driveway is to be removed and replaced with a permeable surface. A new native hedgerow is proposed to the western boundary. No trees are proposed for removal and the scheme has been carefully designed to sit sensitively around the existing trees on site.

- compatibility with the general building height within the surrounding area;

The majority of the dwellings along The Warren are set on higher land closer to the road and there is a varied building height between different properties. Despite being raised to mitigate flooding issues, the eave height of the proposed dwelling is 44.56m AOD, compared to 44.45m AOD of the neighbouring dwelling to the east. This demonstrates that the proposed dwelling will be compatible with the general building height within the surrounding area.

- the materials and elevational detail. These should be high quality, and where appropriate distinctive and/ or complementary;

The elevation detail has been designed to be a high quality, traditional style. The materials have been chosen to reflect local architectural styles and therefore be complimentary to the character of the area.

- the arrangement of doors, windows and other principal architectural features and their rhythm between buildings.

There is no additional relationship of windows, doors or architectural features between the neighbouring buildings The proposed building has hip roofs, a chimney and brick plinths in order to provide it with traditional architectural features. The primary windows have been placed on the south elevation to benefit from the maximum advantage of solar gain and maximise natural light to the primary living



Character of the Area



- 2) ***The application site provides a site of adequate size and dimensions to accommodate the development proposed in terms of the setting and spacing around buildings, amenity space, landscaping and space for access roads and parking;***
The dwelling has been designed to sit comfortably within its setting given the size of the existing plot. The central part of the site is the widest part of the plot and the new dwelling is shown in this area. Ample space is provided around the building and the plot benefits from a large amount of amenity space running down to the river.
- 3) ***The proposal includes access, which meets appropriate highway standards;***
The existing access serving the site is not proposed to change.
- 4) ***The proposal does not lead to tandem development;***
The proposal is for a replacement dwelling and therefore does not lead to tandem development
- 5) ***The design and layout minimises exposure of existing private boundaries to public areas, and avoids the need for additional physical security measures;***
As discussed above, the setting back of the proposed house will minimize the exposure of the dwellinghouse to the public area along the river. There is no requirement for additional security measures.
- 6) ***The proposal does not cause a significant detrimental impact to the amenity of adjacent and nearby occupants;***
The site is screened from neighbouring dwellings by mature vegetation. The proposed house is 42.5m away from its nearest neighbour and therefore will not cause any detrimental impact to the amenity of adjacent or nearby occupants.
- 7) ***The emphasis is on the provision of family-sized housing.***
The proposal is seeking to demolish a 2-bed property and replace it with a 4-bedroom family home. It therefore accords with the Council's emphasis on the need for more family-sized housing.
- 8) ***The development provides biodiversity net gain wherever possible, and would not have an adverse impact on biodiversity in terms of the fragmentation of blocks of gardens, which as a unit or in association with adjacent green space are deemed to make an important contribution to biodiversity and contribute to the green network;***
The proposed development sits on the edge of an area of identified biodiversity interest but not within it. Accordingly, the designs allow for the provision of biodiversity net gain with additional tree and hedge planting, as well as bat and bird boxes, hedgehog domes and other habitat creation. The significant removal of concrete hardstanding will also contribute to green space within the site. In conclusion, this proposal needs to achieve a minimum of no net loss of habitat, as this is a self build project. However in this instance it can be seen as there are benefits in all three areas.
Total net % change : Habitat units 10.96% / Hedgerow units 163.47% □/ Watercourse units 47.06%
- 9) ***The proposal does not prejudice the satisfactory development of a wider area***
There is no wider area to develop so this policy is not relevant to this proposal.

Character and Appearance of the Area

The site is situated in the Thames Valley Major Landscape Feature area. Policy EN13 states that planning permission will not be granted for any development that would detract from the character or appearance of a Major Landscape Feature. The character of the area in this part of The Warren is of large detached properties, clearly visible from the river footpath, with gardens between them and the river edge (see example pictures on the following page).

The existing property at Warren Creek is an exception to this character, with the building fronting right up to the edge of the river. The proposed development therefore seeks to set the property further back in the plot, away from the river's edge, in order to reflect the prevailing character of the area. Accordingly, the new development layout has been designed to sensitively sit within its setting, while also benefitting from a contemporary architectural style in its design, scale and massing. The proposal therefore maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area and complies with Policy CC7.

The existing dwelling has a large frontage of windows in very close proximity to the river's edge. There is a considerable amount of light spillage directly onto the waterscape. The setting back of the dwelling within the site will significantly reduce the light pollution in such close proximity to the river.

Heritage Views

The application site is 1.5km from Caversham Court Gardens and will therefore have no impact on the setting of this heritage asset. The application therefore complies with Policy EN1 - Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment.

Pre-application advice from the Council's officers states that the application site is within two viewing corridors highlighted within Policy EN5 - Protection of Significant Views with Heritage Interest. The pictures on the following page demonstrate those views and clearly show that the application site is either not visible or is completely screened by mature vegetation. The proposed development will therefore not harm the historical significance of these views.



View from MacIlroy Park

Application site is screened by mature vegetation



View from Caversham Bridge

Application site cannot be seen as the river meanders upstream

7. POLICY ASSESSMENT CONTINUED

Waterscapes

Local Plan policy EN11 seeks to protect and enhance Reading's waterscapes to ensure that is no adverse impact on the functions and setting of any watercourse. The policy states that where development in the vicinity of watercourses is acceptable, it will comply with a number of criteria. This criteria is set out below and the proposals compliance with different points is discussed.

- ***Provide appropriate, attractive uses and buildings that enhance the relationship of buildings, spaces and routes to the watercourse, including through creating or enhancing views of the watercourse, and create a high quality public realm;***
The existing dwelling sits right on the river frontage and dominates views into the site from the river and footpath to the south. The proposed development seeks to soften the relationship between the river and the built form by relocating the dwelling 30m to the north, within the central part of the site. This will significantly enhance the relationship by giving the river and river bank prominence in views along the river, which will now benefit from a reduced amount of built form on the river's edge.
- ***Make positive contributions to the distinct character, appearance, historic significance, landscape and amenity of the watercourses;***
As discussed above, by setting the proposed dwelling back 30m from the river frontage, the proposal makes a significant contribution to the distinct character and appearance of the watercourse.
- ***Provide a strengthened role for watercourses as important landscape features, wildlife corridors, historic features and recreation opportunities;***
The watercourse now has a strengthened role as an important landscape feature due to the removal of built form from the frontage. This proposal will also enhance the role of the watercourse as a wildlife corridor, as additional habitats can be created on the river bank.
- ***Wherever practical and consistent with its biodiversity role, provide good, level access to and along the waterside for all those who want to use it;***
Once the dwelling is demolished, a new river frontage will focus on habitat creation, but will also provide access to the river for the occupants of the new dwelling to partake in recreational opportunities.
- ***Be set at least ten metres back from the watercourse wherever practicable and appropriate to protect its biodiversity significance;***
The proposed dwelling is now set 30m back from the watercourse.
- ***Improve the quality of watercourse environment through protecting and enhancing habitats and ensuring that habitat creation is balanced with access and urban uses;***
As discussed, the proposal seeks to balance the provision of new habitats on the river frontage with access to the river for recreational opportunities

7. POLICY ASSESSMENT CONTINUED

Flooding

Policy EN18 Flooding and Sustainable Drainage Systems requires developments to be directed to areas at lowest risk of flooding, while also acknowledging that where development in flood areas is necessary, it will not reduce the capacity of the flood plain to store floodwater, impede the flow of floodwater or in any way increase the risks to life and property arising from flooding.

The site is situated within Flood Zone 3 - the 1% AEP flood extent with allowance for climate change. The finished floor levels of the development are proposed at 300mm higher than the modelled flood level for the 1 in 100 year plus 35% flood event. Furthermore, even though the built footprint of the proposed development including the garage is 205m², it will be built on stilts with a large floodable voids designed not to get blocked, silt up or be used as storage. This will significantly decrease the amount of built footprint within the floodplain.

By removing the existing buildings from the flood plain, the development will provide a significant net gain in the capacity of the flood plain, the flow of floodwater on the site and the safety of residents. It therefore complies with the requirements of Policy EN18. The development will be safe for its lifetime and provides significant betterment compared to the location of the existing dwelling.

The Flood Risk Assessment submitted with the application concludes that the mitigation and resilience measures proposed for fluvial flooding will be sufficient to deal with surface water flooding. The surface water run off produced as a result of the development will be dealt with through the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems.

Sequential Test

The National Planning Policy Framework December 2023 Section 165 says “inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk”

This proposal is a redevelopment and not a new development. It doesn't create any additional new dwelling, it doesn't degrade the water flow, it doesn't decrease the flood zone and it doesn't introduce new risks. In fact, the design improves the floodplain volume, improves the flood-flow and decreases the risk to safety.

The plot currently houses a non-optimal home that degrades the floodplain with a house that has legitimacy to remain indefinitely with permitted development rights to extend and adapt. The current non-optimal factors include reduction of the floodplain, interference with the flow of water, high risk of the need to evacuate and no evacuation safety arrangements... not to mention ecological enhancements to the green corridor adjacent to the riverbank.

This is not a greenfield application to develop in Flood zone 3 where no previous development exists. Preventing the replacement of a dwelling can never result in the home being demolished. Preventing replacement of the dwelling will knowingly prevent multiple flood zone improvements being put in place on a brownfield site.

The following describes how the proposal will create an improved situation...

- The permeable floodplain area would increase from 1533m sq to 1777m sq (excluding the area under the replacement dwelling which if well managed would further increase permeability).
- The volume of the floodplain would increase, subject to agreement that the area under the house can work as an effective void. The owners have already indicated they are ready to accept design optimisation to minimise voids getting blocked and eliminate silt build up, the owners are happy to accept terms that prevent the void becoming storage and the owners are ready to accept an ongoing inspection & remediation program
- The particularly acute flood plain interference created by the lack of openings in the current house plinth and proximity to the river would be fully removed and replaced by a structure that has minimal flow disruption and would be repositioned 25m further back from the river's edge
- The home would be built to recommended levels to prevent the need for flood evacuation.
- The home would have a tried and tested exit method should people need to leave the home during a flood period.

The proposal will fully remove the current dwelling and replace it with a single dwelling.

We would request that the review of this application recognizes this is a redevelopment and not a new development increasing floodplain living. It offers improvements to floodplain optimisation and safety. A sequential test would knowingly attempt to block the proposed improvements in all 5 key areas... floodplain volume, floodplain flow, floodplain permeability, safety and rights to improve what currently exists. The proposed surface water run off produced as a result of this replacement dwelling will also be dealt with through the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems, and therefore reduce the peak flow rate of surface water run off leaving the site, therefore not only reducing flood risk at the site further, but reducing flood risk elsewhere.

Considering the Exception Test, The National Planning Policy Framework December 2023 Section 170 says 2 criteria must be met...

- “sustainability benefits to the community that outweigh the flood risk”, in this case through better flow, a larger floodplain, easy walking and cycling distance to Caversham centre, easy walking distance to Reading station and all required infrastructure services already in place
- “development [that] will be safe for its lifetime taking account of the vulnerability of its users, without increasing flood risk elsewhere, and, where possible, will reduce flood risk overall” in this case through build levels, increased floodplain and improved emergency exit.

From the data above, both of these can be demonstrated.

Furthermore, the main reason for this re-development at the site for a new dwelling to replace the existing dwelling, is that the clients are aware that obtaining buildings and contents insurance for their current dwelling is problematic, in fact just recently Nationwide Building Society have declared that they will stop granting mortgages for dwellings in high flood risk areas, and some building societies have stated that they will only provide mortgages for homes where home insurance is in place. Therefore, this coupled with the major concerns over the safety of the occupants of the existing dwelling, are the main reasons why the client is applying for planning permission to build this new dwelling. The new dwelling will be raised on stilts with the accommodation above the modelled flood level, including an allowance for climate change, therefore requiring no evacuation during an extreme flooding event, and providing safe access and no need for the occupants to leave their homes for long periods of time whilst flood damage is repaired.

We appreciate the stance on new developments in flood risk areas. However when an existing home does not provide flood safety for the occupants and would require complex and risky evacuation of the residents in times of flooding, it genuinely makes no sense for this permission not to be granted on the grounds of flood risk.



January 2024 where the water reached 80cms up the house (20cms higher than shown in this picture)

7. POLICY ASSESSMENT CONTINUED

Impact on Neighbouring Amenity

As the new dwelling is set further back from the river, it is now closer to the neighbouring dwellings Waimarie and Creek House. Despite this, the proposed dwelling is still over 40m from each property, while existing mature vegetation already screens views between the application site and both neighbouring properties. As such, there will be no impact on neighbouring amenity from the proposed development.

Ecology

Policy EN12 Biodiversity and the Green Network requires that permission not be granted for development that negatively affects sites with identified biodiversity interest. It requires new development to consolidate the Green Network. The second tranche of the policy also requires development to demonstrate biodiversity net gain and enhancements.

The site is bounded to the north and south by a designated area of identified biodiversity interest, however the site itself is not designated. The applicant has undertaken a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Roost Assessment which has concluded that no priority habitats are impacted by the proposal. The PRA showed no evidence of roosting bats. The final report will be added to the submission shortly. A net gain in biodiversity can be achieved through the provision of bird and bat boxes, as well as reptile log piles and hedgehog domes. Subject to the results of the roost survey, the proposal will comply with Policy EN12.

Trees

No trees are proposed for removal within the application and all new built form is proposed outside of existing tree root protection areas. Existing trees and vegetation on the site boundaries will be retained and enhanced.

7. POLICY ASSESSMENT CONTINUED

Energy

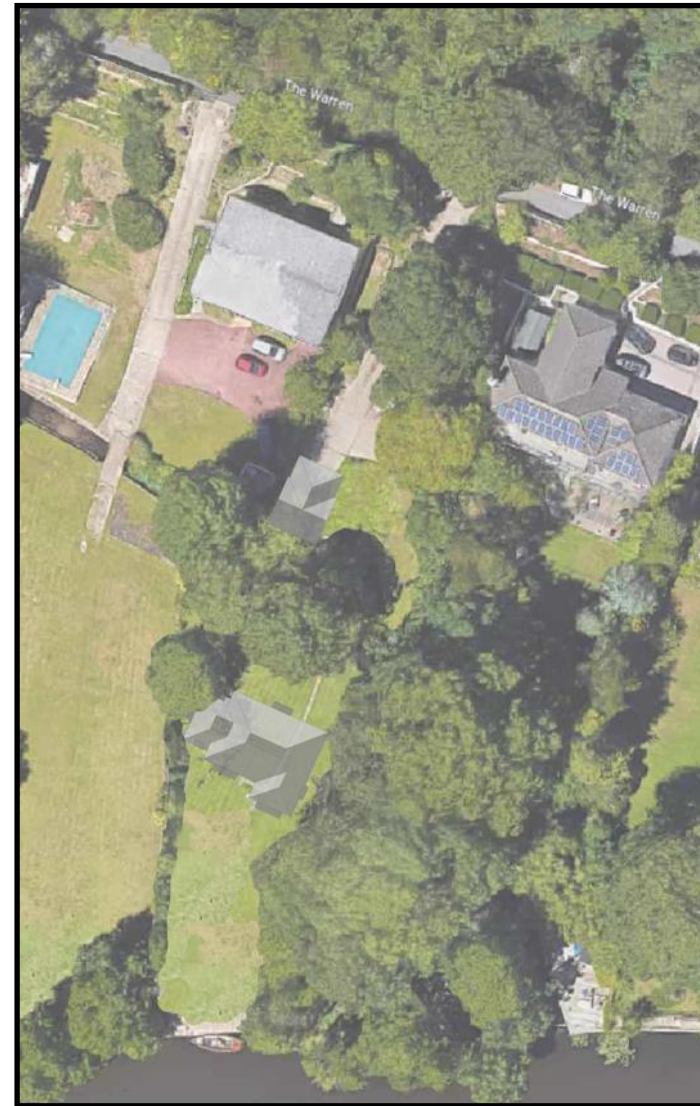
The proposed development will incorporate a renewable Air Source Heat Pump system to meet it's heating requirements. It will also benefit from an improved building fabric construction with low u-values to increase it's sustainability.

The Energy Statement submitted with this application finds that the proposed development will achieve a 58% improvement in the dwelling emission rate over the target emission rate, as defined in the 2013 Building Regulations. This is well in advance of the minimum 19% requirement in the Local Plan. The proposal therefore complies with policies CC2 and H5.

Standards for New Housing

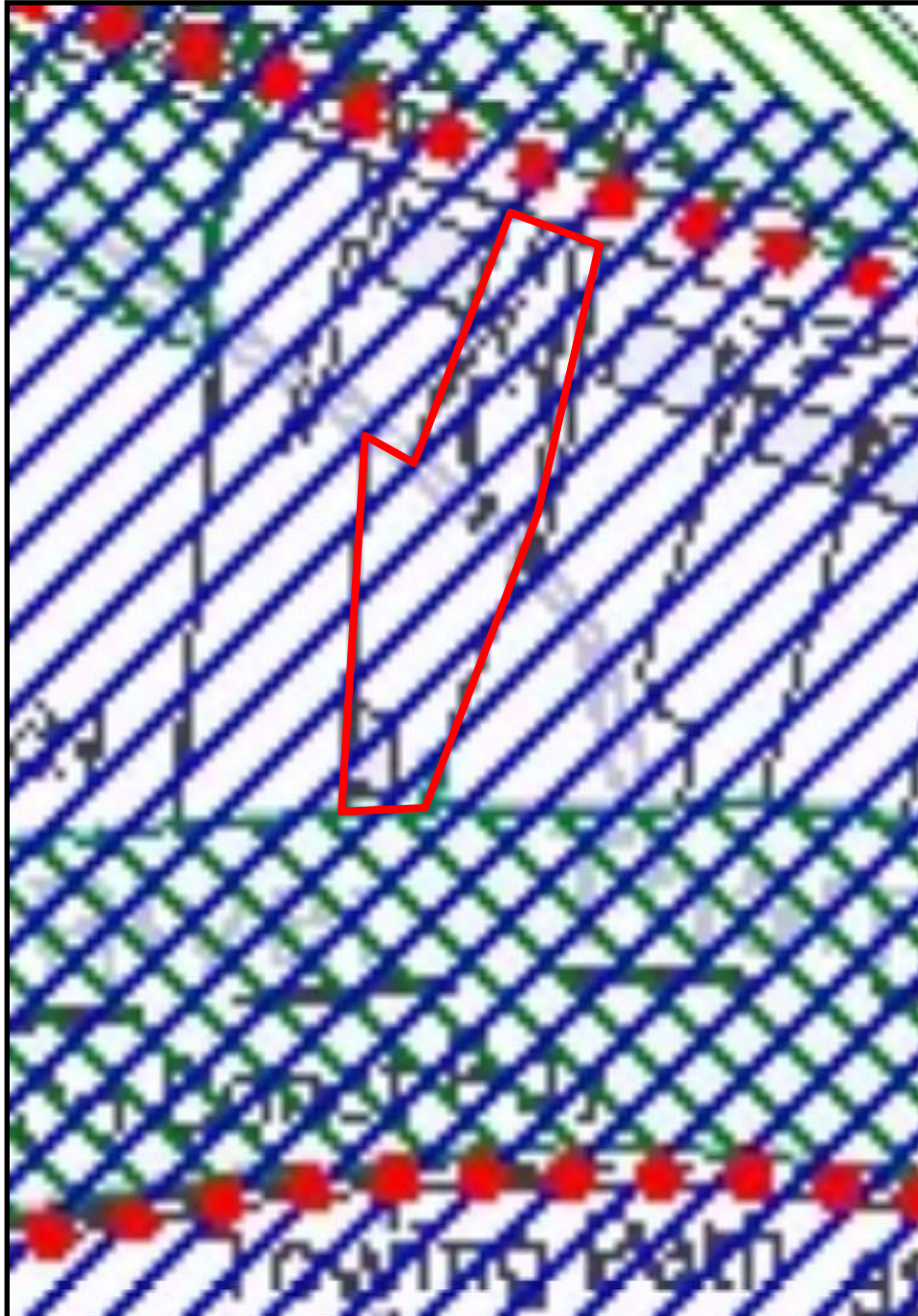
Local Plan policy H5 sets out that new build housing should be built to certain standards, which are set out via six criteria.

- a. From a space perspective, the proposal is far in excess of the proposed minimum 97sq m size for a 4 bed house for 5 people and therefore complies with H5a.
- b. Paragraph 4.5 of the accompanying Energy Statement submitted with the application sets out how the proposal will comply with Regulation 36(3) of the Building Regulations.
- c. As a single dwelling the proposal isn't subject to H5c, but nonetheless the applicant is looking to achieve zero carbon status.
- d. The Energy Statement finds that the proposed development will achieve a 58% improvement in the dwelling emission rate over the target emission rate, as defined in the 2013 Building Regulations. This is well in advance of the minimum 19% requirement in the Local Plan. The proposal therefore complies with policies CC2 and H5d.
- e. To comply with flood regulations there is a need to have the house raised and access by steps. The design does however support the future installation of a mechanical platform or ramp to both the left of right of the front door in line with H5e
- f. This proposal is a single dwelling and not subject to H5f which addresses developments of over 20 dwellings.



Aerial comparison between existing and proposed development

Extract from Local
Plan Proposals Map



8 CONCLUSION

This Planning, Design and Access Statement supports a full application for the demolition of an existing dwelling and outbuildings, and the erection of one 4-bed detached dwelling and garage at Warren Creek, The Warren, Reading, RG4 7TQ.

It is concluded the site can be developed as proposed without adverse impacts to the character of the area and amenity of neighbouring land, while the development will provide flood betterment and will be safe for it's lifetime.

The proposal is compliant with the relevant local and national policy and has been designed to reflect the prevailing character of the area.

Accordingly, the applicant requests the Local Planning Authority grant planning permission at their earliest convenience.

