

DELEGATED REPORT

Application No. 231854/HOU

Site Address: 87 Balmore Drive, Caversham, Reading

Proposal: Part single, part double storey Side extension

Target Date: Originally 07/03/24; Extension of Time agreed until 28/03/24

Site Description

The application site sits within Balmore Drive, a private residential road. The road is characterised by pairs of semi-detached 1930s properties of uniform design. Properties have a front bay window at ground and first floor level and are primarily finished in red-brick, although some do have pebbledash/ render at first floor level. Street trees line both sides of the road.

No. 87 is situated towards the top of Balmore Drive, near the junction with Peppard Road and is no different in terms of design to other properties on the road. However, the application site benefits from a wider plot than neighbouring properties in the immediate vicinity (although not as large in terms of depth). Due to this additional width, the site accommodates a detached double garage to the east.

The property is not listed, nor in a conservation area.

Proposal

The proposal comprises of a two-storey side extension and single storey rear extension following demolition of existing garage.

Materials would match those of the host property.

Revised plans were requested during the course of the applications amending the depth of the single storey element, to minimise the impact on No.88 Balmore Drive.

Documents Submitted

Proposed Elevations 3915/204 Rev E

Received 25th March 2024

Proposed Block Plan 3915/200 Rev C

Proposed Site Plan 3915/205 Rev C

Received 13th March 2024

Proposed Roof Plan 3915/203 Rev D

Proposed Elevations 3915/204 Rev D

Proposed Ground Floor Plan 3915/201 Rev D

Proposed First Floor Plan 3915/202 Rev D

Received 13th March 2024

Location Plan

Existing Ground Floor Plan 3915/101

Existing First Floor Plans 3915/102

Existing Roof Plans 3915/103

Existing Elevations 3915/104

Existing Block Plan

Received 4th January 2024

Relevant Planning History

210230/HOU - Erection of a two storey side extension and single storey rear extension (amended) - Permitted

200915 - Demolition of existing garage and erection of proposed new dwellinghouse and associated works - Application Withdrawn

020105 - Loft conversion with side dormer - Application Permitted

010739 - Loft conversion with side dormer - Application Refused

Consultations

Internal Consultees

None.

Public Consultation

Nearby neighbouring properties were consulted by letter and a site notice was displayed.

4 neighbour letters of representation received (2 from same property) raising the following:

- Too big, overdevelopment, disproportionate and overbearing
- Out of keeping with character of area
- Overshadowing, loss of light
- Loss of privacy
- Loss of green garden space
- Impact on environment/trees
- Potential subdivision
- Impact on parking and highway safety

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.

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

National Planning Policy Framework 2023

National Planning Practice Guidance 2014

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC7: Design and the Public Realm

CC8: Safeguarding Amenity

H9: House Extensions and Ancillary Accommodation

H10: Private and Communal Outdoor Space

TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters

TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging

EN6: New Development in a Historic Context

EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network

EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodland

Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents

Design Guide to House Extensions (2021)

Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011)

Appraisal

Design Considerations

Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) states: All development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located.

Policy H9 (House Extensions and Ancillary Accommodation): Extensions must respect the character and appearance of the house in terms of scale, location, materials. The design should also respect the character and pattern of neighbouring properties and appearance of the street as a whole in terms of scale, location, materials and design, the arrangement of doors, windows and other principal architectural features and any important existing building line.

The prevailing character of Balmore Drive is pairs of 1930s semi-detached dwellings with separate access and driveways. The road has several curves, but of the whole, the road is has a regular rhythm and pattern in terms of positioning and design of properties. It is noted that some properties within the Drive have been extended both at single and two storey.

Concern has been raised during neighbour representation that the proposals would be disproportionate and overbearing in scale and would result in overdevelopment of the site.

The proposed increase in footprint would not be discernably different to that approved under application 210230. The design of the proposals is also considered to integrate better with the host property - and be more in keeping with the surrounding area - than that approved under application 210230 which was more contemporary in appearance when viewed from the rear. The extensions would remain subservient to the host property and whilst would unbalance the pair of semis, this is already the case and not considered to be unacceptable over and above that approved under application 210230. Properties on Balmore Drive have been extended to the side at both single and two storey level. As such, it is not considered the presence of the extension would disrupt the overall street scene or appear an addition substantially out of keeping with surroundings to a degree that would warrant refusal of the application. It is considered that the plot can accommodate the proposals without resulting in a cramped or overdeveloped appearance. It is considered that an acceptable level of amenity space would be retained.

The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in relation to Policies H9 and CC7.

Impact on Neighbouring Amenity

Policy H9 (House Extensions and Ancillary Accommodation) states that an extension will be acceptable where it does not result in an overbearing impact on neighbours. Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) states an extension to a house will be acceptable where it will not cause a significant detrimental impact to the living environment of existing or new residential properties.

The neighbouring properties potentially most affected by the development are Nos. 86 and 88 Balmore Drive to the west and east of the site respectively.

No. 86 Balmore Drive

In relation to No. 86, given the positioning of the proposals on the east of the site and distance to the common boundary with No.86, no overbearing effects or loss of privacy will arise.

No. 88 Balmore Drive

No. 88 Balmore Drive is set at an angle to the application site and due to change in site levels is set lower than No.88.

Concern has been raised by the occupiers of No.88 that the proposals would result in loss of light, privacy and would be overbearing.

As part of the proposal, the existing flat roof garage would be replaced with a single storey side extension. Whilst clearly visible to the occupiers of No.88, it would be offset from the common boundary (a greater gap than existing) and the roof would be hipped away to minimize the impact. The two storey element is considered of suitable distance away from the boundary. The proposals are not considered to be so visually dominant to

result in any significant material overbearing effects over and above the existing situation or that approved under application 210230 to warrant a refusal.

No first floor windows are proposed on the side elevation facing No.88 and a condition will be included preventing windows being installed on the side elevation facing No.88 in the interests of privacy. The rooflight is not considered to result in substantial views to No.88 due to its position in the roof slope.

At ground floor level, the garage door would face onto the neighbouring site, although would be screened by the boundary fence. Furthermore, these are not habitable spaces and so even if the boundary treatment not in place, it would not be considered to result in a substantial loss of privacy.

85 Balmore Drive

Concern has been raised by the occupiers of No.85 Balmore Drive that the proposals would result in a loss of privacy and loss of light.

Given the position of the proposals on the east side of No.87 Balmore Drive and the distance to the common boundary with No.85, no material overbearing effects are considered to arise. Similarly, whilst the proposed first floor window would have an obscure view towards the end of No 85's garden, this would be no different to the current first floor windows and no material loss of privacy over and above the existing situation is considered to arise.

No. 47 Peppard Road

Concern has been raised by occupiers of No.47 Peppard Road that the proposals would be visually intrusive and would result in a loss of light, privacy and amenity of their back garden.

Given the significant distance between No.87 Balmore Drive and 47 Peppard Road (with No.88 Balmore Drive positioned between the two properties) no overbearing effects will arise. Similarly, given the distance, combined with proposed windows facing down the applicant's garden, any views towards No.47 would be at an oblique angle and no material loss of privacy would arise.

A condition is proposed to be attached to remove permitted development rights in respect of alterations/enlargements and roof additions. This is to protect neighbouring amenity through additional alterations in this respect.

As such the proposal is considered acceptable in relation to neighbouring amenity, in accordance with Policy CC8.

Impact on Parking/Highways

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

There is sufficient space for the driveway and garage to accommodate two vehicles. The existing garage is also to be retained for parking, and this will be secured via condition. Therefore, there are no transport objections subject to condition ensuring vehicle parking is as specified on the block plan. In accordance with Policy TR3.

Natural Environment and Ecology

Natural Environment - Trees and landscaping

Policy EN14 (Trees, Hedges & Woodland) seeks to extend the Borough's vegetation cover and that development should make provision for tree planting, whilst Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) seeks proposal should include appropriate landscaping.

Whilst not consulted on this application, the Natural Environment officer raised concern over the proposals under application 210230:

- Plans do not show the relocation of the Wisteria plant
- An existing apple tree is to be removed from the rear garden without surveys being carried out
- Replacement trees are to be provided in the rear garden but would encourage one in the rear garden
- Concrete hardstanding driveway replacement with a permeable SUDs driveway are within falling distance to a number of trees growing at no. 88 on the boundary. It is likely that re-surfacing works will affect their Root Protection Areas. An arboricultural impact assessment and method statement might be necessary to demonstrate lack of harm to said trees
- Overall, tree information is not clearly provided; it is unclear what trees are to be removed, what trees will be planted. Lack of harm to existing trees - on or off site - has not been demonstrated

Further to the above, however, it is noted that it was subsequently considered unreasonable to require the applicant to submit tree surveys and assessments for trees that could be removed at any time:

“Whilst mindful of the Natural Environment Officer’s comments, Planning Officers have to take into consideration what, of the above, could be carried out outside of the planning process and any requests be proportionate to the size of the scheme. The application has been submitted as a householder development and relates to a single residential dwelling. Vegetation can be planted and removed at any time outside of the planning process as it is not protected by way of a preservation order. As such, it is not considered reasonable to require the applicant to submit tree surveys and assessments for the trees that could be removed at any time.”

As part of 210230, plans illustrated indicative locations for replacement planting which was positive. This application does not show tree planting; however, further to discussion with the applicant, a landscaping condition is proposed to be attached to secure replacement planting.

As such, given the size and nature of the proposal, and the status of the existing trees on site, the proposal is considered acceptable in relation to Policy EN14.

Ecology

Policy EN12 (Biodiversity and The Green Network) requires that new development should provide a net gain for biodiversity where possible and should incorporate biodiversity features into proposals where practical.

No objection was raised on ecology grounds under application 210230. However, an updated bat survey report was submitted as part of this application. This concludes that no bats were seen emerging from or enter the building. There are therefore no objections to this application on ecology grounds.

With regard to wider environmental considerations (raised in the neighbour comments), the loss of open space between the dwelling and garage, whilst open in nature, would not be considered to result in a substantial level of impact for the environment or habitats. A good-sized rear and front garden will remain, and furthermore the Ecologist had not suggested this piece of land of vital ecological/ environmental importance to prevent development. Landscaping and replacement planting will be provided to enhance the site and potentially biodiversity which is positive.

As such, the proposal is considered acceptable in relation to Policy EN12.

Other Matters Raised in Representation

All material considerations have been considered in the above appraisal.

Concern has been raised that the proposal would allow for subdivision to form multiple occupancy or trading and suggestion of condition to prevent this has been made. There is no indication that the property should sub-let or used as an HMO based on the plans before the LPA today. Deviation from the plans would be a breach, and planning permission would be required to divide the property into two. Therefore, a condition is not considered necessary - or reasonable - to prevent sub-letting.

With regards to the use of the property as a HMO, again there is no indication this would be the case however neighbours have been concerned over future use of the site. Balmore Drive is not placed within an Article 4 direction preventing the change of use of family dwellings to HMOs being carried out under Permitted Development (ie not requiring planning permission). In theory, any property on Balmore Drive could change to a small HMO (max 6 occupiers) without planning permission. When attaching planning conditions, the LPA has to be mindful of the tests that are required to be met as outlined in the NPPG. Conditions must be:

1. necessary;
2. relevant to planning;
3. relevant to the development to be permitted; - *Officers have concern that a condition restricting the property's Permitted Development rights to convert to a small HMO would fail this test. The LPA have no evidence the property would be used as a HMO; it would only be speculative. As such, it is not relevant based on the set of plans before the LPA*

today. If there had been a feature on the plans that would have suggested the intention could be for a HMO, it may have been relevant and more reasonable to attach a condition.

4.enforceable;

5. precise; and

6. reasonable in all other respects

As such, the LPA do not consider a condition preventing the property converting to a HMO would meet all of the 6 tests. It is not the default position or practice to assume large house extensions will result in a HMO use without evidence.

CONCLUSION

The proposed development has been assessed as set out above and is considered to be acceptable.

RECOMMENDATION:

GRANT