

DELEGATED PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Caversham Heights

App Ref: 231590/FUL

Address: 2 Conisboro Way, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7HT

Proposals: Demolition of existing dwelling house and construction of replacement dwelling house.

Case Officer: Marcie Rejwerska

**Date received (valid from): 8 November 2023
(ext.)**

Target Decision date: 29 March 2024

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site comprises a detached bungalow on the north side of Conisboro Way in Caversham. The existing bungalow is and has been vacant for a period of time. The site comprises a number of mature trees, including three protected by TPO. Conisboro Way is a private gravelled road accessed from Geoffreyson Road. A private access drive runs along the western boundary of the site. The surrounding area is residential, characterised by detached and semi-detached dwellings in similar character, with the exception of no. 1 Conisboro Way which is a white render bungalow in similar character to that present on the application site. The application site is not listed nor in a conservation area.



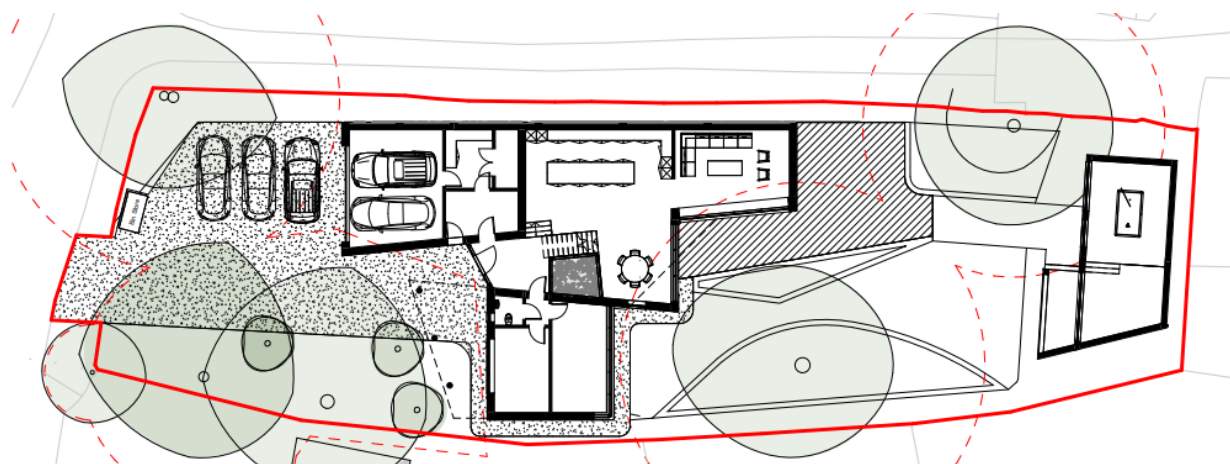
Application site location, image taken from Google Maps in 2023. It is noted that vegetation as seen on Google Maps does not reflect the extensive clearance which has taken place on site at the time of this application.

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Planning permission is sought for demolition of the existing bungalow and replacement with a 4-bedroom, two-storey property and ancillary annexe at the rear of the plot. The replacement dwelling would be set back from the road to accommodate a new driveway. The

proposal includes an integrated double garage. The property is divided into two 'wings' - westerly and easterly. The easterly wing has a first floor front elevation balcony which overhangs the ground floor, measuring over 10m in depth from the longest point of the balcony to the rear. The easterly wing is set back approx. 1.3m away from the side boundary. The westerly wing is set back approx. 1.1m and measures a total 25m in depth with a 6.6m deep single storey element at the rear. The central element of the property contains the hallway and dining room, with a void above on the first floor.

The proposed annexe at the rear would measure approx. 41m² with a front porch to obscure the entrance from view of the neighbouring properties. The annexe is set back 0.99m from the rear boundary and approx. 2m from either side boundary.



Proposed site plan

Plans considered:

Biodiversity Impact Calculation, The Ecology Co-op, dated 28th March 2024, received 16 April 2024

Biodiversity Net Calculations, received 24 April 2024

Bat Emergence Surveys, The Ecology Partnership, dated August 2022, received 8 November 2023

Bat Scoping Report and Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, The Ecology Co-op, dated 26th July 2022, received 8 November 2023

BS:5837 Arboricultural Report, Duckworths Arboriculture, dated March 2024, received 5 March 2024

2 CONISBORO WAY TPP [PHASE 1] 06341 / 2024, received 5 March 2024

2 CONISBORO WAY TPP [PHASE 2] 06341 / 2024, received 5 March 2024

TREE PLAN 05849 / 2022 R1, received 5 March 2024

2202-2 Planning / Design & Access Statement, dated October 2023, received 8 November 2023

2202(11)000J - Proposed Site Plan, received 12 March 2024

2202(21)000J - Proposed Ground Floor General Arrangement Plan, received 12 March 2024

2202(21)001G - Proposed First Floor General Arrangement Plan, received 12 March 2024

2202(21)002A - Proposed Roof Plan, received 12 March 2024

2202(21)020G - Proposed Site Plan (Ground Floor Level), received 12 March 2024

2202(31)000F - Proposed Front Elevation (South), received 12 March 2024

2202(31)001F - Proposed Side Elevation (West), received 12 March 2024

2202(31)002F - Proposed Rear Elevation (North), received 12 March 2024

2202(31)003F - Proposed Side Elevation (East), received 12 March 2024

2202(81)100 - Front Perspective CGI, received 12 March 2024

2202(81)101 - Rear Perspective CGI, received 12 March 2024

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

230431 - Demolition of existing dwelling house and construction of replacement dwellinghouse - Application refused due to following reasons:

1. Excessive scale and footprint, prominent siting and long blank west façade, loss of landscaping and vegetation would result in a visually dominant, overdeveloped form of development with consequent harm to the character and appearance of the area.
2. Bedrooms 1 and 4 lack and acceptable level of access to natural light.
3. Proposed fenestration layout would lead to perceived overlooking to neighbouring dwellings.
4. No revised biodiversity net gain calculations.

4. CONSULTATIONS

Non-statutory:

RBC Transport - In accordance with the adopted SPD, a 3+ dwelling will require 2 x off road parking spaces. Proposed Site Plan 2202(21) 020 E illustrates 3 parking spaces located within the curtilage of the site and a double garage. In the Councils current Parking Standards and Design SPD, it is recommended that the internal dimensions for a double garage are 7000mm long x 5500mm wide, this is to allow easy access to/from each vehicle and sufficient storage to the rear to accommodate a bicycle. While the width conforms the length falls short of the standards. Spaces are provided with sufficient forecourt depths to allow for on-site turning, therefore dimensions of the garage can be accepted in this instance.

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.

The Council's Local Transport Plan 3 Strategy 2011 - 2026 includes policies for investing in new infrastructure to improve connections throughout and beyond Reading which include a network of publicly available Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points to encourage and enable low carbon or low energy travel choices for private and public transport. The Councils Local Plan was adopted in November 2019 and this includes a requirement at Policy TR5 for each new house to be provided with an electric charging point. The Design and Access Statement makes reference to the installation of an EV point; however, this has not been illustrated on a site plan. Revised plan required.

Plans indicate that a detached annexe is proposed in the rear garden, if the proposed annex were to be commercially let, the newly created annex would require parking for 1 car which should be independently accessible from those from the main dwelling, however the potential of a scenario for a commercial let dwelling can be controlled via the application of the appropriate condition.

A new pedestrian and vehicle access is proposed to serve the site located along the southern boundary. As previously advised in previous Transport comments for this site, the width of the access is excessive for the needs for a single dwelling and should be a maximum of 5m wide. Given the development is located at the end of a no through road, visibility splays are not required in this instance, however revised plans illustrating 5m vehicle cross over are required.

A minimum of 2 cycle storage spaces which should be in a conveniently located, lockable, covered store are required, in a development of this nature these can be located within a garage however given the size of the garage an alternative will need to be provided, a secure garden shed can be provided. Details and illustrations on revised plans will be required.

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. Given that it is unlikely that a refuse vehicle will enter the site, refuse storage and collection areas will need to be illustrated on plans that will allow for kerb side collection. Revised plans required.

The applicant should be made aware that this development will be subject to a Construction Management Statement.

RBC Natural Environment - No objections subject to condition to require compliance with the submitted Arboricultural Report/Method Statement.

RBC Environmental Health - The development lies within the 250 buffer zone of an historic land fill site which has the potential to have caused land gas. The proposal may introduce new pollutant linkages between contaminated land and sensitive receptors at the site as although there is already a dwelling house on the site, the new property may create an increased risk depending on its construction. The developer is responsible for ensuring that development is safe and suitable for use for the intended purpose or can be made so by remedial action.

Ecology - Application not supported based on demonstrated net loss as proposal could be reduced in size to mitigate further. BNG calculations appear to have been done incorrectly as individual trees have not been accounted for.

Reading Design Review Panel - Support for the proposed design of the proposal.

Public:

The following addresses were consulted by letter.

43 Hilltop Road, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire, RG4 7HR
45 Hilltop Road, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire, RG4 7HR
43 Carlton Road, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire, RG4 7NT
30 Carlton Road, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7NT
32 Carlton Road, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7NT
8 Calton Way
4 Conisboro Way, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire, RG4 7HT
5 Conisboro Way, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire, RG4 7HT
48 Geoffreyson Road, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7HS
39 Geoffreyson Road, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7HS
37 Geoffreyson Road, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7HS
36 Geoffreyson Road, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7HS
50 Geoffreyson Road, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire, RG4 7HS
43 Geoffreyson Road, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire, RG4 7HS
52 Geoffreyson Road, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7HS
38 Geoffreyson Road, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7HS
46 Geoffreyson Road, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7HS
40 Geoffreyson Road, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7HS

Letters of representation have been received as follows:

24 letters of objection (NB. Some letters received are revised comments from the same commenters). Concerns raised relating to:

- Overbearing scale and footprint of both the property and the annexe
- Biodiversity loss on site
- Encroachment onto the private access path at the rear of Geoffreyson Road to the west of the application site

- Overlooking and loss of privacy
- Poor response to local character

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

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

CC7: DESIGN AND THE PUBLIC REALM

CC8: SAFEGUARDING AMENITY

EN12: BIODIVERSITY AND THE GREEN NETWORK

EN14: TREES, HEDGES AND WOODLAND

EN16: POLLUTION AND WATER RESOURCES

H1: PROVISION OF HOUSING

H2: DENSITY AND MIX

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

SPG/SPD

Affordable Housing (2021)

Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)

Sustainable Design and Construction (2019)

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.

APPRAISAL

The main issues are considered to be:

l) Character and appearance

Policy CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 states that *“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. The various components of development form, including:

- *Layout: urban structure and urban grain;*
- *Landscape;*
- *Density and mix;*
- *Scale: height and massing; and*
- *Architectural detail and materials”*

The existing bungalow sits ‘quietly’ in its plot which is distinctly open and vegetated. It is acknowledged that there is scope for some enlargement to that dwelling, also that the plot has become somewhat overgrown in recent years. The footprint and internal layout of the property have been somewhat improved from the previous submission, however, the size of the proposed property creates further biodiversity issues which are discussed later in the report. It is still considered that the scale of the proposal erodes the character of the site and the surrounding area. The applicant has stated that the plot density will be similar to that of the surrounding plots, as the application site is larger than other residential plots in the area. While this is true, this has little bearing on the character and appearance of the site in relation to the surrounding area. The pattern of development of Conisboro Way and the surrounding residential roads is relatively uniform, and the proposal would result in a visually dominant and overdeveloped form of development.

While it has been noted that objections have been raised to the contemporary style of the dwelling, this is not considered harmful per se.

While the proposed style is not considered unacceptable, the scale is considered harmful and contrary to Policy CC7 of the RBLP and paragraphs 131, 135 and 136 of the NPPF.

II) Residential amenity

Policy CC8 states *“Development will not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties, in terms of:*

- *Privacy and overlooking;*
- *Access to sunlight and daylight;*
- *Visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development;*
- *Harm to outlook;*
- *Noise and disturbance;*
- *Artificial lighting;*
- *Vibration;*
- *Dust and fumes;*
- *Smell;*
- *Crime and safety;”*

Future occupiers

There are no identified concerns regarding amenity harm to future occupiers.

Neighbouring properties

A number of objections have been received with regards to amenity impact of the development on the neighbouring properties on all sides of the site. Although minimum distances between properties have been largely achieved, the slope of the ground and the presence of a two-storey gallery at the rear of the dwelling contribute to a perception of

being overlooked to the residents on Hilltop Road and Carlton Road and would be a distinct and harmful change from the existing situation.

The relationship with properties on Geoffreyson Road on the west side of the application site has been improved from the previous submission and there are no identified amenity impacts. The proposed balcony at the front of the property in the east wing is similarly not considered harmful either by way of overlooking or noise.

The scale of the annex has also been raised as potentially overbearing. Although large, the proposed annex has been amended to be smaller in scale and set off the neighbouring boundaries. Its presence, however, contributes to an overdevelopment of the site in the context of biodiversity net loss.

III) Natural environment

Trees

The Natural Environment team has supported the protection measures for the trees to be retained on site. The application site is part of a green corridor which cuts across Conisboro Way. The proposal reduces the verdant character of this area and is therefore considered harmful.

Ecology

While the proposal qualifies for compulsory BNG exemption as a small site, Policy EN12 of the Local Plan remains a material consideration, which requires no net loss on all development sites. The applicant has submitted revised biodiversity calculations to take into account pre-clearing which was carried out on site. None of the trees removed were protected and no permission was required to conduct the pre-clearing, however, in the context of the submission of this, and the previous, submission, this pre-clearing is required to be taken into account. The submitted calculations show an approx. 80% biodiversity net loss on site, with a loss regardless of whether the proposal is implemented due to the pre-clearance. The applicant has offered off-site compensation by way of legal agreement to compensate for this.

Policy EN12 outlines the hierarchy of action in relation to biodiversity net loss as follows:

In exceptional circumstances where the need for development clearly outweighs the need to protect the value of the site, and it is demonstrated that the impacts cannot be: 1) avoided; 2) mitigated or; 3) compensated for on-site; then new development will provide off-site compensation to ensure that there is “no net loss” of biodiversity. Provision of off-site compensation shall be calculated in accordance with nationally or locally recognised guidance and metrics. It should not replace existing alternative habitats, and should be provided prior to development.

The Council's Ecology consultants have identified that the applicant has not demonstrated that the net loss has been fully mitigated, for example through the removal of the annexe or the reduction in footprint of the proposed main house. Although this would not be expected, according to the data provided, to fully resolve the net loss it would improve the amount of net loss on site, and therefore reduce the harm. Without this being fully demonstrated, the applicant has not completely followed the hierarchy of actions and as such, off-site compensation is not accepted. The Council's Ecology consultant has also raised concerns that the BNG calculations have not been done correctly, particularly as trees have not been counted as individual units (as they should be due to their size).

The proposal is therefore contrary to Policy EN12 of the RBLP.

IV) Other matters

Other matters raised in objections received:

- The applicant has erected a timber fence which encroaches onto the adjacent access drive.
 - Encroachment is considered a civil matter.
- Impact of internal lighting in the gallery on the neighbour amenity and the environment.
 - There is no identified risk caused by internal lighting of the gallery, although it is noted that the proposed gallery could present a risk of overlooking.

Conclusion

While the replacement of a two-bedroom unit on this site to be replaced with a three-bedroom property would be beneficial to the housing mix of the area, the harm to the character of the area, the harm to the amenity of neighbours and the harm to the biodiversity of the site far outweigh this benefits, and the proposal is therefore recommended for refusal.

RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE

Due to the following reasons:

1. The proposed development by reason of its excessive scale, layout and plot coverage, would fail to maintain the existing spacious vegetated character of the site and surrounding area and would fail to allow sufficient space for replacement planting. As such the proposal would result in a visually dominant, overdeveloped form of development which fails to respond positively to its local context with consequent harm to the character and appearance of the area. Therefore the proposal is contrary to Policy CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and paragraphs 131, 135 and 136 of the NPPF 2023.
2. The proposed development by reason of its excessive scale, layout, and plot coverage together with insufficient landscaping would result in an unacceptable net loss in biodiversity within the site. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policy EN12 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and schedule 7A of the TCPA 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021).
3. The proposed fenestration to the rear of the proposed dwelling, by reason of its size, layout and elevated position, would result in a perception of overlooking and loss of privacy to neighbouring dwellings on Hilltop Road and Carlton Road with consequent harm to the amenity of occupiers of those dwellings. As such the proposal is contrary to Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.