

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Southcote

App Ref: PL/24/0579 Full planning permission

Address: 262 Southcote Lane, Reading, RG30 3BB

Proposal: Proposed 2 bedroom end terrace house.

Applicant: Mr Azad Asghar

Received date: 2024-05-02

Target Decision date: 2024-08-04

Case Officer: Marcelina Rejwerska

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is an end-terrace two-storey dwelling on the north side of Southcote Lane. The property is set back from the road and has a paved driveway to the side of the property. There is an existing single garage to the side of the house and an existing single storey side extension. The surrounding area is predominately residential, with properties in similar character. The application site is not listed nor in a Conservation Area.



Table 1 Aerial view of the application site in context. Image taken from Google Maps on 30/07/2024.

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Permission is sought for a detached dwelling to the side of the existing dwelling. This would require the removal of the existing garage and the existing side extension. The proposed dwelling would

have two bedrooms and a front porch similar to the existing dwelling. The revised plans have been amended from the initial design for an end-terrace dwelling.

Measurements:

GIA = 60.22m²

Rear garden = 29.4m²

Bedroom 1 = 5.69m²

Bedroom 2 – 12.67m²



2.1. Information submitted:

P1513-03A Proposed plans Elevations, received 19th July 2024

P1513-01A Location Plan, received 19th July 2024

Affordable Housing Statement, received 6th June 2024

P1513-01 Vegetation Diagram, received 6th June 2024

Priority Habitat Desk Assessment, received 20th May 2024

P1513-02 Existing Plans Elevations, received 2nd May 2024

Design and Access Statement, received 2nd May 2024

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

None.

4. CONSULTATIONS

The following were consulted:

RBC Transport Development Control:

The proposed layout fails to demonstrate that it complies with the Local Planning Authority's standards in respect of vehicle parking. This could result in on-street parking/reversing movements on Southcote Lane, adversely affecting road safety and the flow of traffic, and in conflict with local plan policies TR1 and TR3 of the Reading Local Plan 2019.

The proposed development would result in the increased use of a substandard access, which would have an adverse effect on road safety and the flow of traffic. This would be in conflict with local plan policies TR1, TR3 and TR5 of the Reading Local Plan 2019.

RBC Natural Environment: Insufficient information received regarding on and off-site vegetation, particularly as the proposed driveway appears to require removal of the existing hedgerow.

Ecology:

Google maps shows the area to be developed as entirely hardstanding with a small side extension and detached garage. As such, the development would not affect any on-site habitats and would not be subject to mandatory BNG. However, local policy EN12 states that: b) On all sites, development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity and geodiversity, and should provide a net gain for biodiversity wherever possible.

Development should:

- Protect and wherever possible enhance features of biodiversity interest on and adjacent to the application site, incorporating and integrating them into development proposals wherever practicable; and
- Provide new tree planting, wildlife friendly landscaping and ecological enhancements (such as wildlife ponds, bird and bat boxes) wherever practicable.

As such, should the application be approved, it would be recommended that a condition be set to ensure that enhancements for wildlife are provided (such as integrated bird and bat boxes and wildlife friendly planting). Alternatively, the applicant may wish to provide this information prior to determination of the application to negate the need for such a condition.

Public:

The following addresses were consulted by letter:

- 85 Virginia Way, Reading, RG30 3QR
- 81 Virginia Way, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 3QR
- 264 Southcote Lane, Reading, RG30 3BB
- 262 Southcote Lane, Reading, RG30 3BB
- 83 Virginia Way, Reading, RG30 3QR

No letters of representation have been received.

A site notice was displayed on site.

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'. However, the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making (NPPF paragraph 12).

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
H1: PROVISION OF HOUSING
H2: DENSITY AND MIX
H3: AFFORDABLE HOUSING
H5: STANDARDS FOR NEW HOUSING
H10: PRIVATE AND COMMUNAL OUTDOOR SPACE
H11: DEVELOPMENT OF PRIVATE RESIDENTIAL GARDENS
TR1: ACHIEVING THE TRANSPORT STRATEGY
TR3: ACCESS, TRAFFIC AND HIGHWAY-RELATED MATTERS
TR5: CAR AND CYCLE PARKING AND ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING

SPD

Affordable Housing (2021)
Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)
Planning Obligations Under S106 (2015)
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.

6. APPRAISAL

Land Use Matters

The NPPF (2023) states that LPAs should “encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value”. The NPPF definition of ‘previously developed land’ excludes private residential gardens in built up areas. Therefore, it is clear that the priority for development should be on previously developed land, in particular vacant and derelict sites and buildings.

Assessing the site as residential garden will be against Policy H11 (Development of Private Residential Gardens). This requires that new residential development that involves land within the curtilage of private residential gardens will be acceptable where: a) It makes a positive contribution to the character of the area; b) The site is of an adequate size to accommodate the development; c) The proposal has a suitable access; d) The proposal would not lead to tandem development; e) The design minimises the exposure of existing private boundaries to public areas; f) It does not cause detrimental impact on residential amenities; g) The emphasis is on the provision of family housing; h) There is no adverse impact on biodiversity, and i) The proposal does not prejudice the development of a wider area.

The proposed dwelling fails to meet the nationally described minimum space standards. The GIA of the proposed dwelling fails to meet the standard for a two-storey, two-bedroom dwelling. Both bedrooms also independently meet the standards due to their size and layout.

As set out further below, it has not been demonstrated that these criteria can be complied with and therefore the principle of a new dwelling on this site has not been demonstrated.

Character and design

The NPPF (Para 131) sets out that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. Policy CC7 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. 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 application site is on a prominent plot approaching a large roundabout, characterised by large front gardens and a generally spacious character. The introduction of a new dwelling on a relatively cramped new plot would be detrimental to the spacious character of the local area, and would fail to integrate into the urban grain of the street. A detached dwelling also fails to respond to the local character of semi-detached and terraced dwellings. While the height and massing are generally acceptable, the layout and resultant plot size would be uncharacteristic for both the existing and proposed dwellings.

Overall, the proposal is not considered acceptable in relation to Policy CC7.

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.”*

Furthermore, Policy H10 states: *“Dwellings will be provided with functional private or communal open space, including green space wherever possible, that allows for suitable sitting-out areas, children’s play areas, home food production, green waste composting, refuse storage, general outdoor storage and drying space.”*

The original plans submitted with the proposal posed a risk of overlooking from the first-floor rear elevation to the properties on Virginia Way due to an unacceptable back-to-back distance of under 20m. The proposal has since been amended to remove windows to habitable rooms from the rear elevation and this has resulted in an awkward and cramped arrangement of bedrooms which indicates that a two-storey dwelling at this plot is not acceptable and poses a number of residential amenity risks both to future occupiers and neighbouring residents.

The proposed rear garden measures considerably less than the GIA of the proposed dwelling resulting in an uncharacteristically small rear garden. The garden space is also fragmented to include a smaller side garden which is unlikely to enable the space to be effectively used. The small rear garden and reduced back-to-back distance indicate an overdevelopment of the plot, resulting in

further harm to the spacious character of the local area and appearing overbearing to neighbours who back onto the site.

Overall, the proposal is not considered acceptable in relation to Policies CC8 and H10.

Transport Matters

The site is situated within Zone 3, Secondary Core Area, of the Council's adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD and is located on the C406 Southcote Road, therefore, all proposals should comply with Reading Borough Council's Design Guidance for Residential Accesses on to Classified Roads to ensure that the safety and efficiency of the classified road network is maintained. In accordance with the adopted SPD, the development would require 2 onsite parking spaces as well as retaining existing provision for No 262. The submitted location and block plan illustrates the new dwelling would be provided with 1 onsite parking space served via the existing vehicle crossing.

In accordance with the Council's current adopted standards a 2-bedroom dwelling in Zone 3 would require 2 parking spaces (rounded up from 1.5). Proposed provision for the new dwelling falls below the Council's current adopted standards and therefore does not comply with Policy.

The proposed dwelling is to be accessed via the existing access, however, no information has been submitted alongside the application to detail how the existing parking spaces would be accessed. Given that parking associated with the proposed dwelling would block the existing access a further vehicle crossing point for the retained dwelling would be required. However, there is a traffic island located outside the property and therefore plans would be required illustrating the traffic island in relation to the dropped crossing.

Overall, insufficient information has been submitted to demonstrate acceptable off-road parking provision and access arrangements.

Biodiversity and Natural Environment

Policy EN12 states *"On all sites, development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity and geodiversity and should provide a net gain for biodiversity wherever possible."* The area to be developed is currently entirely hard standing with a small side extension and detached garage. As such, the development would not affect any on-site habitats and would not be subject to mandatory BNG. However, would the application have been recommended for approval, a condition would have been sought to secure biodiversity enhancements on site.

Policy EN14 is also relevant, and states *"Individual trees, groups of trees, hedges and woodlands will be protected from damage or removal where they are of importance, and Reading's vegetation cover will be extended."* A basic vegetation diagram has been submitted, however, no information has been provided to confirm whether the hedge on the north-western boundary is being removed or protected.

Overall, insufficient information has been provided to demonstrate how existing trees and hedges on site and nearby will be protected, contrary to Policy EN14. No landscaping principles have been demonstrated.

Affordable Housing

In accordance with Policy H3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan; *"Residential development will make appropriate contribution towards affordable housing to meet the needs of Reading: (...) on*

sites of 1 – 4 dwellings, a financial contribution will be made that will enable the equivalent of 10% of the housing to be provided as affordable housing elsewhere in the Borough.”

Given that planning permission is to be refused for other reasons a section 106 has not been drafted and therefore this would amount to an additional reason for refusal of the planning application.

7. CONCLUSION

The proposed development has been assessed as set out above and is considered to be unacceptable for the reasons set out below.

8. RECOMMENDATION

Refuse

Due to the following reasons:

1. The proposed dwelling due to its character, design and layout fails to positively respond to its local context and urban grain, resulting in overdevelopment of a cramped plot, contrary to Policies CC7 and H11 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and the NPPF (para 131 to 141) 2023.
2. The proposed dwelling due to its design and layout results in a poor internal layout which fails to meet national minimum space standards and an inadequate private outdoor amenity space as a result of overdevelopment of the plot. This is contrary to Policies CC8, H5 and H10 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard (2016).
3. The proposed development would result in the increased use of a substandard access, which would have an adverse effect on road safety and the flow of traffic. Insufficient off-road parking allocation would also increase pressure in the local area for parking on the highway. This would be in conflict with Policies TR1, TR3 and TR5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.
4. Insufficient information has been submitted with regards to on-site and off-site vegetation, resulting in potential harm particularly to the hedgerow on the western boundary. This is contrary to Policies EN12 and EN14 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.
5. In the absence of a completed legal agreement to secure an acceptable contribution towards the provision of affordable housing, the proposal fails to contribute adequately to the housing needs of Reading Borough. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies H3 and CC9 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and the Council's adopted Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document 2021.