

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward:

App Ref: PL/24/0518 Full planning permission

Address: 95 Northumberland Avenue Reading RG2 7PT

Proposal: Part-retrospective application for the change of use of a single C3 dwellinghouse to three C3 flats (1 x 3-bed, 2 x 1-bed), with a two-storey side extension, and single storey upward flat roof extension including associated works.

Applicant: Mr Hargun

Received date: 22 April 2024

Target Decision date: 4 September 2024

Case Officer: Anthony Scholes

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is a two-storey detached property on the eastern side of Northumberland Avenue. The works as proposed had been partially completed at the time of a site visit. The two-storey side extension, single storey rear extension and upward flat roof extension were completed at the time of the visit, and the internal works are required to be finalised. The site is fairly flat, and has been stated by the applicants agent to have lawful access from the rear to Morpeth Close.

Site visit date: 05/06/2024

Site visit photos:



2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The proposed development is a part-retrospective application to regularise the works that have already been completed, and include some changes to the above photos which are understood to have been completed prior to determination.

As such, the proposal includes:

- Retrospective permission for a two-storey side extension with a mansard roof;
- Retrospective permission for a flat roof upward extension to the property;
- Change of use from a single dwelling to three flat (C3 Dwellings) 1 x 3-bed, 2 x 1-bed

The proposed ground floor flat would be the three-bed flat, with access to 2 no. parking spaces to the rear, and the rear garden. The first and second floor flats are 1-bed, with no access to the rear, and one parking space to the frontage. There is unrestricted on street parking to the front of the site. Bin and cycle storage is proposed within the frontage.

It is noted that the plans provide inaccuracies in relation to the ridge of the original house which has since been removed. The proposal will be considered as an upward flat roof box extension, and not two dormers as purported by the applicant.

Plans considered

Location Plan

As received 22 April 2024

Drawing No. A-1005 'Existing Landscape' - Retrospective

Drawing No. A-1010 'Existing and Proposed Ground Floor Plan' - Retrospective

Drawing No. A-1012 'Existing and proposed First Floor Plan' - Retrospective

Drawing No. A-1014 'Existing and proposed Second Floor Plan' - Retrospective

Drawing No. A-1020 'Existing and Proposed Roof Plan' - Retrospective

Drawing No. A-1100 'Existing and Proposed Roof Plan' - Retrospective

Drawing No. A-1100 'Existing and Proposed Elevations' - Retrospective

Drawing No. A-1190 'Existing and Proposed Context Elevations' - Retrospective

Drawing No. A-1120 'Existing and Proposed Side Elevations'

As Received 13 June 2024

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

221180/HOU - Proposed ground, first floor side and rear extension. Approved 2/02/2023.

4. CONSULTATIONS

Public notification

No letters of representation have been received.

RBC Transport

This retrospective application consists of a change of use from a 4 bedroom single dwelling into:

- *1 x 3 bedroom unit*
- *2 x 1 bedroom unit.*

The site is located in Zone 2, Primary Core Area, of the Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD. This zone directly surrounds the Central Core Area and extends to walking distances of 2 kilometres from

the centre of Reading. Typically, this zone is well served by public transport, with buses continuing either into or out of the Central Core Area via this zone.

In accordance with the councils current Parking Standards and Design SPD the development would require 1 parking space for each 1 2 bedroom unit and 1.5 for the 3 bedroom unit. This would equate to a total of 4 parking spaces (rounded up from 3.5). Which would be an increase in the number the single dwelling would have required.

Originally submitted plans only illustrate 2 off road parking spaces on the front garden area served via an existing vehicle crossing. The proposed provision falls below the Councils current parking standards. Parking has also been illustrated on street.

Transport would not support an increase in on street parking in an area where there are currently no on street parking restrictions and would further increase competition for parking.

Images also identify steps into the property that have not been illustrated on plans. These steps would further restrict the amount of parking space available. Removal of the steps would require extensive regrading of the front drive. The existing access would also be required to be extended to facilitate the proposed parking lay out. The reduced parking provision would be worsened because of the widening of the access that would need to be provided, therefore further reducing on street parking availability.

In accordance with the Councils current parking standards each 1 and 2 bedroom unit Would require 0.5 cycle storage spaces and a 3 bedroom unit 1, therefore a total of 2 storage spaces would be required, these would need to be covered and secure utilising Sheffield type stands. Plans illustrate 2 cycle storage units located at the front of the site which would be deemed acceptable.

Bin storage area has been illustrated adjacent to the cycle storage area. It is assumed that the bins will be moved to the property boundary for collection. The Councils waste services team should be contacted to ensure the correct number and capacity of bins is provided for the proposed number of units.

Given that parking has is not being provided in accordance with the Councils current adopted standards, Transport would not support this application.

The revised plans show 3 parking spaces within the site, concerns remain from highways officers with the arrangement of the frontage given the slope of the site relative to the highway.

RBC Ecology

The application appears to be for the retrospective change of use of single dwellinghouse to three flats. As the application is retrospective (partly approved through PA 221180) there can be no objections to the application from an ecological point of view.

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.

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

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

CC5: Waste Minimisation and Storage

CC6: Accessibility and the Intensity of Development

CC7: Design and the Public Realm

CC8: Safeguarding Amenity

CC9: Securing Infrastructure

EN10: Access to Open Space

H1: Provision of Housing

H2: Density and Mix

H3: Affordable Housing

H5: Standards for New Housing

H7: Protecting the Existing Housing Stock

H8: Residential Conversions

H9: House Extensions and Ancillary Accommodation

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

Relevant Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) are:

Affordable Housing March 2021

Design Guide to House Extensions March 2021

Revised Parking Standards and Design October 2011

Residential Conversions March 2023

Planning Obligations Under Section 106 March 2023

Sustainable Design and Construction December 2019

1. APPRAISAL

The main matters to be considered are:

- **Design considerations and effect on character**
- **Principle of development**
- **Residential amenity**

- Landscaping
- Ecology
- Transport
- Other Matters
- S106

6. APPRAISAL

Design considerations and effect on character

NPPF Chapter 12. paragraph 135 states: *“Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:*

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*
- c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);*
- d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;*
- e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and*
- f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience”*

And, paragraph 139 states *“Development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design⁵⁵, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes. Conversely, significant weight should be given to: a) 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; and/or b) outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings”.*

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*

will be assessed to ensure that the development proposed makes a positive contribution to the following urban design objectives: -

- Character - a place with its own identity and sense of place*
- Continuity and enclosure*
- Quality of the public realm and provision of green infrastructure and landscaping*
- Ease of movement and permeability*
- Legibility - clear image and easy to understand*

- *Adaptability – capable of adaptation over time*
- *Diversity – meets a wide range of needs*

Policy H8 ‘Residential Conversions’ of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 states: *“Proposals to convert buildings into self-contained flats or for multiple occupation will be assessed against the impact on the amenity and character of the surrounding area, particularly in terms of intensification of activity, loss of privacy, loss of external amenity space, the provision and location of adequate on-site car parking and the treatment of bin storage areas and other related servicing. Proposals to convert properties into self-contained flats or for multiple occupation will only be acceptable where:*

- *The proposal respects the physical character of the area in terms of scale, location, materials and design, the arrangement of doors, windows and other principal architectural features;*
- *The proposal would not, either individually or cumulatively, unduly dilute or harm an existing mixed and sustainable community through the significant loss of single family housing;*
- *There are no unacceptable adverse impacts to residents of the scheme or surrounding properties arising from noise and disturbance in terms of the number and layout of units proposed and the proximity to other properties;*
- *There is no inappropriate stacking and location of rooms between units;*
- *Bin and cycle storage is of an appropriate size and standard for the units proposed and should be located at ground floor level with easy access; and*
- *The resulting property or properties would provide adequate internal floorspace and headroom for residents.”*

Policy H9 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 states: *“An extension to a house or other householder development will be acceptable where it:*

- *Respects the character and appearance of the house in terms of scale, location, materials and design;*
- *Respects 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;*
- *Does not present an overbearing impact on neighbours or a large blank façade to public areas; and*
- *Does not result in a loss of biodiversity within gardens. In addition to the above, ancillary accommodation, such as granny annexes, will be acceptable where it would not be capable of operating as a separate dwelling which could be let or sold separately.*

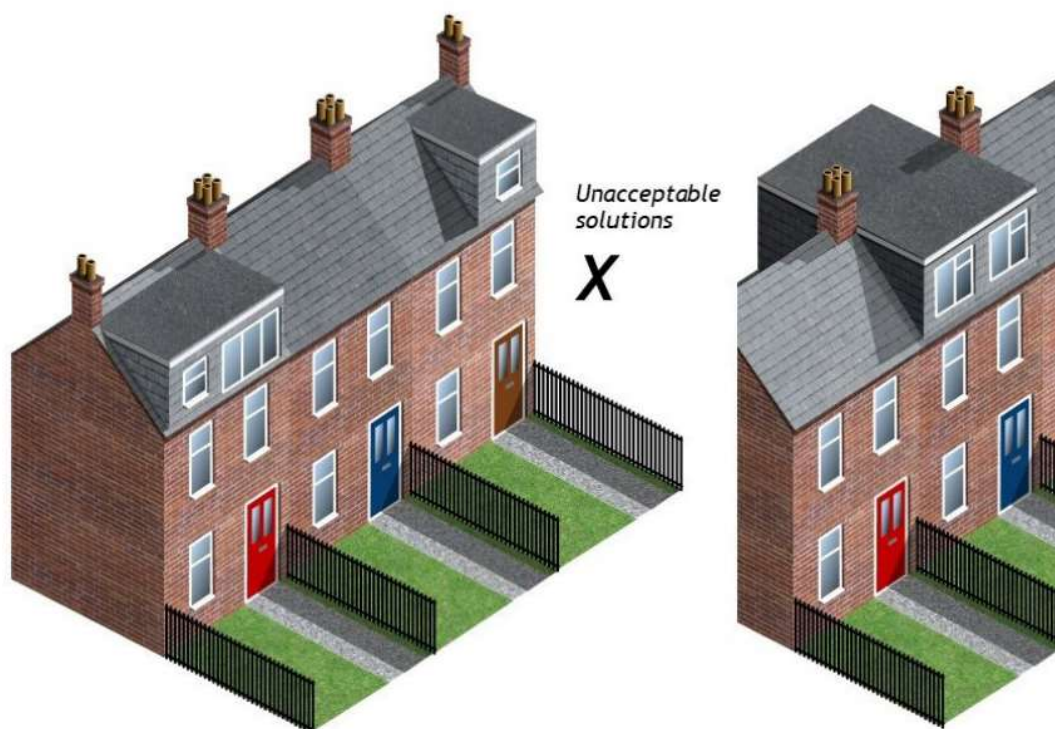
Design Guide to House extensions states:

“Where permission is required, dormer extension proposals need to demonstrate compliance with policies CC7: Design and the Public Realm, CC8: Safeguarding Amenity and H9: House Extensions and Ancillary Accommodation relating to the character of the original house and adjacent properties and the protection of privacy. Unfortunately, Reading has a few examples of box style dormers on the front of houses or dormers of excessive size which demonstrate how harmful this type of extension can be if not designed with these key criteria in mind.

7.3.3 Dormer windows should be set within the roof slope and be in proportion with the scale of the rest of the house in terms of overall size and window shape. Two appropriately designed small dormers may be better than one large dormer in achieving this. It is important that dormers and rooflights reflect the pattern of existing window openings by being positioned to line through vertically with the window openings below, whilst avoiding building to the edge of a neighbour’s roof to avoid party wall issues.

7.3.4 In some cases; flat roof dormers may be more appropriate than pitched roof dormers, if done in a way that is appropriate in terms of size and scale. One example where flat roof dormers could be considered appropriate is on a Georgian style house, or a bungalow with a high pitched roof. The key consideration is whether or not the flat roof dormer is appropriate in terms of size, scale, and selection of materials in relation to the existing dwelling and are not considered ‘box dormers’.

7.3.5 All dormer extension styles will be considered on a case by case basis in relation to the character and appearance of the existing dwelling and surrounding area. The conversion of existing roof space within a dwelling to living accommodation where light is obtained solely by the insertion of velux type roof lights does not normally require planning consent."



Upward Extension

The applicant is seeking retrospective planning permission for the additions to the roof of the original dwelling. The original roof, including the ridgeline has been removed from the dwelling. The front and rear gable end walls have been retained, though they now form more of a parapet wall feature. The upward extension as it will be considered in this assessment has been constructed as a new addition above the first floor.

The applicant and their agent have made reference to Permitted Development Rights, and a nearby similar application ref: 211012 at 219 Basingstoke Road. It is noted that the upward extension would not have been considered permitted development, by virtue of the fact that an upward extension, as constructed, would be required to proceed through a prior approval process with the LPA. In addition, where this dormers compared to an upward extension, the materials not matching the original dwelling, the removal of the chimneys, and the construction of the wall less than 0.2m from the original eaves would also fail to meet the requirements of such permitted development rights.

The design is that of a flat roof, linear board clad (in white cladding) structure above the first floor. By virtue of the roof form of the original dwelling, having a ridge line perpendicular to the highway, any roof addition would always be highly visible from the street. The development as constructed includes a box dormer style addition to the roof, which presents as vertical walls of poor quality, and incompatible materials to that of the host dwelling. This combined materiality, visual dominance, and incongruous form represent harm to the character of the host building, and to the wider area through its visual dominance and striking appearance. The upward extension as constructed is considered contrary to policy CC7, H8, and H9 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019, and Paragraphs 135, and 139 of the NPPF 2023.

Side and Rear Extension

The side extension, as constructed, and amended prior to determination of the application to include a mansard style roof, which reads from the front as a hipped roof structure is akin to that approved under the previous application (reference: 221180). The two-storey side extension includes a set-down roof, similar architectural detailing, and materials to the host dwelling. Though not setback, and higher than the originally approved, the side extension component is considered to be a subservient addition to the dwelling, and is acceptable.

The rear extension, is exactly as proposed and approved under application 221180. Though the internal layout differs, this could be considered partial implementation of that permission. Though its scale, form, and appearance is acceptable under relevant planning policies.

External Works

The proposal includes the addition of two parking spaces to the rear, a bin and bike store, and one parking space to the frontage. The long rear garden would remain for the ground floor 3-bed flat. Limited detail of the proposed access (dropped kerb), bin and cycle storage have been provided. Should approval have been recommended, details could be secured by condition.

Principle of development

The proposed development seeks to convert the existing dwelling to three self-contained flats. Policy H8 'Residential Conversions' as above includes the following: "*Additionally, in the case of conversions of houses to self-contained flats:*

- *The property to be converted measures more than 120 square metres gross;]*
- *At least 25% of the units formed and, where there are 4 or fewer units at least one unit of accommodation, should be suitable for family occupation with a minimum of two bedrooms."*

The development as proposed includes one 3-bed flat, and is greater than 120m². The provision of additional dwellings within an existing area contributes toward the Council's overall aim of providing housing to meet its targets. The principle of development is acceptable, subject to all other matters contained within this report.

Residential Amenity

Policy H9 states that an extension will be acceptable where it does not result in an overbearing impact on neighbours. Policy H10 seeks to ensure that the amenity of gardens and other outdoor areas are not compromised. Policy CC8 states that development will only be acceptable where it will not cause a significant detrimental impact to the living environment of existing or new residential properties. Policy H5 requires all new development to provide adequate internal space for proposed dwellings. Policy H8 also seeks to ensure conversions are acceptable with regard to stacking of rooms between flats.

The proposal included three flats, a 3-bed flat at ground floor of 82.6m²; a 62.5m² 1-bed flat at first floor, and a 40m² (with shower room) 1-bed flat at second floor. These dwelling sizes comply with Policy H5, and include appropriate bedroom sizes, and headroom (within the second storey).

All proposed flats would be provided with appropriate levels of daylight/sunlight (due to the addition of lanterns within the second floor). The layout would not appear to create any privacy issues for existing or proposed dwellings. Not would the proposal be overbearing to neighbouring properties. Somewhat limited outlook would be provided to the second floor flat with only small windows serving the bedroom and living rooms. Though, this is not considered harmful enough to be included as a reason for refusal.

The arrangement of bedrooms, kitchens and bathrooms over the three levels provides appropriate stacking as to minimise potential for disturbance and is acceptable.

Landscaping

Policies CC7 and EN14 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 seek to provide meaningful landscaping to contribute toward the character and appearance of the area. Should approval have been recommended details or frontage landscaping, and landscaping to the rear (including tree planting) could have been secured by condition.

Ecology

RBC's ecologists have confirmed that the proposed, as a retrospective planning application would not be required to meet the new BNG requirements. In addition, policy EN12 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 requires that development not result in a net loss of biodiversity. As such, the proposal would comply with the local plan in this regard. Though, as above, additional tree planting to the rear could be secured by condition which could improve biodiversity.

Transport

The proposed development is within a highly accessible area, given Reading provides a high quality network of high frequency public transport. Notwithstanding, and in accordance with RBC transport officers comments, two parking spaces to the frontage would provide for each 1-bed flat to have a parking space. It is unclear if parking of two-vehicles within the frontage could be accommodated in addition to the cycle and bin storage. As such, the applicant has failed to demonstrate compliance with Policy TR5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

S106 and Affordable Housing

Policy H3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan requires development “... *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.*”

The applicant has agreed in principle to pay an off-site contribution toward affordable housing elsewhere within the borough. Upon receiving confirmation from the case officer that the recommendation would be for refusal the applicants agent suggested that the second floor flat could be ‘social housing’ in an effort to offset the harm identified by officers, with an affordable housing offer above policy requirements. It is noted that this would not be supported by the LPA as a manageable arrangement, nor would it accord with the above mentioned policy to be secured by condition of legal agreement lawfully.

Though the original agreement to provide a policy compliant 10% affordable housing contribution, no such agreement has been completed. A reason for refusal will be included on this., though it is acknowledged the completion of such a legal agreement could overcome this refusal reason.

Other Matters

The proposed development would be CIL liable.

7. CONCLUSION

As outlined above, the harm identified by the incongruous and out of keeping upward extension component would be significant, and though the proposal would provide additional dwellings which meet most of the requirements under the local plan, the significant harm would not be outweighed through the benefits of the scheme,

8. RECOMMENDATION

Refuse.