

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Norcot Ward

App Ref: PL/24/0998 Full planning permission

Address: 5 STONEHAM CLOSE, TILEHURST, READING, RG30 4HB

Proposal: Construction of Two Storey - 3 Bedroom house and retrospective demolition of existing garage.

Applicant: Faris Sawar

Received date: 5 August 2024

Target Decision date: 30 September 2024

Case Officer: Anthony Scholes

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

Site Visit Date: 15 August 2024

The site forms part of the garden of number 5 Stoneham Close. It contained a single garage, which appears to have been removed relatively recently. To the north is 5 Stoneham Close, a semi-detached property with some garden remaining to the rear. To the west is the rear garden of number 7 Stoneham Close, to the east is Stoneham Close, with number 87 beyond and to the south is a substation and the rear garden of number 81 Cockney Hill, with the property beyond. The site faces onto Stoneham Close to the east.

The site has no allocations or designations in the Local Plan.



Figure 1 - Site visit photos 15 August 2024

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The proposed development, would be located in an area which is currently the rear garden of no. 5 Stoneham Close. The red line area is reported to be 245m², with a footprint of ~75m² for the

proposed two-storey dwelling. Due to the taper of the plot, the proposal would be located closer to the street than the existing flank wall at no.5 Stoneham Close. The proposal would be 3.5m from the highway land (edge of the footway) at its closest point, and 4.6m at its greatest. The original dwelling is some ~7m from the edge of the footway. Due to the shape of the red line area, and the existence of a substation on the southern edge of the site, the plot area is oddly defined, and results in the proposed dwelling being close to all boundaries, with 1.2m to the rear of its plot (adjoining no.4 Stoneham Close), 1.6m to the northern boundary, and 3.3m to the boundary of the substation (southern). The proposal would provide 2 no. parking spaces in a tandem arrangement between the dwelling and the substation, and 2 no. parking spaces for the original dwelling to the north. The site plan shows paving to parking areas, and stepping stones around the dwelling. There is limited space along the frontage, or within the site for vegetation. A 47m² area behind the substation and the parking area is proposed as natural stone, and appear to be designated for amenity space. The original proposal included amenity space within the area now proposed as parking for the original dwelling.

3. Relevant Planning History

211184/OUT - Outline application considering appearance, layout and scale for the construction of a two storey building for 1 x 1, 1 x 2 and 1 x 3 bedroom flats with a mansard roof on land to the rear of 5 Stoneham Close Withdrawn 13/12/2021

220943/OUT - Outline application for a 1 storey building creating 2 x dwellings with mansard roof, with appearance, layout and scale to be considered (access and landscaping reserved for future consideration) Withdrawn 09/09/2022

230120/OUT - Outline application for the demolition of existing garage and erection of two houses Refused 28/04/2023

231621/OUT - Construction of new 2 storey 3 bedroom house. Returned invalid.

4. CONSULTATIONS

The following addresses were consulted by letter:

- 81, 83, 87 Cockney Hill
- 5, 7, 9, 11 Stoneham Close

A site notice was displayed by the applicant on 28 August 2024.

Comments were received during the consultation period, which was extended due to reports that letters to neighbours had not been received, which ended on 18 September 2024, with 7 comments having been received prior to closing, and 7 letters being received after closing, they can be summarised as:

- Concerns over parking provision, and general highways safety concerns;
- Concerns around impacts upon character and appearance of the area and lack of green space within the proposal, and cramped appearance;
- Negative impact on privacy of surrounding properties;
- Insufficient space on site for waste storage (bin storage);
- Concerns around accuracy of information provided;
- Negative impacts upon natural habitat and greenery;
- Concerns around proximity to the electrical sub-station;
- Negative impact upon right to light leases;

- Proximity relative to substation and noise/safety concerns
- Concern over increase pollution from additional cars;

RBC Transport

Original Comments - 23/8/2024

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 on Stoneham Close and on the surrounding highway, adversely affecting road safety and the flow of traffic, and in conflict with Local Plan Policies TR3 and TR5.

Updated Comments – 20/9/2024

Plans identify 2 parking spaces for the existing dwelling which is what was required, however I had previously requested revised plans illustrating visibility splays of 2.4m x 43m, submitted plans fail to demonstrate the proposed access will provide the required site lines as set out in Mfs. Fencing or landscaping has not been illustrated therefore difficult to determine what visibility splays can be achieved.

RBC Ecology

“BNG should have been calculated using the statutory metric (not version 3.1) and importantly, urban trees should not be included in the metric as per BNG guidance which reads:

....

You should not:

- *count newly planted trees sited within private gardens*
- *count trees planted as part of hedgerow creation or enhancement*
- *adjust the area generated by the tree helper*

This is because the private garden has no public access, and biodiversity net gains cannot be legally secured.

When the trees are removed, the development leads to a net loss which is contrary to EN12. It will result in the loss of private garden land, on a designated green link and would does not provide “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 “and therefore does not accord with Policy H11. It also does not maintain, protect, consolidate, extend or enhance the identified Green Network and instead will lead to its fragmentation (Policy EN12)”

5. Equality Act

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. 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 (December 2023)

National Planning Practice Guidance

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC1: PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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

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)

Planning Obligations under Section 106 Supplementary Planning Document (2015)

7. APPRAISAL

Principle of Development

Paragraph 123 of the NPPF states that: *"Planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions. Strategic policies should set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously-developed or 'brownfield' land"*

Previously-developed land is defined within the NPPF as *"Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. This excludes: land that is or was last occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill, where provision for restoration has been made through development management procedures; land in built-up areas such as residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments; and land that was previously developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape"*

As such, it is clear that the priority for development is not residential gardens in line with the above. Notwithstanding, the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 seeks to deliver 15,847 within the plan period (2013-2036) which equates to 689 homes per annum. Reading's housing supply over the past five years, in accordance with the annual monitoring report published in March 2024, is generally exceeding annual targets and is on track to deliver the housing target within the Local Plan. Notwithstanding, the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 acknowledges the opportunity for additional dwellings within residential gardens subject to a number of requirements which are addressed throughout this report. Therefore, the principle of housing within an existing area serviced with existing infrastructure is subject to all other matters contained within this report.

Design, and Character and Appearance

Paragraph 123 of the NPPF states *"planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions..."*

Paragraph 128 of the NPPF states *"Planning policies and decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land, taking into account:*

- a) the identified need for different types of housing and other forms of development, and the availability of land suitable for accommodating it;*
- b) local market conditions and viability;*
- c) the availability and capacity of infrastructure and services – both existing and proposed – as well as their potential for further improvement and the scope to promote sustainable travel modes that limit future car use;*
- d) the desirability of maintaining an area's prevailing character and setting (including residential gardens), or of promoting regeneration and change; and*
- e) the importance of securing well-designed and beautiful, attractive and healthy places."*

Within Section 12 'Achieving well-designed and beautiful places', paragraph 135 of the NPPF 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"*

Policy CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 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.*

Developments will also be assessed to ensure that they: -

- *Respond positively to their local context and create or reinforce local character and distinctiveness, including protecting and enhancing the historic environment of the Borough and providing value to the public realm;*
- *Create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder or fear of crime does not undermine quality of life or community cohesion;*
- *Address the needs of all in society and are accessible, usable and easy to understand by them, including providing suitable access to, into and within, its facilities, for all potential users, including disabled people, so that they can use them safely and easily;*
- *Are visually attractive as a result of good high quality built forms and spaces, the inclusion of public art and appropriate materials and landscaping.*

Applications for major developments, or other relevant developments, should be accompanied by a design and access statement that deals with all the above matters.”

Policy H11 of the Reading Borough Local Plan states: *“Proposals for new residential development that includes land within the curtilage or the former curtilage of private residential gardens will be acceptable where:*

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;*
- *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;*
- *Providing appropriate hard and soft landscaping, particularly at site boundaries. This includes features such as the variety of trees, hardstanding/lawns and hedges, etc;*
- *Compatibility 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 arrangement of doors, windows and other principal architectural features and their rhythm between buildings.*

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;

3) The proposal includes access, which meets appropriate highway standards;

4) The proposal does not lead to tandem development⁸⁹;

5) The design and layout minimises exposure of existing private boundaries to public areas, and avoids the need for additional physical security measures;

6) The proposal does not cause a significant detrimental impact to the amenity of adjacent and nearby occupants;

- 7) *The emphasis is on the provision of 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; and*
- 9) *The proposal does not prejudice the satisfactory development of a wider area.”*

Policy H2 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 states: *“The appropriate density of residential development will be informed by:*

- *the character and mix of uses of the area in which it is located, including the housing mix, and including consideration of any nearby heritage assets or important landscape or townscape areas;*
- *its current and future level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport;*
- *the need to achieve high quality design;*
- *the need to maximise the efficiency of land use; and*
- *the need to minimise environmental impacts, including detrimental impacts on the amenities of adjoining occupiers.”*

The area is characterised by a ~1950-60’s development, of reasonably large plots, with generous rear gardens and carparking. The design of the buildings are standard, with a mix of brick, and linear cladding. There is also a mix of styles, with 1.5 storey (including accommodation within the roof) and two-storey semi-detached properties as the prevailing dwelling type withing Stoneham Close. The immediately adjacent dwellings on Cockney hill are somewhat unique, compared to the prevailing type of detached dwelling within larger plots which exists along Cockney Hill. These include large setbacks to Cockney Hill. Notably, the owner of no.5 Stoneham Close has erected a ~2m high close boarded fence without planning permission following purchase in December 2020. This has enclosed the rear garden to a greater extent than the original situation, and was conducted without planning permission (Permitted development rights allow a 1m high fence adjoining a highway. No enforcement action has been undertaken in relation to this by Council at the time of writing. Though, the original situation is considered to be the base for assessment of the application given the unauthorised nature of the current fencing.



Figure 3 - Streetview image 2020



Figure 3 - Streetview image 2023

The existing character and amenity of the area is therefore one of relatively low density development set within large plots with large gardens and good separation between dwelling, resulting in a spacious character to the area. Policy CC7, H2, and H11 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 required all development to comply with various elements of form, and function relative to the area in which development is proposed.

The proposal, is considered to fail a number of these aspects. The developments location, layout, and density is out of keeping with the prevailing spacious character of the area. The development would be cramped within the plot, by virtue of the shape of the plot and proximity to the boundaries. The proposal is therefore considered to not make a positive contribution to the character of the area, and the relationship of built form and spaces around the building are not considered appropriate.

The proposal would also provide a dwelling which is crowded on both sides by hardstanding for carparking. Though the section of the road which it lies does not have a similar character to the Close it is a part of, it would still be overly dominated and out of rhythm relative to the layout and form of the area. The existing fencing being removed and taking away visually softening elements of the site, being the grassed area between the footway and the original fencing. In addition, the proposal would provide most of the site frontage as hardstanding, both by carparking areas, and other paving. This is due to the constrained nature of the site leaving insufficient room to the front of the dwelling to provide any substantive soft landscaping.

The proposed appearance is fairly basic, with what appears to be a channelled course of block work to ground floor level, and horizontal cladding above. The course to first floor would not be similar to those around, with a predominantly brick feature, though the horizontal cladding would match the area. The overall external appearance of the building would be fairly bland, with minimal fenestration to the frontage, and limited opening to the sides. The rear of the building would provide two small windows to the bedroom in this location. There would be larger ground floor windows on all sides.

The proposal would be a full two-storey dwelling, set down ~1m from the ground floor level of no.5 Stoneham Close. The ridge is purported by the agent to approximately match that of no.5 and 4 Stoneham Close. It is unclear if the proposed building height would be lower than that of the original dwelling, and it is unclear if conditions could be applied to secure this. The lack of topographical information or streetscene drawings is unhelpful in allowing the impact to be assessed and as such the applicant has failed to demonstrate that the design would be of an acceptable scale relative to the sloping nature of the site.

As such, the proposal, by virtue of its location, proximity to boundaries, form, scale, and detailed design, including parking, servicing and lack of soft landscaping relative to the lower density developments surrounding it would represent a cramped, poorly designed development which would be harmful to the open spacious character of the existing rear garden, and would disrupt, and harm the urban grain and character and appearance of the area.

Residential Amenity

Policy CC8 'Residential Amenity of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 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; or*
- *Wind, where the proposals involve new development of more than 8 storeys."*

Paragraph 135 (f) of the NPPF states: *"... 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."*

In addition to CC8, policy H11 notes a number of points on amenity, which will also be considered in this section. As above, the proposal will be located in close proximity to the rear elevation, including rear facing windows of no.5 Stoneham Close, with a maximum separation of 6.8m. The rear facing second floor windows will also be located approximately 4.8m from the nearest portion of no.4 Stoneham Close, being a conservatory. The proposal is a two-storey dwelling with an eaves height of 5.1m. Though no information has been provided to show the levels of the site, conservatively, the building would be at least 4m higher than the level of the rear garden immediately off no's 4 and 5 Stoneham Close.

The rear elevation of no.5 Stoneham Close, would therefore look directly onto a blank large side wall of a proposed dwelling within 7m of the primary outdoor areas, and rear facing windows. To a lesser extent, the views from the attached dwelling at no.4 would have similar views of the proposal. These views would be considered significantly overbearing, removing most of the pleasant outlook given by the elevated position. Though no right to a view, the outlook would be significantly altered to that of a blank wall within very close proximity of the existing dwelling.

The proposal would also be located on the southern side of the existing dwellings. Therefore, it is likely that the proposal would result in loss of daylight/sunlight to the existing dwellings.

In addition, the proposal would result in a pair of second floor rear facing windows which would provide clear, if slightly oblique views into the rear garden of no.4 Stoneham Close.

By virtue of the proximity of the proposal to the neighbouring properties, and proposed boundary fences, the design provides limited windows to all rooms. These will limit access to daylight/sunlight, and restrict outlook. It may be possible to include roof lights to provide additional light to some bedrooms, and first floor bathroom/ensuite facilities, though this is not currently included and the proposal is assessed as is. By virtue of the design of the dwelling, the limited windows, and location of windows relative to the boundaries, the living areas (ground floor) are considered to be provided with limited daylight/sunlight, and very limited outlook for future residents.

The proposed dwelling would be ~123m². Policy H5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 seeks to apply the nationally described space standards to all new build dwellings outside the central area. The proposal would be of an appropriate size, with good sized rooms which complies with those standards. It does fall slightly short of bedroom sizes for an 8-person, 3-bed dwelling, though it does not appear that level of occupancy would be reasonably expected, nor controllable. The development would also be required to meet improved building standards for energy efficiency, the standard assessment procedure (SAP) under building regulations would cover part of this, and conditions could be applied to ensure a higher water efficiency standard. The proposal therefore would comply with Policy H5.

Overall, the proposed development would result in significant harm to the amenity of existing residents contrary to policy CC8 and H11 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019. The proposal would also create a unit which would provide inadequate amenity for future residents.

Transport

Policy TR3 of the Reading Local Plan 2019 states that *“Development will only be permitted where:-*
i) Accesses and works to the highway comply with the adopted standards of the Transport Authority;
ii) The development would not have a material detrimental impact on the functioning of the transport network;
iii) The proposals would not be detrimental to the safety of users of the transport network, including pedestrians and cyclists;

*iv) The proposal would not generate regular movement of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) on unsuitable roads, or on roads without easy access to the Classified Highway Network; and
v) For non-residential uses, or new dwellings on classified roads, off-street servicing would be provided.*

Policy TR5 of the Reading Local Plan 2019 states *“Development should provide car parking and cycle parking that is appropriate to the accessibility of locations within the Borough to sustainable transport facilities, particularly public transport.”*

The Revised Parking Standards and Design Supplementary Planning Document (October 2011) categorises the Reading LPA into four zones for accessibility, based on frequency and distance to bus routes, it also designates maximum parking standards for each zone, including minimum cycle storage standards. The site is designated as ‘zone 3’ which is still within 300m (most direct walking route) of a high frequency bus route which runs along the Meadway. is less accessible than other zones.

The proposal has provided a 2 replacement parking spaces for the lost off street parking to the host dwelling, and 2 parking spaces for the proposal. The layout has sought provision of parking by the area of the existing access and dropped kerb. It is unclear if parking could be provided in front of the dwelling. The parking levels meet the maximum parking standards contained within the Adopted parking standards and design supplementary planning document. Though this level of parking is capable of being provided on site, it would be at odds with the desire within the Reading Transport Plan to support more use of public and active transport modes. The design comments above regarding how the site presents as a result of the parking spaces are considered to detract from the scheme. No details of cycle storage, within a secure covered area are shown, though could be secured by condition should approval have been granted.

In accordance with policy TR5, any new dwellings with off street parking would be required to provide one EV charging point. Details have not been provided, though this could be secured by condition should approval have been recommended.

In accordance with updated transport comments, though the parking provision would not include replacement parking for the existing dwelling, and the proposed dwelling. No information to determine that the new accesses would be suitable from a highways safety perspective in providing visibility splays. Therefore, failure to demonstrate access in accordance with TR3, and TR5 is included as a reason for refusal.

Ecology and Biodiversity

From 12 February 2024, amendments to Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021) made it mandatory for all developments in England to provide a biodiversity net gain of 10%. This included, as of 2 May 2024, that this also applied to all ‘minor’ developments. As such, all development approvals as considered to have a condition applied that they must provide this. A Biodiversity Gain Plan must be submitted and approved by the planning authority before commencement of the development. In accordance with Central Government guidance: *“When determining a planning application, biodiversity net gain will often be a material consideration, and local planning authorities will want to consider, where relevant, whether the biodiversity gain condition is capable of being discharged successfully through the imposition of conditions and agreement of section 106 planning obligations to secure significant onsite biodiversity gains and registered offsite biodiversity gains.”*

The applicant has provided a biodiversity improvement calculation based on the initial layout (now revised to remove some soft landscaping areas), and based on an outdated biodiversity calculation

metric. RBC's ecologist has also reviewed the information and provided a response with concerns with the ability to provide this onsite as: "... *These seem to be included in the "Habitats creation " section of the metric.*

The guidance state that trees within gardens should not be included in the metric – see section on Recording planted individual trees at post-development which reads:

....

You should not:

- *count newly planted trees sited within private gardens*
- *count trees planted as part of hedgerow creation or enhancement*
- *adjust the area generated by the tree helper"*

As such, it is not clear that a biodiversity net gain on site would be possible, and an off-site BNG may be required. This would be required to be secured through a s106 agreement, and as such, a reason for refusal would be included to state that this is not met. An agreement could overcome this reason for refusal, however this has not been completed/agreed.

Affordable Housing

Paragraph 34 of the NPPF states that "*Plans should set out the contributions expected from development. This should include setting out the levels and types of affordable housing provision required...*"

Paragraph 64 of the NPPF states that "*Where a need for affordable housing is identified, planning policies should specify the type of affordable housing required³⁰, and expect it to be met on-site unless:*

- a) off-site provision or an appropriate financial contribution in lieu can be robustly justified; and*
- b) the agreed approach contributes to the objective of creating mixed and balanced communities"*

As outlined within the material submitted with the Local Plan review for the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019, and in accordance with Policy H3, Reading has an acute need for affordable housing and has a long established policy securing affordable housing on all sites for new housing. Policy H3 therefore, requires all residential development to make an appropriate contribution towards affordable housing to meet the needs of Reading. On sites of 1-4 dwellings, that is sought to be a financial contribution equivalent of 10% of the housing to be provided as affordable elsewhere in the Borough.

The applicant has duly agreed to contribute toward affordable housing in line with policy requirements. Though, no draft agreement, nor valuations for the proposed development have been put forward to support this and determine an appropriate sum. Therefore, a reason for refusal for the failure to contribute toward affordable housing will be included. It will be noted that this could be overcome by the provision of suitable legal agreement in line with s106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Other Matters

The proposed development, should it have been approved would have been CIL liable.

8. CONCLUSION



The proposal would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area through the creation of a cramped and inappropriate dwelling. It would cause harm to neighbour's living conditions through loss of outlook, creation of a sense of enclosure and an overbearing presence in close proximity to the boundary. The living conditions of future occupants would be compromised given the poor quality of both internal and external space. Furthermore, the proposal fails to demonstrate that there would be no net loss of biodiversity. Given the significant issues with the proposals, they would also conflict with Policy H11, and are therefore considered unacceptable in principle.

9. RECOMMENDATION

Refusal