

05 February 2025



Title	PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT
Ward	Caversham Heights
Planning Application Reference:	PL/24/1148 (HOU)
Site Address:	4 Scholars Close, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7DN
Proposed Development	Proposed erection of front, side and rear single-storey extensions (rear extension off existing structural slab) with associated internal alterations and fenestration changes. Roof finish to be changed and installation of solar panels to roof.
Applicant	Mr & Mrs M & A Yeo and Fernandez
Report author	Sian Hickey
Deadline:	Originally 25 December 2024, extension of time agreed until 7 February 2025
Recommendations	Grant planning permission, subject to conditions as follows
Conditions	1. <i>TL1 – Time Limit</i> 2. <i>AP1 – Approved Plans</i> 3. <i>M3 – Materials As Specified</i> 4. <i>DC1 – Vehicle Parking As Specified prior to occupation</i> 5. <i>Precommencement - Trial hole / trench investigations to establish the existing foundations. Arboricultural Method Statement to be submitted for approval prior to commencement for any additional foundation works required resulting from the investigations, OR development in accordance with existing Arboricultural Method Statement submitted.</i>
Informatives	1. <i>IF6 - Building Regs</i> 2. <i>I2 - Pre-commencement conditions</i> 3. <i>IF7 - Complaints About Construction</i> 4. <i>IF8 – Encroachment,</i> 5. <i>IF3 – Highways</i> 6. <i>I24 – Damage to highway verge</i> 7. <i>I1 – Positive and Proactive</i>

1. Executive summary

- 1.1. The proposal is to alter and extend the existing residential bungalow. The proposal is considered acceptable in terms of its effect on the character of the area, the effect on neighbouring amenity and the impact on trees.

- 1.2. The proposal is recommended for approval subject to the conditions as outlined above.

2. Introduction and site description

- 2.1. The application seeks full planning permission for a single storey side extension, a single storey rear extension, and a single storey front extension. The proposal also includes converting the existing garages into habitable space, alterations to the existing fenestration and materials, a new roof finish, removal of the existing chimney and the mounting of 12 solar panels onto the forward roofslope.
- 2.2. The application is required to be determined by Planning Applications Committee as the applicant is a Ward Councillor.
- 2.3. The application site is a bungalow located at the end of a cul-de-sac (Scholars Close) off St Peters Avenue. The street consists of two houses and four bungalows. The rear boundary of the application site runs adjacent to St Peter's Hill. Two oak trees in the rear garden are protected by Tree Preservation Orders.

Location Plan



Site Photograph



3. The Proposal

- 3.1. The works comprise converting the existing garages into habitable use and erecting a single storey side extension in front of the existing garage closest to the main dwelling. The existing garage flat roof would be made good with a rear facing parapet wall. At the front of the property, a single storey pitched roof extension is proposed to create an

entrance hall. Replacement windows and doors are proposed with aluminium polyester powder coated frames, and a composite front door with sidelights and glazing. The proposal also includes insulated render being applied to the existing masonry. Natural slate tiles are proposed to replace the existing tiles of the main roof, and 12 Solar Panels are proposed in the front facing roofslope. The plans show the existing chimney is to be removed. At the rear, a single storey extension is proposed to replace the existing conservatory.

3.2. The following plans/documents have been received:

- Drawing No. 336-1300 – Existing and Proposed Elevations
- Drawing No. 336-1200-A – Site Location Plan, Existing Site Plan and Floor Plans
- Tree Protection Plan
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment
- Arboricultural Method Statement

Received 30th October 2024

- Drawing No. 336-1205-B – Proposed Site Plan and Floor Plans

Received 20th November 2024

- Bat Survey

Received 18th December 2024

4. Planning history

None

5. Consultations

5.1. The following consultation responses were received:

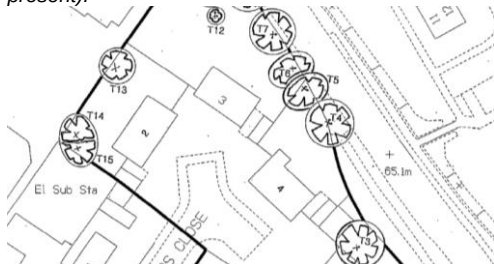
5.2 ***RBC, Transport Development Control***

The proposed works will result in the loss of the 2 garages and therefore the loss of 2 parking spaces. Submitted plans illustrate 2 parking spaces located on the front drive accessed via an existing shared vehicle crossing.

There are no Transport objections to this application as parking is being provided in accordance with current standards.

5.3 ***RBC Natural Environment***

Two Oak trees in the rear garden are protected by TPO 135/01 (other non-TPO trees are also present):



With reference to **Existing & Proposed Elevations Plan 336-1300, Proposed Site Plan & Proposed Plans 336-1205-A, Arboricultural Implications Assessment dated 30/10/24 and Arboricultural Method Statement dated 30/10/24 (both from Merewood Arboricultural Consultancy Services)**:

"The AMS [Arboricultural Method Statement] (following on from the AIA) demonstrates that the development is acceptable and that trees can be appropriately protected. However, the acceptability of the AMS is partially based on one important assumption that it makes; that being that the foundations of the existing conservatory will be used for the rear (dining room) extension. I understand that conservatories are not required to have Building Control approval if under 30m², which would apply to the one here, hence the foundations of the conservatory are unknown and may not be sufficient for the rear extension proposed. If that is the case, excavation within the RPA of a protected Oak (T4 of TPO and tree survey) would be required and as such would need to be addressed within the AMS.

Given the above, I asked for clarity on whether trial holes had been dug to establish the foundation depth to confirm if they would meet NHBC standards for the proposed rear extension. In response, the agent advised in his email of 14/11/24:

'That is the intention, to reuse the existing foundations to avoid major ground works within the RPA of the oak trees. No trial holes have yet been undertaken as these would be done so on award of consent to limit costs etc. to the applicants. Any trial holes to establish the foundations would be done so by hand, this can be discharged by condition as part of any consent notice. The ground conditions in this part of Reading are Boyne hill gravel overlaying Seaford Newhaven chalk formation which provides a solid ground base and depths can be fairly minimal - The investigations and subsequent structural design would be provided by a chartered structural engineer in due course as Stage 4'

As such, approval will be with an unknown in relation to the foundations. Whilst it is appreciated that foundations are largely dealt with by Building Control, in this case it is appropriate to deal with these via a planning condition due to the potential works within the RPA of a protected tree for the foundations, and also the initial trial digs mentioned.

As well as condition L7A requiring development in accordance with **Arboricultural Method Statement dated 30/10/24 from Merewood Arboricultural Consultancy Services**, we also need a separate condition to deal with the foundation investigation and possibility of new / deeper foundations being required. Something along the following lines:

'No development shall commence on site until the location, specification and method of trial hole / trench investigations to establish the existing foundations of the rear conservatory has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. If, following investigations, existing foundations are found to be inadequate for the rear extension (dining room) hereby approved, then no development shall commence on site until an Arboricultural Method Statement Addendum has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority detailing the new foundation specifications and tree protection measures to minimise harm to adjacent retained and protected trees. Development shall then be in accordance with the approved Arboricultural Method Statement Addendum.

Reason: In order to ensure that appropriate protection is given to trees of amenity value within and adjacent to the site in accordance with Policy EN14 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and the Reading Borough Council adopted Tree Strategy 2021'."

5.4 RBC Ecology

"The bungalow may host roosting bats and to confirm whether this is the case, and if so how bats will be affected by the proposals, a bat survey will need to be carried out. Alternatively, the applicant may wish to provide photographs that we will then be able to review for any potential features suitable for use by roosting bats. Such evidence will need to be provided prior to determination of the application or the application would need to be refused on the grounds that insufficient evidence had been provided to determine the likely impacts of the proposals on bats (which are a protected species and a material consideration in the planning process)."

Officer note: further to the comments above, photographs were provided and reviewed by Ecology, however, the photographs were not considered sufficient evidence that a bat survey is not needed.

Subsequently, a bat survey was submitted on 18 December 2024 and reviewed by Ecology. Additional comments were received as follows:

The Bat report (Arbtech, December 2024) has been undertaken to an appropriate standard and concludes that the risk of bats being affected by the proposals is minimal. There are therefore no objections to this application on ecology grounds.

5.5 Neighbour Consultations

1 Scholars Place, Caversham, Reading, Reading, RG4 7DN
2 Scholars Place, Caversham, Reading, Reading, RG4 7DN
3 Scholars Place, Caversham, Reading, Reading, RG4 7DN
5 Scholars Place, Caversham, Reading, Reading, RG4 7DN
18 St Peters Avenue, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7DD

No letters of representation have been received.

6. Legal context

- 6.1 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).
- 6.2 In this regard, the NPPF states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the Local Plan 2019 according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).
- 6.3 Accordingly, the latest NPPF and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (2023)
National Planning Practice Guidance
SPD – Design Guide to House Extensions (2021)

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC7 (Design and the Public Realm)
CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity)
H9 (House Extensions and Ancillary Accommodation)
H10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space)
TR3 Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
TR5 Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging
EN12 (Biodiversity and the Green Network)
EN14 (Trees, Hedges and Woodlands)
EN17 (Noise Generating Equipment)
CC2 (Sustainable Design and Construction)

7. Appraisal

Character and Appearance

- 7.1 Policy H9 states that an extension to a house will be acceptable where it respects the character of the house in terms of scale, location, materials, and design and respects the character and pattern of neighbouring properties and the street as a whole in terms of scale, location, materials and design, and any important existing building line. Policy CC7 also sets out relevant considerations for design.
- 7.2 Officers consider the proposed front extension is appropriate in terms of size, scale and design. Both of the two-storey dwellings within the Close have pitched roof porches thus this is not considered out of character. The proposed side extension roof is to be set down from the existing ridge height of the original property and set back from the existing front elevation of the original dwelling, thus protecting the original form and shape of the host property and ensuring a subservient addition. The single storey rear extension is positioned in the same footprint as the existing conservatory and as such is not considered to be harmful in terms of scale. The size and placement of the window and door openings are considered acceptable. The proposed solar panels have been positioned on the roof to create a balanced feel. It is considered that, although more modern in appearance, the scheme has been appropriately designed to complement the existing dwelling and would not harm the wider streetscene. The proposal is considered compliant with policies H9 & CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

Residential Amenity

- 7.3 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 an extension to a house will be acceptable where it will not cause a significant detrimental impact to the living environment of existing or new residential properties.
- 7.4 The proposed single storey rear extension is considered acceptable as it will replace an existing conservatory of similar scale. The proposed side extension is sufficiently set away from the attached garage at number 5 Scholar Close. Given the modest scale of the proposed single storey extensions, combined with the distance between the proposed extensions and the neighbouring properties, no significant adverse impacts are envisaged to neighbouring amenity with regards to overbearing effects, loss of light, or privacy and overlooking. The amount of remaining amenity space is considered acceptable.
- 7.5 The proposal is considered compliant with policies H9, H10 & CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

Ecology

- 7.6 The Ecology Officer confirms that the Bat Survey has been conducted to the appropriate standard and that the proposal is acceptable in ecological terms. There would be little or no loss of biodiversity within the garden as a result of the proposal.
- 7.7 The proposal is considered compliant with policies H9 and EN12 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

Commented [SV1]: Policy H9 also refers to no net loss in biodiversity.. Might be worth confirming little or no change...

Trees/Natural Environment Officer

- 7.8 Policy EN14 states that 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.
- 7.9 The Natural Environment Officer (NEO) was consulted and in principle has no objections. The proposed development can be carried out and the existing trees can be appropriately protected. However, there are concerns that the foundations of the existing conservatory may not be sufficient for the proposed rear extension. Therefore, trial hole/trench investigations are required to establish the existing foundations of the conservatory. A condition securing this prior to commencement is recommended.
- 7.10 It is considered the proposal complies with policies H9 and EN12 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

Transport

- 7.11 The Council's Transport team have no objections to the proposals as the submitted plans illustrate 2 off-road vehicle parking spaces. A condition is recommended to ensure that both vehicle parking spaces are provided and kept available for parking thereafter.
- 7.12 Officers consider the proposal will be compliant with policies TR3 & TR5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

Sustainable Design and Construction

- 7.13 Policy CC1 states that a positive approach to considering development proposals will be taken that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- 7.14 Policy CC2 states that proposals for new development, including the construction of new buildings and the redevelopment and refurbishment of existing building stock, will be acceptable where the design of the building and site layouts use energy, water, minerals, materials and other natural resources appropriately, efficiently and with care and take account of the effects of climate change.
- 7.15 With regards to the proposed solar panels, whilst the above policy is not directly applicable to this type of application, officers note that the proposed development is a means to maximise the use of energy efficiency and energy conservation, utilising the existing layout of the building and its orientation in efforts to reduce overall energy demand.

8. Equality implications

- 8.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 8.2 The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation. It is considered that there is no indication or evidence that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular application.

9. Conclusion & planning balance

- 9.1 As with all applications for planning permission considered by the Local Planning Authority, the application is required to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise, as per Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- 9.2 It is considered that, subject to the recommended conditions, the proposed single storey side extension, single storey rear extension, front porch extension, fenestration alterations, roof and solar panels would be acceptable in terms of their effect on the character and appearance of the area. The proposals would not harm the amenity of neighbouring properties and the suitable protection is secured for existing trees. As such, this application is recommended for approval subject to conditions.

Plans

Drawing No. 336-1200-A

Location Plan

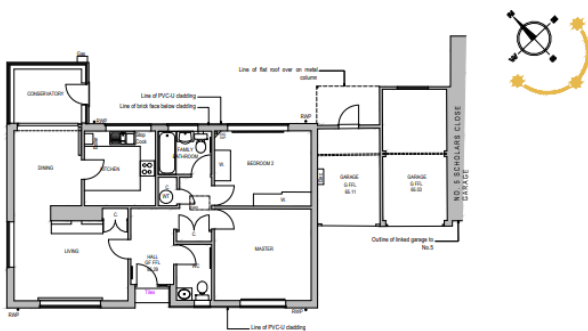


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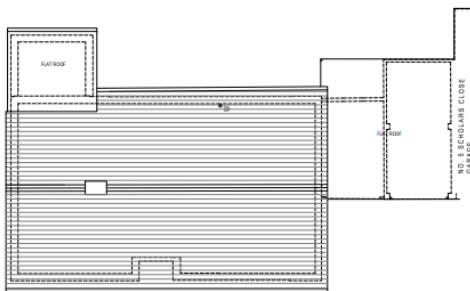
Block Plan



Existing Floor Plans



Existing Ground Floor Plan - 1:100 @ A1



Existing Roof Plan - 1:100 @ A1

Drawing No. 336-1205 -A

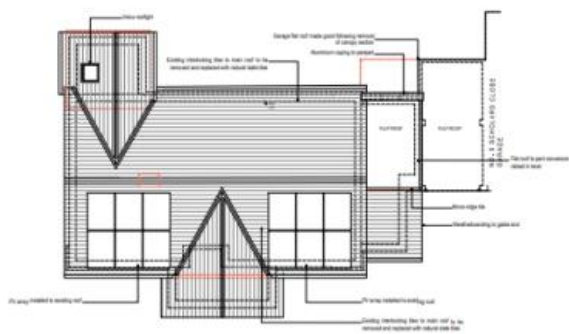
Proposed Site Plan



Proposed Floor Plans



Proposed Ground Floor Plan - 1:100 @ A1



Proposed Roof Plan - 1:100 @ A1

Drawing No. 336-1300

Existing and Proposed Elevation Plans



Site Visit Photos:







