

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Caversham Heights Ward

App Ref: PL/24/1281 Householder planning permission

Address: SPRINGWOOD, THE WARREN, CAVERSHAM, READING, RG4 7TQ

Proposal: Erection of a two-storey rear extension to include a first floor balcony, extension of the eastern single storey area, a front two storey extension on the existing porch, and an upward extension of the existing western extension as well as alterations to the hard and soft landscaping.

Applicant: Dr Abdulrahman Saadeddin

Received date: 30/09/2024

Target Decision date: 28/02/2025 (EOT)

Case Officer: Marcelina Rejwerska

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

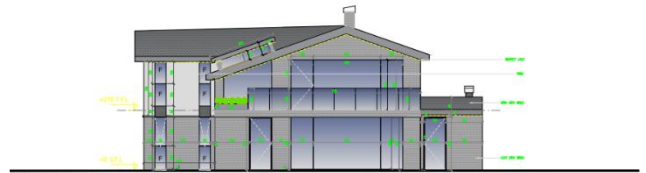
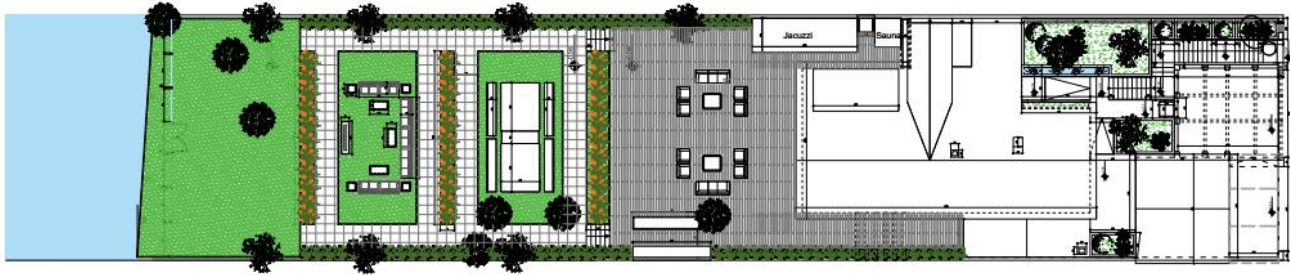
The application site is located on the south side of The Warren, backing onto the River Thames. The site is within an area of identified biodiversity interest and is part of a major landscape feature (Thames Valley). The site is within Flood Zones 2 and 3, and there are a number of trees within the rear garden, of which one is protected by a TPO. The surrounding area is residential, varying widely in character, design and scale.



2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Planning permission is sought for a two storey rear extension, including a rear balcony, measuring 1m in depth across the width of the existing rear extension, extension of the single storey side extension on the east elevation, to measure 4m in depth from the front façade (including the existing side element) and 1.4m in width, a two storey front extension of the existing porch, to measure 1.34m in depth, and an upward extension of the existing western elevation.

The proposal also includes hard landscaping to include areas of patio and hardstanding within the rear garden.



2.1. Information submitted:

20240926 Planning Statement

Appendix 1 - Appeal Decision – 3345579

24_PEA_05_09 Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, ROAVR Group, dated 18 July 2024

24_5837_05_89 Tree Survey & Arboricultural Impact Assessment, ROAVR Group, dated 2 July 2024

Received by the LPA on 30 September

24_5837_05_89 Arboricultural Impact Assessment, ROAVR Group, dated 2 July 2024

PP-13446642v1 Location Plan

MS - 152020 – 13168 Existing Plans & Elevations Pack, Pages 1-5

Corridor & Double High Plans and Sections Pack, Pages 1-15

Office Plans Pack, Pages 1-14

FF Boy Bathroom Plans Pack, Pages 1-12

FF Girl Bedroom Plans Pack, Pages 1-12

FF Boy Bedroom Plans Pack, Pages 1-13

Sitting Room Plans Pack, Pages 1-14

TV Room Plans Pack, Pages 1-14

Rooms Labelled Villa London Floor Plans, Pages 1-2

FF Master Bedroom Plans Pack, Pages 1-15

FF Master Bathroom Plans Pack, Pages 1-21

FF Master Dressing Room Plans Pack, Pages 1-13

Kitchen and Dining Plans Pack, Pages 1-20

Office and Bathroom Plans Pack, Pages 1-11

FF Girl Dressing Room Plans Pack, Pages 1-11

Store and Laundry Plan Pack, Pages 1-18

FF Girl Bathroom Plan Pack, Pages 1-12

Received by the LPA on 8 October 2024

83906R1 Flood Risk Assessment, Geosmart Information, dated 31 October 2024

Received by the LPA on 1 November 2024

London Villa Demolition Plan Pack, Pages 1-3

Received by the LPA on 6 December 2024

Landscape and Elevations Plan Pack, Pages 1-8
General GF Arrangement Plan Pack, Pages 1-6
Received by the LPA on 29 January 2025

3. CONSULTATIONS

The following were consulted:

- RBC Natural Environment:
 - With reference to the Tree Survey & Arboricultural Impact Assessment version 1.0 from ROARV dated 2/7/2024 and to the group of Site plans saved as Landscape Plans:
 - Constraints / important factors to consider about the site (amongst other things) – on a ‘treed corridor’ (Thames) hence a net gain in tree coverage is expected; within a MLF, adjacent to two Areas of Identified Biodiversity Interest (Thames and Warren escarpment)
 - Description of development includes ‘*alterations to the hard and soft landscaping*’, hence comment on the significant plans for the rear garden are appropriate. Note the tree report describes these as ‘*terraced patios and garden structures*’
 - TPO 84/07 includes one Robina pseudoacacia near the end of the rear garden (probably T4 Gleditsia of the tree survey – Cat B1 in good condition)
 - Tree survey includes 4 x B Category trees within the curtilage in the rear garden, plus 2 Category trees overhanging from adjacent rear gardens – feasible retention of these is unclear.
 - 4.1.2 Of the tree report lists the impacts on all trees, with RPA incursions included for trees 1-9 hence potential harm to all of these.
 - 4.2.1 of the tree report states : *The proposals significantly impact the root protection areas and canopies trees, these conflicts will need to be resolved through design changes or tree removal.*
 - 4.3.1 of the tree report correctly states: ‘*If tree removal is proposed then suitable mitigation measures would be required to ensure that the canopy cover and number of trees is increased overall*’, yet landscaping principles are very unclear on this.
 - The tree report goes on to say:
 - 4.4. *Impact on Tree Canopies:*
 - 4.4.1. *The proposals for garden structures are located close to tree canopies and in some cases in conflict. Pruning trees to enable construction close to tree canopies is unlikely to be supported.*
 - 4.5. *Impact on Tree Roots:*
 - 4.5.1. *The proposals are likely to impact the rooting areas of trees both within and adjacent to the plot.*
 - 4.5.2. *The rear extension significantly encroaches into the root protection area of T2*
 - 4.6.1 of the tree report states: *New hard surfaces are proposed within the root protection areas of trees. This may be possible with the use of a no dig methodology, and the incorporation of a cellweb system into the subbase – little further details are given.*
 - 4.8 of the report acknowledges ground level changes, but we have no details of these and clear mitigation
 - At a fundamental level, the tree report points out all the issues with the proposed development and appears to indicate the unacceptability of these by comment or the unfeasible tree retention by lack of detailed AIA, i.e. how harm will be mitigated. As such the report supports concern for the development and hence the application fails to demonstrate no harm to good quality trees in an important location, including one TPO tree.

- Given the importance of the location, I would expect clear and detailed, appropriate landscape principles, confirming tree loss, demonstrating sufficient mitigation, alongside additional planting. We don't have this hence the development fails to demonstrate appropriate landscape principles and a clear tree net gain.
- GS Ecology:
 - The Ecology Report (ROAVR Group, July 2024) concludes that the proposals are unlikely to directly affect protected species such as bats. However, there are likely to be nesting birds on site and the site could be traversed or used as a foraging resource by a range of protected and priority species including otter, water vole, badger, as well as bats. Other risks of the proposed development to priority habitats ie the River Thames and protected wildlife include:
 - Pollution (including surface water runoff, dust, noise, littering etc.) during and after construction works
 - Excessive illumination by new external lighting impacting the river Thames and other wildlife-sensitive areas
 - Disturbance or damage to wildlife resting places, such as those of water fowl (as per the ecology report)
 - Unmitigated, the above risks would lead to a deterioration in the quality of the Priority Habitat River Thames and a loss of biodiversity. As such, should the application be approved, all works will need to be undertaken in accordance with an approved under a comprehensive Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) for biodiversity which details measure to protect wildlife and the river during construction. This could be secured via a planning condition.
 - The plans do not demonstrate how the development will enhance the wildlife corridor or achieve a net gain for biodiversity. In a riverside context such as this one, enhancements should specifically focus on improving the river corridor. However, the landscaping plans and 'photo' within, that the proposals introduce a length of wall and hardstanding ('development') along the edge of the River Thames. This could potentially harm local wildlife and reduce the ecological status of the river. The applicant should provide details of how the plans comply with local policies EN11 and EN12, as well as national policy, regarding the river corridor.
 - Any additional lighting may introduce light pollution onto the river. As such details of how the lighting (internal and external) associated of the proposed development will comply with the following national and local planning policies should be provided.
 - The proposals do not currently comply with planning policy, in particular EN12, EN11, and para 179 of the NPPF. In addition, further details would be needed to ensure compliance with EN16 and Para 191 of the NPPF

The following addresses were consulted by letter:

- Newlyn, The Warren
- Thameside, The Warren
- Tideway, The Warren

Letters of representation have been received as follows:

2 objections, citing concerns relating to:

- Increased flood risk/run off to neighbouring gardens due to extent of hard surfacing proposed.
- Concerns about incorrect information within the submitted Flood Risk Assessment, citing more frequent flood events than those recorded in the FRA.
- Overlooking and loss of privacy
- Overbearing mass

The application was also called in to Planning Applications Committee by one of the ward Councillors. Delegated powers were agreed should the application be recommended for refusal.

4. 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).

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC1: PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

CC7: DESIGN AND THE PUBLIC REALM

CC8: SAFEGUARDING AMENITY

H9: HOUSE EXTENSIONS AND ANCILLARY ACCOMMODATION

H10: PRIVATE AND COMMUNAL OUTDOOR SPACE

EN11: WATERSPACES

EN12: BIODIVERSITY AND THE GREEN NETWORK

EN13: MAJOR LANDSCAPE FEATURES AND AREAS OF OUTSTANDING BEAUTY

EN14: TREES, HEDGES AND WOODLAND

EN18: FLOODING AND DRAINAGE

SPD

Design Guide to House Extensions 2021

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. APPRAISAL

Character and appearance

Policy H9 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.*

The proposed rear extension has been scaled down at the rear at the request of the case officer and is now considered acceptable in its design and appearance. The extensions and external alterations to the character of the property are significant, however, this is not considered at odds with the wider character of the area. Properties along the Warren vary in their design and character, and an updated contemporary design would not appear out of place.

The site is within an identified Major Landscape (Thames Valley). Policy EN13 states *“Planning permission will not be granted for any development that would detract from the character or appearance of a Major Landscape Feature.”* The proposed extensive areas of hardstanding at the rear of the site are considered harmful in this regard, as the rear of the site is highly visible from the Thames Path across the river and would detract from the natural and relatively unspoiled appearance of the riverside.



Rear of application site as seen from Thames Path across the river. Image taken from Google Maps.

Overall, while the house extensions proposed and the redesign of the exterior of the property is not considered harmful, the amount of hardstanding in the rear garden is considered excessive and not in keeping with the character of the surrounding area, specifically in the context of a Major Landscape Feature.

Residential amenity

Policy CC8 requires all development to have no detrimental impact on the residential amenity of nearby residents and future occupiers.

The reduction in depth to the proposed rear extension has resolved previous concerns raised by the case officer and within objections received from the public, of the development appearing overbearing to the neighbouring properties. As this matter is considered to have been resolved through the submission of revised drawings, there are no other identified risks of harm to residential amenity.

The proposal is considered in accordance with policy CC8.

Landscaping and flooding

Policy EN11 states *“Reading’s waterspaces will be protected and enhanced, so that they can continue to contribute to local and regional biodiversity and ecology, flood mitigation, local character, heritage and visual amenity, the provision of accessible leisure and recreational opportunities and, where appropriate, navigation. There will be no adverse impact on the functions and setting of any watercourse and its associated corridor.”*

Policies EN12 and EN14 are relevant and require development to have no detrimental impact on biodiversity or existing trees and hedges.

Policy EN18 sets out the Council’s requirements for flood risk management on sites within Flood Zones.

The proposal includes extensive areas of works within the rear garden involving terracing and paving of the majority of the rear garden area. The case officer requested that these are significantly scaled down or removed in their entirety from the proposal, which was then amended to include a 10m long area of relief from the riverbank to the hard surfaced areas of the garden. This is not considered sufficient or acceptable for a number of reasons.

Firstly, the site is a priority habitat (NPPF 2024) with a number of existing trees within the garden. The plans do not demonstrate how the development will enhance the wildlife corridor or achieve a net gain for biodiversity. In a riverside context such as this one, enhancements should specifically focus on improving the river corridor. However, the landscaping plans and 'photo' within, that the proposals introduce a length of wall and hardstanding ('development') along the edge of the River Thames. This could potentially harm local wildlife and reduce the ecological status of the river. The applicant should provide details of how the plans comply with local policies EN11 and EN12, as well as national policy, regarding the river corridor.

The hard surface also encroaches into the root protection areas of a number of the existing trees on site. The submitted arboricultural assessment appears to indicate the unacceptability of the proposal by comment or the unfeasible tree retention by lack of detailed impact assessment. The report supports the concern for the development, and no information has been submitted to demonstrate how these concerns will be mitigated or avoided. As such, the proposal has failed to demonstrate that there will be no risk to existing trees resulting from the proposed development.

Lastly, concern has been raised by the public with regards to the submitted flood risk assessment (FRA), and its accuracy. The site is known to flood frequently; however, this was not accounted for in the assessment as the flood events are not categorised as significant by the Environment Agency. Regardless of this, the concern remains with regards to the extensive areas of hard surfacing and their effect on the runoff of flood water, especially to neighbouring residential plots. The mitigation measures identified in the submitted FRA are also not identified on the submitted plans and the proposal fails to demonstrate how the design has adopted and responded to its own FRA findings. As such, the proposal fails to adequately assess the flood risk to the site, and the impact of the proposal, specifically the areas of hardstanding, on the flood risk to neighbouring sites through run off.

Overall, the proposal is considered harmful to the ecological value

6. CONCLUSION

While the works proposed to the dwellinghouse itself could be considered acceptable, the areas of hardstanding at the rear of the site are excessive and pose a risk of harm to the character of the waterspace, the Major Landscape Feature, and the priority habitat. There is insufficient information to demonstrate that existing trees on the site will not be harmed or damaged by the proposed works.

7. RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE

Due to the following reasons:

1. The proposal by way of its excessive areas of hardstanding presents harm to existing trees on the site and the overall ecology of the site, which is an identified priority habitat (NPPF), as outlined in the submitted Arboricultural assessment. This is contrary to policies H9, EN11 and EN14 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.
2. The proposal by way of its excessive areas of hardstanding in a prominent and highly visible location on the Thames River waterside harms the character of a Major Landscape Feature (Thames Valley), contrary to policies H9, CC7, EN11 and EN13 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.
3. Insufficient or inaccurate information has been submitted relating to flood risk management and mitigation, and fails to demonstrate no increased risk of run off to neighbouring sites, contrary to Policy EN18 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and para 176 and Footnote 63 of the NPPF 2024.