

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Coley

App Ref: PL/25/0059 Full planning permission

Address: 236 WENSLEY ROAD, READING, RG1 6DP

Proposal: 1x new 3-bedroom dwelling and two-storey wraparound extension with associated parking

Applicant: Mr harinder Singh

Received date: 13/01/2025

Target Decision date: 12/03/2025

Case Officer: Marcelina Rejwerska

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is a semi-detached dwelling on the west side of Wensley Road within Coley Park. The west side of Wensley Street is characterised by semi-detached properties in similar character, while the east side is comprised of terraced housing in its own uniform character. The application site comprises a large front garden and a single-storey lean-to to the side, but has otherwise no other external additions to its original built form. The rear of the site comprises a wooded area running parallel to the train tracks, which is identified as an existing Green Link and an area of identified biodiversity interest (Policy EN12), connecting to the Kennet and Holy Brook Meadows Major Landscape Feature approx.77m to the south of the site. The application site is also within an Air Quality Management Area.



*Left: Photo of the application site as seen from the road, taken in November 2024 by an RBC Planning Officer.
Right: Aerial view of the site, Google Maps, March 2025.*

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Planning permission is sought for erection of 1x new 2-bedroom dwelling within a wraparound two-storey extension to the host dwelling at 236 Wensley Road. The proposal requires internal alterations to the host dwelling to facilitate the layout of the proposal. The proposed dwelling will measure:

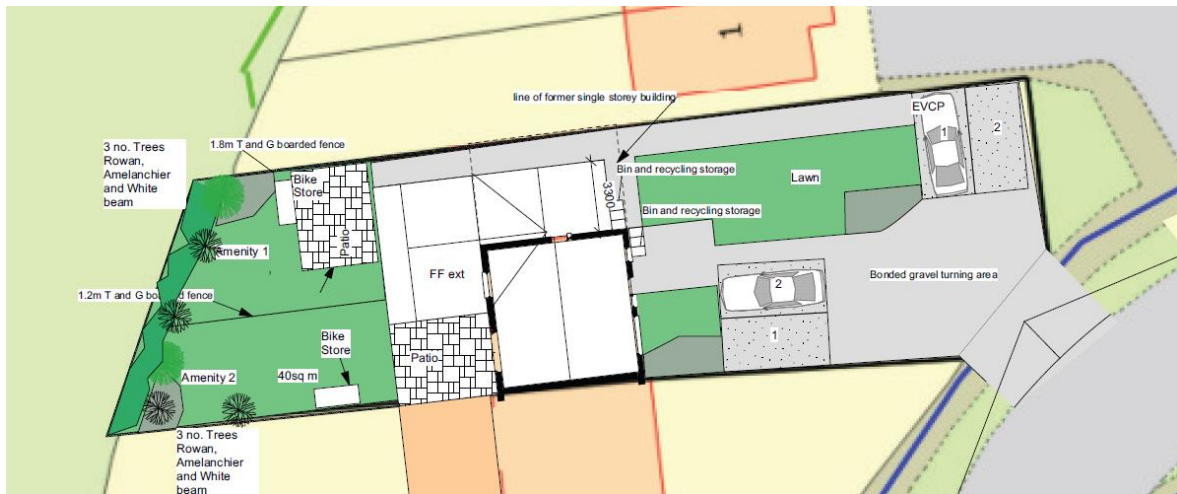
GIA = 63.86 sq m

Bedroom 1 = 12.61 sq m

Bedroom 2 = 8.36 sq m

Rear Garden = 62.69 sq m

Landscaping is proposed to both the front and rear of the site to formalise the parking layout. The proposal has been amended by the applicant to scale the proposal down from 3-bedrooms to 2-bedrooms, which makes the current description of the proposal incorrect.



Proposed Block Plan



Proposed Elevations

2.1. Information Submitted:

SD1004 01 Existing Floor Plans and Elevations
Received 13 January 2024

Planning Statement (Revised)
SD1004 02 04B Proposed Elevations
SD1004 02 03B Proposed Layouts
SD1004 02 02B Site Layout
SD1004 05A Block Plan and Highways
Received 10 March 2025

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

PL/24/1444 - Conversion of 236 Wensley Road into 2 apartments and 1 maisonette, including rear and side extensions. Application withdrawn.

4. CONSULTATIONS

The following were consulted:

- **RBC Natural Environment** – Site visit conducted by Natural Environment officer in November in relation to an earlier application. It was noted that there were extensive areas of existing hardstanding on site, and a number of existing trees just outside of the site. Although these are unlikely to prevent development on the site, a tree survey is required to plot those existing trees and their RPAs to confirm. No objection to the proposed soft landscaping species although further information would be required as to their planting schedule and maintenance.
- **RBC Transport Development Control** – No objections subject to conditions.
- **GS Ecology** – BNG exemption listed on the application form is incorrect as it does not take into account development of the front garden. The building is surrounded by habitat of good suitability for use by foraging and commuting bats (adjacent to a line of trees associated with the railway line with opens space and woodland to the north and south). The proposals include the erection of a double rear and side two storey extension and there is a risk that the proposals may affect roosting bats. As such a bat survey report will need to be provided before this application can be determined.

A site notice was erected on site. One letter of representation received citing an objection due to the following concerns:

- Overshadowing to neighbouring properties on Wensley Road
- Loss of privacy to neighbouring properties on Wensley Road

5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. However, the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making (NPPF paragraph 12).

National Policy and Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework
National Planning Practice Guidance

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC1: PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
CC2: SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION
CC3: ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE
CC5: WASTE MINIMISATION AND STORAGE
CC7: DESIGN AND THE PUBLIC REALM

CC8: SAFEGUARDING AMENITY
EN12: BIODIVERSITY AND THE GREEN NETWORK
EN14: TREES, HEDGES AND WOODLAND
EN15: AIR QUALITY
EN16: POLLUTION AND WATER RESOURCES
H1: PROVISION OF HOUSING
H2: DENSITY AND MIX
H3: AFFORDABLE HOUSING
H5: STANDARDS FOR NEW HOUSING
H9: RESIDENTIAL 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

Other documents

Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD 2011
Sustainable Design and Construction SPD 2019
Affordable Housing SPD 2021

Local Plan Update

The current version of the Local Plan (adopted in November 2019) turned five years old on Tuesday 5th November 2024. The Local Plan was reviewed in March 2023 and around half of the policies in the plan are considered still up to date. However, the rest need to be considered for updating to reflect changing circumstances and national policy. A consultation version of the draft updated version of the Local Plan was published on 6th November 2024.

Although there is a five-year period for carrying out a review of a plan after it is adopted, nothing in the NPPF or elsewhere says that policies automatically become “out of date” when they are five years old. It is a matter of planning judgement rather than legal fact whether a plan or policies within it are out-of-date. This will depend on whether they have been overtaken by things that have happened since the plan was adopted, either on the ground or through changes in national policy, for example.

Officer advice in respect of the Local Plan policies pertinent to this application listed above is that they remain in accordance with national policy and that the objectives of those policies remains very similar in the draft updated Local Plan. Therefore, they can continue to be afforded weight in the appraisal below and are not considered to be ‘out of date’.

Equality Act 2010:

In determining this application, the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. However, there is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application. Therefore, in terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

6. APPRAISAL

6.1. Land use matters

The NPPF (2024) states that LPAs should “encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value”. The NPPF definition of ‘previously developed land’ excludes private residential gardens in built up areas.

Therefore, it is clear that the priority for development should be on previously developed land, in particular vacant and derelict sites and buildings.

Assessing the site as residential garden will be against Policy H11 (Development of Private Residential Gardens). This requires that new residential development that involves land within the curtilage of private residential gardens will be acceptable where:

- a) It makes a positive contribution to the character of the area;
- b) The site is of an adequate size to accommodate the development;
- c) The proposal has a suitable access;
- d) The proposal would not lead to tandem development;
- e) The design minimises the exposure of existing private boundaries to public areas;
- f) It does not cause detrimental impact on residential amenities;
- g) The emphasis is on the provision of family housing;
- h) There is no adverse impact on biodiversity, and
- i) The proposal does not prejudice the development of a wider area.

As set out below, the proposal fails to demonstrate compliance with these criteria and therefore the principle of a new dwelling on this site is not accepted.

6.2. Design and character

The NPPF (Para 131) sets out that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. Policy CC7 states *“All development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. The various components of development form, including:*

- *Layout: urban structure and urban grain;*
- *Landscape;*
- *Density and mix;*
- *Scale: height and massing; and*
- *Architectural detail and materials”*

The proposed dwelling would be situated on the side of the host dwelling and wrap around its rear façade. The rear garden is proposed to be divided to create new boundary lines, although it appears that the proposed rear extension forming the new dwelling would extend over the garden boundary line into the remaining garden of the host dwelling.

The proposal due to its contrived and bulky design is unsympathetic to the host property and the urban grain on the west side of Wensley Road. The design and layout overall relate poorly to the building as a whole. While there are some examples of two storey side and rear extensions along the west side of Wensley Road, these are not considered comparable as they are domestic extensions rather than separate self-contained dwellings.

The proposal has been amended from its initial layout in response to the case officer's concerns relating to design. The revised proposal has resulted in a reduced internal floor space which now falls under the minimum space standards for new dwellings (Policy H5). This is not considered acceptable.

Overall, the proposal is not considered acceptable due to its scale and design.

6.3. Residential amenity

Policy CC8 states: *“Development will not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties, in terms of:*

- *Privacy and overlooking;*

- *Access to sunlight and daylight;*
- *Visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development;*
- *Harm to outlook;*
- *Noise and disturbance;*
- *Artificial lighting.”*

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

The proposed two-storey rear extension is likely to appear dominating and overbearing to occupants of the host dwelling, especially as the rear appears to extend over the garden boundaries into the plot of the host dwelling. The orientation of the site is unlikely to lead to loss of sunlight to neighbouring properties, however, the first-floor rear bedroom window is likely to result in loss of privacy to the occupiers of the host dwelling. Furthermore, the sizes of the gardens present another issue. The existing rear garden measures just over 120 sq m, proposed to be divided into 62.7 sq m for the proposed dwelling and 57.94 sq m for the host dwelling. These are below the guidance size for dwellings within Policy H10 which states that gardens should not generally measure less than the Gross Internal Area of the property which they serve. Looking at the pattern of garden sizes on the west side of Wensley Road, the proposed gardens would be significantly smaller than those of other properties. Therefore, the proposed division of the plot is not considered acceptable, due to the reduced garden spaces.

If planning permission were to be granted a condition is required to secure a construction method statement to demonstrate that construction activities associated with the development would not result in detrimental impacts to residential amenity of existing surrounding occupiers from things such as dust, noise and vibration.

Overall, the proposal is not considered acceptable due to identified residential amenity harm.

6.4. Landscaping and biodiversity

Policy EN12 states *“On all sites, development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity and geodiversity and should provide a net gain for biodiversity wherever possible.”* All developments are now required to provide a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). The applicant has stated on the form that the development is exempt due to the small size of the site. The land to comprise the proposed dwelling is made of mostly of existing hardstanding, however, the proposed new areas of hardstanding at the front of the site measure in excess of 45 sq m and therefore, the development is not considered exempt from demonstrating the mandatory 10% Biodiversity Net Gain. However, this does not form a reason for refusal as a Biodiversity Net Gain Plan could have been secured by condition.

The building is surrounded by habitat of good suitability for use by foraging and commuting bats (adjacent to a line of trees associated with the railway line with opens space and woodland to the north and south). The proposal will include works to the roof of the existing dwelling and as such a bat survey report should have been provided with the application to demonstrate that the proposals would not result in harm to bats, a protected species, which may be roosting on/within the existing dwelling. A bat report has not been provided and therefore the proposals fail to demonstrate that bats would not be harmed by the proposed development. This will form a reason for refusal, as bats are a protected species as per para 187 of the NPPF (2024).

The submitted landscaping information, although limited, would be considered acceptable at this stage, and should the application had not been recommended for refusal, a condition would have been recommended to secure further details of the proposed soft and hard landscaping.

Policy EN14 is also relevant, and states *“Individual trees, groups of trees, hedges and woodlands will be protected from damage or removal where they are of importance, and Reading’s vegetation cover will be extended.”* There are existing mature trees just outside of the site, forming a small, wooded area which has been identified as having biodiversity interest. As the proposal is within 15m falling distance of those trees, a tree survey should have been submitted to demonstrate the Root Protection Areas of those trees. Without this information, the application fails to demonstrate that the proposed development would not result in harm to retained trees. As such, the proposal is not considered acceptable at this stage due to insufficient information regarding existing trees.

6.5. Transport matters

Local parking standards are set out in the RBC Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD which considers the accessibility of the site. The site is located in Zone 3, Secondary Core Area, of the Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD. In line with the adopted parking standards, two off-street parking spaces are required for each dwelling.

The submitted revised Block and Highway plan illustrates the provision of 2 parking spaces within the site served via the existing dropped kerb onto Wensley Road. The parking provision for the development is acceptable and complies within the policy TR5 subject to conditions in respect of layout and electric vehicle charging points (to be provided for new dwellings). The current visibility splays/sight lines are deemed acceptable for the level of new development.

In accordance with the Borough’s Parking Standards and Design SPD, a minimum provision of 2 cycle storage spaces should be provided for each dwelling. Cycle storage in the form of a wooden bike shed has been proposed within the garden of each dwelling, which would be considered acceptable. Had the application been recommended for approval, a condition would have been recommended to secure the details of the bike stores.

Individual bin storage is proposed to the front of each dwelling. Residents will have to transfer the bins for kerbside collection, and this is considered a typical arrangement in this location and is therefore considered acceptable.

If planning permission were to be granted a condition is required to secure a construction method statement to demonstrate that construction activities associated with the development would not result in detrimental impacts to the surrounding highway network.

Overall, there are no objections to the proposal on transport and highway safety grounds.

6.6. Affordable Housing

The proposed new residential unit would be required to provide a policy compliant level of off-site affordable housing contribution. Policy H3 states *“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 Affordable Housing SPD further outlines that *“For sites of 1-4 dwellings, where the contribution required by policy H3 is 10%, this will equate to 5% of GDV of the development.”*

While it is stated in the submitted Planning Statement that the applicant agrees to enter a legal agreement to secure an affordable housing contribution, the LPA have not sought to agree the heads of terms on the basis that the application is recommended for refusal. This will form a reason for refusal, but the applicant is advised that this could be overcome at appeal.

6.7 Community Infrastructure Levy

The proposal would be a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) liable development in respect of the floor space to be created for the proposed new dwelling. An informative would be attached to the decision notice to advise the applicant of their responsibilities in this respect.

7. CONCLUSION

The proposal by way of its excessive scale and contrived layout would be unsympathetic to the character of the host dwelling and pattern and character of development within the surrounding area, resulting in harm to the amenity of the occupiers of the host dwelling. The proposed development fails to demonstrate that it would not result in harm to existing trees or any potential bats (protected species) within the host dwelling. Without a completed legal agreement to secure a contribution to affordable housing in the borough, and due to the issues identified, it is not considered that the public benefit of one new private market dwelling would outweigh the policy conflicts and harm identified. The proposals would be contrary to Policies CC7, CC8, H3, H10, H11, EN12 and EN14 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

8. RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE

Due to the following reasons:

1. The proposal by way of its excessive massing and scale and contrived layout and design, wrapping around the rear of the retained dwelling, would fail to integrate satisfactorily with the character of the host dwelling and with the pattern and character of development found within the surrounding area. The proposal would result in a cramped and unproportioned development and would also provide insufficient private amenity space for both the proposed and retained dwelling which would be out of keeping with the size and character of amenity spaces found to surrounding dwellings of similar character, contrary to Policies CC7, H10 and H11 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019, and NPPF paragraphs 135 and 139 (December 2024).
2. The internal layout and size of the proposed new dwelling would not meet the nationally described minimum space standards for a 2-storey, 3-person dwelling. The proposals would result in a poor and cramped standard of accommodation which would fail to safeguard the amenity of future occupier's contrary to Policies H5, H11 and CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019, and NPPF paragraph 135 (December 2024).
3. The proposal, by way of its layout and excessive scale would result in an imposing and overbearing built form, and loss of privacy through overlooking from the rear first-floor bedroom window for the occupants of the host dwelling, resulting in harm to their amenity, contrary to Policies CC8 and H11 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019, and NPPF paragraph 135 (December 2024), and NPPF paragraph 135 (December 2024).
4. The proposed development fails to demonstrate that that it would not result in harm to existing trees within the woodland and Green Link adjacent to the west of the site which are within a 15m falling distance of the proposals, contrary to Policies EN12 and EN14 of the Reading Borough Local Plan and NPPF paragraph 187 (December 2024).
5. The proposed development fails to demonstrate that it would not result in harm to bats, which are a protected species and therefore fails to protect or enhance biodiversity at the site, contrary to Policy EN12 of the Reading Borough Local Plan and NPPF paragraph 187 (December 2024).

6. In the absence of a completed legal agreement to secure an off-site contribution to affordable housing in Reading, the proposal fails to demonstrate that the proposal would positively contribute to the provision of affordable housing in the Borough, contrary to Policy H3 and H9 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and the RBC Affordable Housing SPD 2021.