

TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

WIDBROOK PROPERTY DEVELOPMENTS

PLANNING AND HERITAGE STATEMENT

**LAND TO REAR OF 92 ALBERT ROAD
CAVERSHAM
RG4 7PL**

Erection of 1no. detached dwelling

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Planning and Heritage Statement is submitted in support of a full application by Widbrook Property Developments for the erection of 1no. detached dwelling.

1.2 The remainder of this statement is divided into 4 main sections dealing with the following issues:

- Site and Surrounding Area
- Planning History
- Planning Policy Context
- The Application Proposal
- Summary and Conclusions

1.3 This statement will confirm that the proposal would not be contrary to national or local policy guidance. In particular, it will be demonstrated that the proposal will respect the character and appearance of the surrounding area and that of the host building which the Council consider to be a non-designated heritage asset. The statement will demonstrate that the proposal will safeguard the amenity of neighbouring occupiers and that it is acceptable in terms of highways and parking and on its effect on trees and biodiversity.

1.4 The application site (in conjunction with the host building which is the subject of a separate application) has been the subject of previous applications. Application ref. 321265 was for the erection of 4no. dwellings following the demolition of existing buildings. This application was refused for various reasons, including the total loss of the non-designated heritage asset. Following this decision, a further application was submitted in May 2024 for the extension and alterations to flats 1 and 3 to create one additional apartment (ref.240496). This application was withdrawn in June 2024. The current proposal is to construct a detached dwelling to the rear of

the existing building and is therefore for a different form of development (i.e. it ensures the retention of the existing building). In this regard, the proposal is considered to meet the aims of paragraph 124 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) (i.e. supporting the development of under-utilised land and buildings etc).

1.5 The application site was the subject of pre-application advice in April 2023 under ref.230083/PREAPP. This was for a more intensive scheme comprising of 6 semi-detached dwellings. The Council 's detailed response provided advice relating to the impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area; impact on trees and landscaping; impact on the amenity of surrounding occupiers; highways and parking; ecology and sustainability.

1.6 These comments have been addressed in this revised submission as follows:

- i) The number of dwellings proposed to the rear of the host property is substantially reduced and now comprises of a single detached dwelling. This allows for greater spatial separation to 1 Orwell Close;
- ii) The dwelling along Chelford Way is now two storey with a biodiverse green flat roof (rather than two storey with roof accommodation) which better reflects the area as well as reducing scale and massing
- iii) There are no first floor habitable windows overlooking gardens to the rear;
- iv) In conjunction with the separate application for the host property, the extent of hard surfacing along Chelford Way is significantly reduced and this allows for additional soft landscaping to be provided as opposed to a long row of parking bays as previously proposed. This reflects the open space character of the Chelford Way street frontage;

- v) Bike / bin stores with collection points are now shown;
 - vi) The relationship between the proposed development and existing trees is significantly improved and the proposal is supported by an Arboricultural Impact Assessment which supports the relationship.
- 1.7 The applicant held an initial neighbourhood introduction meeting in 2023. The resident's comments have been taken on board wherever possible and incorporated into the design.
- 1.8 The application is accompanied by the following supporting consultant reports:
 - i) Planning and Heritage Statement (Davis Planning Ltd) – see below
 - ii) Arboricultural Impact Assessment (Urban Tree Experts)
 - iii) Biodiversity Net Gain

2 THE SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

- 2.1 The application site lies on the eastern side of Albert Road, immediately to the north of its junction with Chelford Way. The existing property which is outside of the red line application site comprises of a large unkempt 2½ storey detached building which was most recently in use as three flats. These are now unoccupied, and the site is closed off from the public domain by hoarding to prevent vandalism. The building is located in a large plot which has a frontage onto both Albert Road and Chelford Way. This proposal is to erect a detached property within the rear garden of the building fronting onto Chelford Way. The Council considers the host building to be a non-designated heritage asset.
- 2.2 Whilst the frontage of the site is relatively open, trees along or adjacent to the northern and eastern boundaries of the site provide good screening.
- 2.3 To the north of the site are several detached 2 ½ storey dwellings which front onto Albert Road and are located within large, well screened plots. To the south of the site are three detached dwellings sited in more modest plots. These dwellings are located perpendicular to Albert Road, with their main front elevations facing Chelford Way. To the east of the site are dwellings in Orwell Close which are generally located within fairly shallow plots.
- 2.4 The surrounding area is therefore predominantly residential, and is highly mixed in character and appearance, comprising of mainly detached, or semi-detached two storey dwellings of varying ages and architectural styles.
- 2.5 The site lies within the defined urban area of Caversham (Reading) in a sustainable location close to a range of services and transport links including bus services 22, 81, 82 and 145C which provides regular services to destinations such as Reading, Caversham Heights, Sonning Common and Henley on Thames.

3 PLANNING HISTORY AND PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE

- 3.1 The planning history and pre-application advice associated with the site is set out below:

Pre-application advice

- 3.2 As stated above, the application site was the subject of pre-application advice in April 2023 under ref.230083/PREAPP. This was for a more intensive scheme comprising of 6 semi-detached dwellings and included the entire building and its garden unlike this proposal which is solely concerned with the rear garden area. The Council 's detailed response provided advice relating to the impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area; impact on trees and landscaping; impact on the amenity of surrounding occupiers; highways and parking; ecology and sustainability. The changes made following the feedback are set out above at paragraph 1.7.

Planning application submissions

240496 – Extension and alterations to flats 1 and 3 to create one additional apartment. Withdrawn 21/06.2024.

231265 – Erection of 4no. dwellings following the demolition of existing buildings. Refused 05/03/2024 for the following reasons:

- i) Demolition of a non-designated heritage asset;
- ii) Out of keeping with the character and appearance of the area;
- iii) Harm to the amenity of future occupiers;
- iv) Unacceptable overlooking of neighbouring gardens;
- v) Biodiversity Net Gain;

- vi) Impact on trees;
- vii) Pressure to prune trees;
- viii) Affordable housing.

920010 – Conversion of existing building (used as three flats) into five flats incorporating new dormers, and parking area with new crossover. Approved 02/07/1993.

920133 – Two storey extension and conversion of existing building (used as three flats) into seven flats incorporating new dormers, and parking area with new crossover. Refused 26/06/1992.

4 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

i) Government Guidance - National Planning Policy Framework 2024

- 4.1 The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies and how these should be applied. It confirms that applications should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise (paragraph 2). The NPPF must be taken into account in the preparation of the development plan and is a material consideration in planning decisions.
- 4.2 Paragraph 7 of the NPPF states that the purpose of the planning system is to achieve sustainable development. There are three overarching objectives to sustainable development which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways: economic, social and environmental objectives. The environmental objective includes the need to make efficient use of land and to improve biodiversity. So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 10).
- 4.3 Paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF states that "where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:
- i) The application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed, or
 - ii) Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole."
- 4.4 Paragraph 39 states that Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way and that decision makers at

every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

- 4.5 Chapter 11 is concerned with making effective use of land. Paragraph 124 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. Indent (d) of para.125 states that planning decisions should:

‘Promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings, especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing where land is constrained and available sites could be used more effectively...’

- 4.6 Paragraph 129 states that planning policies and decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land, taking into account:

- The identified need for different types of housing and other forms of development, and the availability of land suitable for accommodating it;
- Local market conditions and viability;
- 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;
- The desirability of maintaining an area’s prevailing character and setting (including residential gardens), or of promoting regeneration and change; and
- The importance of securing well-designed, attractive and healthy places.

- 4.7 Paragraph 130 states that where there is an existing or anticipated shortage of land for meeting identified housing needs, it is especially important that planning policies and decisions avoid homes being built at low densities, and ensure that developments make optimal use of the potential of each site.

4.8 Paragraphs 131 - 141 are concerned with design. It states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. Paragraph 135 states that planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments:

- 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;
- Are visually attractive as a result of good architecture layout and appropriate and effective landscaping.
- Sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting;
- Establish or maintain a strong sense of place;
- Optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development;
- Create safe and accessible environments which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

4.9 Chapter 16 relates to conserving and enhancing the historic environment. Paragraph 216 states that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing up applications that directly or indirectly affect non designated heritage assets, a 'balanced judgement' will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the asset.

ii) Reading Borough Local Plan 2019

4.10 Policy CC1 - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development. 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. Where appropriate, the Council will work proactively

with applicants jointly to find solutions which means that proposals can be approved wherever possible.

- 4.11 Policy CC5 – Waste Minimisation and Storage. States that development should demonstrate measures to minimise the generation of waste in construction, use and life of buildings and promote more sustainable approaches to waste management, including the reuse and recycling of construction waste and the promotion of layouts and designs that provide adequate, well-designed space to facilitate waste storage, reuse, recycling and composition.
- 4.12 Policy CC7 – Design and the Public Realm. States that all development must be of a 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 include: layout; landscape; density and mix; scale (height and massing); and architectural details and materials. These will be assessed to ensure that the development makes a positive contribution to the following urban design objectives: Character; Continuity and enclosure; Quality of the public realm and provision of green infrastructure and landscaping; Ease of movement and permeability; Legibility; Adaptability; Diversity.
- 4.13 Developments will be assessed to ensure that they, amongst other matters:
- 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;
 - Are visually attractive as a result of good high quality built forms and spaces, the inclusion of public art and appropriate materials and landscaping.
- 4.14 Policy CC8 – Safeguarding Amenity. Requires that development does not result in 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. The location of habitable rooms, windows and outdoor living spaces will be particularly important. A back-to-back distance of 20 metres between dwellings is usually appropriate.

4.15 Policy H1 – Provision of Housing. Confirms that provision will be made for at least 15,847 homes (averaging 689 homes per annum) in Reading Borough for the period 2012 to 2036. Of the 689 homes per annum, small scale unidentified sites (i.e. <10 units) are expected to contribute 127 homes per annum (18.5% of the annual requirement).

4.16 Policy H2 – Density and mix. States that 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.

4.17 Indicative densities are set out in figure 4.5. The site has a suburban context and therefore the density range is 30-60 dwellings per hectare. Wherever possible, residential development should contribute towards meeting the needs for the mix of housing set out in figure 4.6. For market housing, this confirms that 29.6% should be two bed properties and 41.5% should be 3 bed properties.

- 4.18 Policy H3 – Affordable housing. 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. Where proposals fall short of the policy target as a result of viability considerations, an open book approach will be taken with the onus on the applicant to demonstrate the circumstances justifying a lower affordable housing contribution.
- 4.19 Policy H5 – Standards for New Housing. States that new built housing should be built to the following standards, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that this would render a development unviable:
- a. All new build housing outside the Central Area as defined on the Proposals Map will comply with the nationally-described space standard.
 - b. All new build housing will be built to the higher water efficiency standard under Regulation 36(3) of the Building Regulations;
 - c. All major new-build residential development should be designed to achieve zero carbon homes.
 - d. All other new build housing will achieve at a minimum a 19% improvement in the dwelling emission rate over the target emission rate, as defined in the 2013 Building Regulations.
 - e. All new build housing will be accessible and adaptable in line with M4(2) of the Building Regulations, unless it is built in line with M4(3).
 - f. On development of 20 or more new build dwellings, at least 5% of dwellings will be wheelchair user dwellings in line with M4(3) of the Building Regulations.
- 4.20 Policy H10 – Private and Communal Open Space. States that 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. Houses will be provided with outdoor private space. The design of outdoor areas will respect the size and character of other similar spaces in

the vicinity and should not be compromised by the relationship of other buildings which may be detrimental in terms of overlooking, overbearing or overshadowing.

- 4.21 Policy EN12 – Biodiversity and the Green Network. States that the identified Green Network shall be maintained, protected, consolidated, extended and enhanced. 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.

5 THE APPLICATION PROPOSAL

5.1 The proposal is for the erection of 1no. 4 bed detached dwelling of a contemporary design and appearance.

5.2 The key considerations are therefore considered to be as follows:

- The principle of development;
- Design, character and appearance, including its effect on the existing building, a non-designated heritage asset – Heritage Statement ;
- Housing density, type and mix;
- Amenity of adjoining occupiers and new occupants;
- Access and parking provision;
- Trees and biodiversity;

i) Principle of development

5.3 The application site is located within an existing defined urban area, in a location which is free from environmental or designated heritage assets (e.g. Flooding, Green Belt, conservation areas, statutory listed buildings). The site is within a sustainable location close to a range of services and transport links including bus services 22, 81, 82 and 145C which provide regular services to destinations such as Reading, Caversham Heights, Sonning Common and Henley on Thames

5.4 There is therefore no objection in principle to the development. The proposal provides for an additional dwelling which ensures that the proposal makes fullest use of the site and is therefore supported by Policies CC1 and H1 of the LP and by the National Planning Policy Framework (i.e. making more efficient use of sites). It should be noted in particular that this proposal meets indent (d) of paragraph 124 of the NPPF which states that planning decisions should *'promote and support the*

development of under-utilised land and buildings'. The proposal is also consistent with Policy CC6 which seeks to relate scale and density to accessibility.

ii) Design, Character and Appearance, including the effect of the proposal on the existing building, a non-designated heritage asset (Heritage Statement)

- 5.5 The retention of the existing building represents a major benefit of the proposal as there are no planning controls governing its demolition and removal from the site.
- 5.6 The proposed detached dwelling would be sited to the east of the existing building, within its garden area. It would be spaciouly located within its plot with a generous separation distance provided between the western elevation of the existing building and the flank elevation of the proposed dwelling. The separation distance between the buildings enables the existing building to continue to be provided with an appropriate setting. Furthermore, the scale of the new dwelling with its part two storey, part single storey flat roof contemporary design, would ensure that it would not compete visually with or detract from the character and appearance of the existing building. The character and appearance of the existing building would therefore be maintained and accordingly, no harm would be caused to the character and appearance of the wider area or its significance as a non-designated heritage asset.
- 5.7 The surrounding area is generally mixed in character and appearance, and the contemporary design of the proposed dwelling would be appropriate to its setting whilst its scale would be reflective of surrounding dwellings. All trees and natural screening of merit would be retained, together with a significant amount of new planting. This would ensure that the dwelling would sit within a landscaped setting thereby fully respecting the existing landscape character of the area.
- 5.8 The proposed detached dwelling would be provided with a new porous gravel two bay parking area, accessed from Chelford Way. All parking associated with the proposed development can therefore be accommodated on the site with very little effect on the visual character of the area.

- 5.9 Paragraph 209 states that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing up applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the asset. In respect to this proposal, the siting of the and accordingly, there would be no conflict with paragraph 209 of the NPPF or Policy EN4 of the Local Plan.
- 5.10 In conclusion, proposed detached dwelling would be of a high quality, contemporary design which would respect the siting and character of the host building and would positively contribute to the character and appearance of the area. The new dwelling will have a biodiverse green roof which will not be out of place within the Chelford Way street frontage which is already characterised by 1960s/1970s designs.
- 5.11 The new dwelling will be constructed to PassivHaus principles improving energy efficiency over Building Regulations. The extent of hard surfacing throughout the site will be reduced and replaced with soft landscaping.
- 5.12 The proposal would therefore comply with LP Policies CC7, H2 and H11 of the adopted local plan as well as the general design objectives set out in the NPPF.

iii) Amenity of adjoining occupiers and new occupants

- 5.13 The proposed new dwelling is to the east of the existing building and would front onto Chelford Way. It would be set back from the road frontage by a similar distance to that of the existing building and would not result in any harm to the living conditions of the occupiers of the dwellings on the southern side of Chelford Road. The rear elevation of the new dwelling would be set in from the northern boundary of the site by 7m. Given its two storey, flat roof design, its built form would not be overbearing on the end section of the rear garden of 94 Albert Road. In addition, no habitable room windows are proposed above ground floor level on the elevation facing towards No 94 (there is a landing window just above ground floor level and an obscure glazed en-suite window at first floor level).

- 5.14 Similarly, no habitable room windows are proposed on the side (west) elevation of the proposed new dwelling which, together with the generous separation distance, would ensure an acceptable standard of amenity for the occupiers of both the semi-detached dwellings (separate application) and the detached dwelling.
- 5.15 The proposed dwelling would be well set in from the eastern boundary of the site beyond which is the rear garden of 1 Orwell Road. There would be a separation distance of over 20m between the two storey flank wall of the new dwelling which contains a first floor bedroom window and the rear elevation of No 1, which is sufficient to ensure that no loss of privacy would occur. It also meets the minimum 20m guidance under LP Policy CC8 (safeguarding amenity). The eastern boundary of the site is also well screened by existing trees which would further filter views of the proposed development.
- 5.16 There are no other properties within the vicinity of the proposed that require further consideration.
- 5.17 Therefore, it can be concluded that the proposed development would not result in material harm to the living conditions of occupiers of neighbouring dwellings as required by Policies CC8 and H11.
- 5.18 The size of the new dwelling would meet the internal space standards set out within the National Technical Housing Standards and would offer future residents a high-quality internal and external living environment. Each room would be provided with an open outlook to all habitable windows. The garden area of the dwelling would not be subject to excessive shading. The proposal therefore complies with LP Policies CC8, H5 and H10 in this regard.
- 5.19 In summary, Policies H2, H5, H10 and CC8 of the LP and paragraph 135 (f) of the NPPF are met as there would be no significant detrimental impact to the living conditions of existing or future occupiers.

iv) Housing density, type and mix

- 5.20 The overall density of the site (dph) will increase but would still be below the expected minimum density of 30dph recommended under Policy H2. This acknowledges the layout of the host building and the need to respect and retain its original character, including the non-designated heritage asset. The proposal would therefore be of an appropriate density given its suburban location and would make effective use of land in a manner consistent with the area's character.
- 5.21 A S106 agreement will be provided to secure the required financial contribution towards off-site affordable housing, as required under Policy H3 (i.e. 10%).

v) Access and Parking provision

- 5.22 The proposed detached dwelling would be provided with a new access directly onto Chelford Way with 2no. driveway parking spaces to the front of the dwelling. The parking bays will be perpendicular to the highway in line with the neighbour consultation process.
- 5.23 Provision is made within the site layout for secure bin storage

vi) Trees and ecology

- 5.24 The application is accompanied by an Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) which concludes that all trees of merit can be retained and protected including those which are protected. The proposals would therefore ensure that the most important landscape features of the site are retained, including all the TPO trees. The new dwelling is sited within a location that will not increase pressure for future tree pruning. The proposal therefore meets LP Policy EN14.
- 5.25 An Ecological Appraisal was submitted with the earliest proposal due to the proposed demolition of the existing building. However, this proposal does not seek to remove any buildings and therefore the report does not form of this revised submission. As such, it is clear that there is no conflict with LP Policy EN12.

- 5.26 The application is accompanied by a BNG gain plan. The applicant has strived to make the BNG work on site so that it benefits the area and not to outsource it so it has no impact locally. The green roofs are included to enhance the local biodiversity and this is reflected in the flat roofed design of the new dwelling.

6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 The application should be supported for the following reasons:

- i) The site lies within the defined urban area of Caversham (Reading) in a sustainable location close to a range of services and transport links including bus services 22, 81, 82 and 145C which provide regular services to destinations such as Reading, Caversham Heights, Sonning Common and Henley on Thames. The efficient use of the site and density proposed meets Policies CC1, CC6, H1 and H2 of the LP and the NPPF (efficient use of land) which encourages efficient re-use of buildings and land.
- ii) The proposal provides for a form of development that is in keeping with the character and appearance of the host property and surrounding area in terms of its size, scale, layout, height and design. The proposal therefore complies with LP Policies EN4, H2 and CC7 and the design/heritage objectives of the NPPF.
- iii) The proposed development is of an appropriate density having regard to the character and appearance of the surrounding area and the Council's stated views on the host building.
- iv) A S106 agreement will be entered into to provide the required financial contributions towards affordable housing in accordance with LP Policy H3 (i.e. 10%).
- v) The siting of the proposed detached dwelling has taken into account the positioning of adjacent properties and ensures that the proposal would not result in a material loss of amenity to occupants of adjoining properties. The proposal therefore accords with Policies H2, H5, H10, H11 and CC8 of the LP and paragraph 135 (f) of the NPPF in this regard.

- vi) The proposal makes suitable provision for parking in accordance with RBC standards. The proposal does not raise any highway safety issues and complies with LP Policy TR3.
- vii) The proposal is acceptable in respect to trees and biodiversity. The proposals will not result in future pressure for branch pruning. The proposal provides BNG in accordance with current legislation. The proposal is therefore compliant with LP Policies EN12 and EN14.
- viii) The proposal will adhere to a high standard of sustainable construction. The proposed dwelling will include highly insulated, sustainable timber framed construction; insulated structural raft for zero thermal bridge connection and minimal disruption to existing ground build up; A rated triple glazed windows; PV Solar panels with batteries; air source heat pump with under floor heating for maximum efficiency; LED low energy lighting throughout; and mechanical ventilation with heat recovery system to provide fresh air in the airtight construction.