

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Caversham Heights Ward

App Ref: PL/25/0187 Householder planning permission

Address: 2 ORWELL CLOSE, CAVERSHAM, READING, RG4 7PU

Proposal: Remove existing timber fence boundary, position 1.9m high brick wall.

Applicant: Mr & Mrs Scotellaro

Received date: 06/02/2025

Target Decision date: 10/04/2025

Case Officer: James Schofield

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The proposal site is a detached dwelling circa 1960s on a prominent corner of Orwell Close and Chelford Way. The host plot has a larger than average rear garden with a south-westerly aspect and a 6 foot brick wall along its north-westerly edge dividing the rear and front/side gardens. Orwell Close and Chelford Way is residential and has an open plan and airy feel, properties are set back from the road and have large open front gardens without fences or other walls dividing them. There is a high amenity deciduous tree of some variety in front of this wall open to the public. There is a building/fence line beyond which fences and buildings do not extend along Chelford Way and Orwell Close.

Site visit date: 28/02/2025

Site visit photos:



2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The proposed development is for a 1.9 metre high brick wall in front of the existing amenity tree to enlarge the rear garden and reduce the verge/front garden along Chelford Way. Plans and considered;

Site Location Plan

Drwg No. 23046.S.PP-08 Rev A Block Plan

Drwg No. 23046.S.PP-10 Existing Ground Floor Plan

Drwg No. 23046.S.PP-11 Proposed Ground Floor Plan

Drwg No. 23046.S.PP-12 Location Plan

Drwg No. 23046.S.PP-13 Block Plan

Drwg No. 23046.S.PP-14 Existing & Proposed Elevation

Drwg No. 23046.S.PP-15 Typical Elevation of Boundary Wall

As received on the 17th of February 2025

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

App Ref: PL/23/1174 Householder planning permission

Proposal: Proposed two storey rear, first floor side, part garage conversion & front porch.

Decision: Approve on 30th of January 2024

Note: PD rights (Classes A & B) curtailed.

App Ref: PL/24/1114 Householder planning permission

Proposal: Remove existing brick wall, position 1.82m timber panel fence 1m in from boundary line.

Decision: Refused on 16th of October 2024

Note: Due to harm posed to the character of the street.

4. CONSULTATIONS

The site notice was posted on the 28th of February 2025 and the consultation period ran through to the 21st of March 2025. No letters of representation have been received from the public.

The agent was contacted informing them the proposed plans had a number of errors, that no tree survey or tree protection plan was included, and that the proposal was unlikely to be acceptable on character grounds and that withdrawing was advised. No response was received.

5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

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.

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. The following local and national planning policy and guidance is relevant to this application:

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework 2024

National Planning Practice Guidance 2019 onwards

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC7 (Design and the Public Realm)

CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity)

H9 (House Extensions and Ancillary Accommodation)

EN14 (Trees, Hedges and Woodland)

SPG/SPD

A Design Guide to House Extensions SPD 2021

Tree Strategy 2021

6. APPRAISAL

Character and Appearance

Policy H9 states that alterations, such as re-siting a brick wall, will be acceptable where it respects the character of the site, uses materials and a design that respects the character of the site and the pattern of neighbouring properties and the street as a whole 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.

Orwell Close is characterised by wide, open plan frontages, which are accentuated by the flat topography within the street. The applicant's property is adjacent to a T-junction and has a prominent dual aspect onto Chelford Way. The proposal includes a brick wall that would be constructed to 1.9m forward of the tree and building/fence line along Chelford Way. The existing grass verge which surrounds the applicant's property provides a soft verdant edge close to the highway that contributes to the open appearance of the street. This open character would be disrupted by the proposal, and it would significantly obscure a high value amenity tree from the streetscene; replacing it with a brick wall. The wall would appear incongruous and unduly harm the open semi-park like character and appearance of the site and area.

The proposals are contrary to Policies H9 and CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

Trees

Part 'b' of Policy EN12 indicates that all development sites should not result in a net loss of biodiversity or geodiversity.

While there are no Tree Protection Orders on the site, there is a tree on the landscaped area to the north west of the site which contributes positively to the visual amenity of the street and complements the open landscaped character. The proposed wall would enclose the tree, and no tree survey has been submitted. The uncertainty over the impact (root system and foundations of wall) of the proposals on the future health of this tree is a concern. Enclosing the tree would be unacceptable on visual amenity and character grounds. The proposals are contrary to Policies CC7 and EN14 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and the Tree Strategy 2021.

CONCLUSION

The proposed development has been assessed as set out above and is not considered to be acceptable for the reasons detailed.

8. RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE

Reasons:

1. Harm to character and appearance of area
2. Insufficient information to assess damage to tree