

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Caversham Heights

App Ref: PL/25/0157 Full planning permission

Address: Willow Bend, The Warren, Caversham, Reading

Proposal: Erection of hobby unit, following demolition of existing shed, and demolition of covered walkway.

Applicant: Mr Darren Hamblin

Received date: 30 January 2025

Target Decision date: 30 April 2025

Case Officer: Anthony Scholes

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The site is a narrow plot of land located between Caversham Grange, and Warrenside, The Warren. These neighbouring properties, like others along the Warren, are large detached dwellings set within generous riverside plots. The subject site is an unusually sized plot along The Warren, at ~6.5m wide, it is significantly below the average plot width of ~30m. The subject site is occupied by some low level structures, including a shed, boathouse, and raised covered walkway. The site is also provided with an existing area of hardstanding for carparking.

The site is within the following designations:

- Flood zone 2 and 3
- Green Link (EN12)
- Thames Major Landscape Feature (EN13)



Figure 1 - Application site as viewed from The Warren

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Planning permission is sought for the demolition of the existing shed nearest the Warren, and demolition of the covered walkway, and replacement with a larger building to be used as a 'hobby unit'.

The following plans were submitted in support of the application:

Drawing No: 147/100 Rev C – Existing Plans & Elevations
Drawing No: 147/300 Rev B - Proposed plans & Elevations
As received 30 January 2025

3. CONSULTATIONS

The following were consulted:

- Trees - Planning Natural Environment
No objection.
- Transport Development Control
No objection.
- Ecology Consultations
No objection, subject to conditions.
- Environmental Protection Consultations
No objection subject to an informative.
- Lead Local Flood Authority
No objection subject to conditions.

A site notice was placed near the site. No objections were received.

4. PLANNING HISTORY

Ref: 970290 - Two storey house - Withdrawn – 01.04.1997

Ref: 020675 - Application for a certificate of lawful existing use as a dwelling - Refused – 16.01.2003

Ref: 041373 - Application to determine that the use of a property as a dwellinghouse is lawful -
Withdrawn – 07.02.05

Ref: 101823 - Retrospective application for the retention of raised timber wheelchair ramp and ancillary works replacing original stepped ramp (re-submission of 10/00842/FUL) - Refused – 10.03.11

Ref: 110461 - Retrospective application for retention of raised timber wheelchair ramp and ancillary works replacing original stepped timber ramp. Amendment to application 10/01864/FUL. - Approved – 05.09.11

Ref: 220530 - Certificate of Lawfulness for existing shed, ancillary to the boathouse – Withdrawn – 19.07.2022

5. EQUALITY ACT

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. 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.

Accordingly, the National Planning Policy Framework and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

National Planning Policy Framework 2021
National Planning Guidance 2014 onwards

Relevant Planning Policies

CC1: Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development
CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction
CC7: Design and the Public Realm
CC8: Safeguarding Amenity
EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
EN3: Enhancement of Conservation Areas
EN5: Protection of Significant Views with Heritage Interest
EN6: New Development in a Historic Context
EN11: Waterspaces
EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network
EN13: Major Landscape Features and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodland
EN16: Pollution and Water Resources
EN18: Flooding and Drainage

7. APPRAISAL

Principle of development

In land use terms the site is already established as a leisure plot containing a number of existing buildings. The proposals seek to retain the plot in this existing use and therefore in planning land use terms there are no objections to the continuation of this use.

Design Considerations

Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) states that all new development is of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area.

Policy EN11 (Waterspaces) seeks that waterspaces are 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.

The existing shed and walkway to be demolished is not of an overly good form, or construction and their removal is considered acceptable. The proposals would replace the existing shed nearest on The Warren with a taller building, with a gable end wall, a single entrance toward The Warren, and a predominantly glazed rear elevation. The proposal would be larger than the existing shed overall,

however, the proposal would remain a very small scale structure within the street, and its appearance would be more positive toward the street, and as such is considered acceptable.

The Natural Environment

Policy EN12 (Biodiversity and the Green Network) states that planning permission will not be granted for developments which would negatively impact on the 'green network' including areas of biodiversity interest along the River Thames and 'Green Links' and that on all sites development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity.

Policy EN14 (Trees, Hedges and Woodlands) seeks that individual trees, groups of trees and hedges will be protected from damage or removal where they are of importance, that Reading's vegetation cover is extended, and that the quality of waterside vegetation is maintained or enhanced. New development shall make provision for tree retention and planting to provide for biodiversity and to contribute to measures to reduce carbon and adapt to climate change.

Ecology

The ecology report (Luscina Ecology, November 2024) has been undertaken and concludes that the proposals are unlikely to adversely affect priority habitats or protected species subject to the implementation of mitigation measures within the report. These measures include protection of neighbouring trees, precautions for badgers and nesting birds during development as well as removal of an invasive species (Virginia creeper) and are detailed within the report. These issues can be mitigated for through the production of a Construction Environment Management Plan for Biodiversity (CEMP - biodiversity) which should also include measures to ensure that the River Thames is not adversely affected by the development works.

Biodiversity Net Gain

The Biodiversity Net Gain report concludes that the proposals will lead to a net gain of 0.1 Area habitat units (AHU's) equivalent to a net gain of 10.39%. However, the trading rules are not satisfied due to the loss of 0.01 habitats of medium distinctiveness

Despite this, it seems very likely that the development will lead to an overall net gain. Consequently, if planning permission is granted, it will be contingent on meeting the pre-commencement general Biodiversity Net Gain condition. This condition requires the submission and approval of a Biodiversity Gain Plan, demonstrating how a 10% increase in biodiversity value will be achieved for the development.

Trees

The applicant has provided sufficient information to demonstrate that impacts on trees will be mitigated. A condition will be attached to ensure development is undertaken in accordance with the Arboricultural method statement submitted.

Flooding

Policy EN18 (Flooding and Sustainable Drainage Systems) states that:

"Development will be directed to areas at lowest risk of flooding in the first instance, following the Sequential and Exceptions Test set out in the NPPF, and taking into account the effects of climate change. It will consider flooding from all sources, including fluvial, surface water, groundwater and sewer flooding. Where development in areas at risk of flooding is necessary, it will not reduce the capacity of the flood plain to store floodwater, impede the flow of floodwater or in any way increase the risks to life

and property arising from flooding. Wherever possible, development should be designed to reduce flood risk, both on- and off-site.”

The proposed development is located on the edge of the flood zone, by virtue of the siting within the site and the existing lawful leisure use, the sequential test is considered to be passed.

It is considered that the submitted flood risk assessment and flood mitigation strategies are a valid and reasonable approach.

The FRA set out that a number of site-specific flood risk mitigation and design features that would be incorporated within the development to ensure safety to the users of the building, and ensure water drainage is maintained to base levels.

8. CONCLUSION

The proposal would include a new structure for continued leisure use of the plot. The structure would be of an improved condition and design as viewed from the street, and neighbouring properties. The development will mitigate impacts on biodiversity, and trees through conditions sought, and would therefore be acceptable.

9. RECOMMENDATION

Approve.