

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Caversham Heights Ward

App Ref: PL/25/0244 Householder planning permission

Address: 7 KELMSCOTT CLOSE, CAVERSHAM, READING, RG4 7DG

Proposal: Two-storey rear extension, first-floor side extension, and alterations to the front boundary wall (amended).

Applicant: Mr C/O Holtham Newman Architects

Received date: 18/02/2025

Target Decision date: 09/05/2025 (EXT)

Case Officer: Huimin Chen

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is a large two-storey detached dwelling located at the end of Kelmscott Close, in Caversham Heights. The property is set down and back from the road, with a frontage that includes shrubs and off-street parking for a couple of cars. It has a large southwest-facing rear garden adjacent to a spacious green area of The Warren. Land immediately to the south of the site (outside of the red line boundary) is located within an area of identified biodiversity interest and the Thames Valley Major Landscape Feature. The application property and neighbouring properties are constructed of red brick with brown tiled roofs. There is a pedestrian path between the proposal site and 8 Kelmscott Close. Kelmscott Close is a residential cul-de-sac off St Peter's Avenue, and the properties are of a similar character and appearance. The property is neither listed nor located within a conservation area.

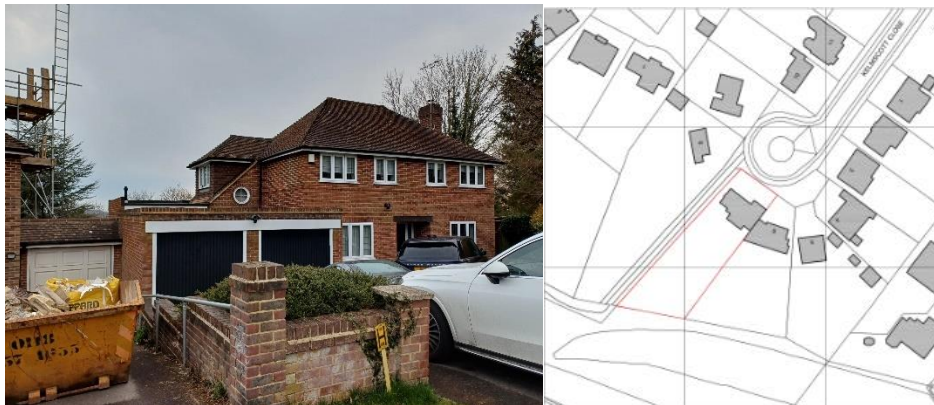


Fig 1 & 2: View from the front of the property (19/03/25); Extract of the location plan submitted

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The proposal seeks permission for a two-storey rear extension, a first-floor side extension, and alterations to the front boundary wall. All proposed brickwork would match the existing property. The existing pitched roof of the main house would be replaced with a combination of crown and pitched roof, while part of the side element would feature a flat roof.

With regard to the proposed two-storey rear extension, which would span the full width of the existing dwelling, the maximum depth would be approximately 5.4m, while the minimum depth would be around 4m. The proposal would create a symmetrical rear elevation, with a central projection of 1.5m in depth, forming a first-floor open-air terrace. The two sides would be set back equally from the centre, featuring identical arrangements of windows, doors, and brickwork. Each side would also include a relatively small, identical hipped roof. The ground and first floors of the central section would both feature large sliding doors. Frosted privacy screens are proposed on both sides of the rear terrace. Three side windows are proposed on the west elevation, with the first-floor windows to be obscure glazed.

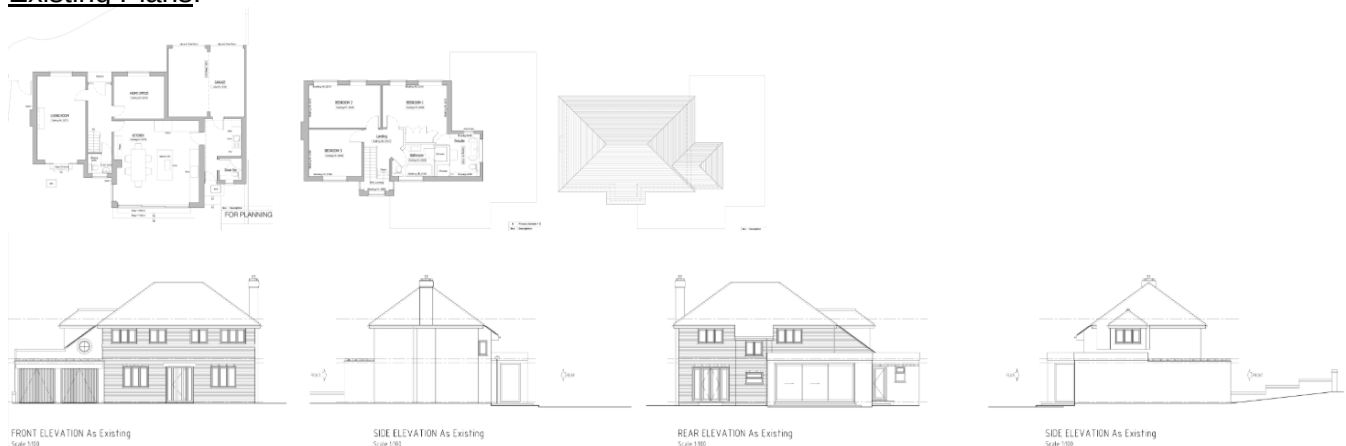
The construction of the first-floor side extension would be set further back from the front elevation of the main house, positioned behind the existing garage roof, and would feature a high-level flat roof that is significantly lower than the main house's existing ridgeline.

The proposal also includes alterations to the existing front boundary wall. Following discussions with the agent, the height of the solid portion of the wall has been reduced to 1m, with black metal railings installed on top, bringing the total height to 1.8m. Four brick pillars are proposed to frame a separate vehicle gate and pedestrian gate. The proposed bricks would match those of the existing property.

Plans considered:

- Drawing No. 2437-P100 – Existing and Proposed Ground Floor Plans received 17/02/25
- Drawing No. 2437-P101 Rev. A – Existing and Proposed First Floor Plans 14/04/25
- Drawing No. 2437-P102 – Existing and Proposed Roof Plans received 17/02/25
- Drawing No. 2437-P103 – Location Plan received 17/02/25
- Drawing No. 2437-P104 – Existing and Proposed Block Plans received 17/02/25
- Drawing No. 2437-P105 – Car Parking Layout received 17/02/25
- Drawing No. 2437-P106 Rev C – Existing and Proposed Elevations received 01/05/25
- Drawing No. 2437-P107 – Street and Rear Elevations received 30/04/25
- Preliminary Roost Assessment (R2917_PRA_a), received 09/04/25
- & An email from the agent, dated 8th May 2025, confirms that the proposed bricks for the front boundary wall would match those of the existing main house, and the railings on top would be black.

Existing Plans:



Proposed Plans:



Fence:



Relevant Planning Histories:

- 7 Kelmscott Close (application site):
 - PL/17/1416 – Single storey rear extension, new first floor side dormer window, replacement garage door. Approved 10/10/2017.
- 6 Kelmscott Close:
 - PL/23/1246 – Removal of existing garage, to be replaced with double storey side extension. Approved 21/11/2023.
 - PL/24/0839 – Proposed partial garage conversion with replacement, raised flat roof over. Additional first floor Ensuite and Bathroom windows on side elevations (obscured glazing) and other ground floor window/door changes to the side and rear elevations. Approved 30/08/2024.
- 8 Kelmscott Close:
 - PL/21/1021 – Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of a two storey, 5-bedroom dwelling. Approved 24/11/2021.

3. CONSULTATIONS

Ecology, Reading Borough Council: No objection.

The original ecological comments requested that the agent carry out a bat survey, as the building may host roosting bats, and to confirm whether this is the case on 11th March 2025. The agent submitted a Preliminary Roost Assessment (R2917_PRA-a) on 9th April 2025. The Ecology team has confirmed the following:

The bat survey report (John Wenman, April 225, ref: R2917_PRA_a) has been undertaken to an appropriate standard and concludes that the proposed works are unlikely to adversely affect roosting bats. There are therefore no ecological objections to the application.

Transport, Reading Borough Council: No objection.

On site parking will be provided in excess of the current parking standards and is illustrated on the submitted car parking plan. No changes to the existing vehicle access is proposed.

Site Notice:

A site notice was displayed on 19th March 2025 in front of the application site. The 21-day consultation period ended on 9th April 2025. One objection letter of representation has been received from 6 Kelmscott Close, Reading as follows:

My comment relates to the potential for being overlooked due to the ability to look back from the end of the proposed balcony towards our house/over the fence at close quarters.



Fig 3: Site notice photo

Communications with Agent:

- The Officer communicated with the agent to address the privacy concerns raised by No. 6, as well as potential privacy concerns for No. 8. The agent agreed to introduce two privacy screens on both sides of the rear roof terrace, as shown on revised plans. Additionally, the proposed side windows on the first floor would be obscured.
- Following communications regarding the front boundary wall, which was not supported initially, the amended proposal reduced the height of the solid portion of the front boundary wall.
- The proposal is large in scale. While the site is spacious enough to accommodate this size of development, the proposal is too close to No. 6. Therefore, the Officer requested a street view, including both the front and rear elevations of No. 6, to help comprehensively assess the proposal. The agent submitted the required street view elevations on 30th April 2025.

Please refer to the appraisal section for a further details.

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.

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’. 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

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC7 (Design and the Public Realm)
CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity)
EN12 (Biodiversity and the Green Network)

EN13 (Major Landscape Features and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty)
EN14 (Trees, Hedges and Woodlands)
H9 (House Extensions and Ancillary Accommodation)
H10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space)

SPD

Design Guide to House Extensions 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 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 determination of this planning application and are not considered to be ‘out of date’.

5. APPRAISAL

Character and Appearance

Policy H9 states that an extension to a house will be acceptable where it respects the character of the house in terms of scale, location, materials and design and respects the character and pattern of neighbouring properties 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. Policy EN13 states that planning permission will not be granted for any development that would detract from the character and appearance of a Major Landscape Feature, with the site adjacent to the boundary of the Thames Valley Major Landscape Feature.

Two-storey rear extension:

The proposed two-storey rear extension would feature a symmetrical rear elevation, with two small, hipped roofs, two large full-height doors, and two four-pane windows on either side of the rear elevation. A full height sliding door would be installed centrally on the rear, both on the ground and first floors. Whilst undoubtedly a large rear extension, given the nature of the existing property, plot and surrounding context of properties on Kelmscott Close, in this specific instance it is considered that the site can suitably accommodate the additional massing proposed. Furthermore, the extension is not considered to detract from the character and appearance of the neighbouring Thames Valley Major Landscape Feature. All proposed bricks would match those of the existing property. Therefore, the proposal is considered to enhance the appearance of the rear elevation compared to the existing property. Since matching bricks are proposed, combined with the detached nature, the proposed two-storey rear extension is not considered to detract from the neighbouring properties. Most of the proposed rear development would be invisible from the street, as it is primarily situated behind the main house and the ground level is lower than Kelmscott Close. Therefore, it would not impact the street view in relation to the rear extension.

First-floor side extension:

The proposed side extension would be built onto the existing side extension, featuring a flat roof with a sedum cover at the front part and a hipped roof at the rear part, starting from the rear of the existing garage roof. The total height of the proposal would be significantly set lower than the existing ridgeline of the main dwelling. Therefore, it is considered subservient to the main house. Two front-facing windows would be installed in the side extension, identical to the existing windows on the opposite side of the main house. All proposed bricks would match those of the existing property. As a result, the proposed side extension is considered to respect the character and appearance of the existing house and is not seen as detracting from the neighbouring properties or the street view.



Fig 4: Proposed (up) and existing (down) front (L) and rear (R) streetscene elevations

It has been noted that 6 Kelmscott Close obtained permission (PL/23/1246) for the removal of the existing garage, to be replaced with a double-storey side extension. The application was approved on 21st November 2023. In elevation form the side extension looks to be a substantial addition, but in the context of a) the existing side extension, b) it being significantly set back from the front elevation and c) what is approved at No. 6, the level of harm to the host property and within the streetscene is sufficiently reduced so as to not be able to sustainably resist the proposal.

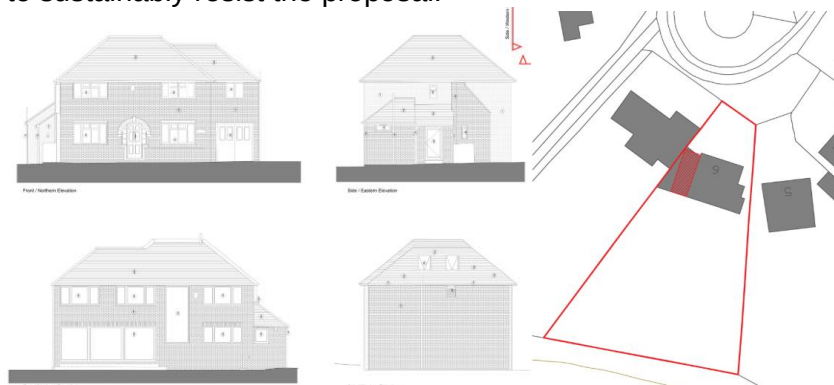


Fig 5 & 6: Approved proposed elevations of 6 Kelmscott Close; Extract of the block plan approved

Cumulative impact of the rear and side extensions

It is acknowledged that when combined, the rear and side extensions to the property amount to significant additions in the bulk and massing of the property, altering its character and appearance in the streetscene. However, as outlined above, individually both elements are considered to be appropriate in design terms. The same conclusion is reached when the cumulative impact is considered, although the level of works is considered to be the maximum possible whilst still responding satisfactorily to the prevailing local context and character, aligning with Policy CC7.

Front boundary wall:

Following communications with the agent, the solid part of the proposed front boundary wall has been reduced to a height of 1m, which is 30cm higher than the existing boundary, with black railings on top, bringing the total height to 1.78m. Two gates, also made of black railings, would be included. The proposed brickwork would match the existing facing brickwork of the host property. Therefore, the amended proposal

mitigates the impact on the wider environment, compared to the original front boundary wall, which had a solid height of 1.5m. Although the total height is still significantly higher than other boundary walls in the wider context of the cul-de-sac, the introduction of railings provides a sense of space and reduces the visual impact from the street. Balancing security and amenity, the alteration of the front boundary is considered acceptable on this basis.

Overall, the proposal is considered acceptable in terms of character and appearance, given its subservient and symmetrical design, matching materials, cul-de-sac position, and lower ground level compared to the highway.

Residential Amenity

Policy H9 states that an extension will be acceptable where it does not result in an overbearing impact on neighbours. Policy H10 states that dwellings will be provided with functional private or communal open space. Policy CC8 states an extension to a house will be acceptable where it will not cause a significant detrimental impact to the living environment of existing or new residential properties.

There are no identified issues regarding privacy. Although the proposal includes two west-facing windows on the first floor, which would face 8 Kelmscott Road, these windows would be obscured, as requested by the Officer to protect the neighbour amenity, windows to be obscured would be secured by condition. Additionally, there is a pedestrian path and a line of trees between the proposal site and No. 8 (albeit in time the line of trees may not be permanent). Regarding the privacy concerns raised by No. 6, where the proposed rear roof terrace could potentially overlook their garden, the proposal includes two opaque glass screens. The introduction of these privacy screens is considered an effective solution to address the concerns raised by No. 6, particularly when combined with the angled position between the properties. The installation of the privacy screens would also be secured by condition. Although there are no side windows proposed on the first floor elevation of No. 6, a condition will prevent any windows being added to the east elevation of proposal site above ground floor level, unless a separate permission is granted.

It is noted that the proposal includes a high-level flat roof on the proposed first-floor side extension, which could potentially be used as a roof terrace with minimal further alterations. Given the proposed extension is set close to the boundary with the neighbour, it is considered necessary to include a precautionary condition which prevents the flat roof of the proposed extension being used as a terrace, without specific permission being granted by the local planning authority. This condition will secure the amenity of the neighbouring occupier at this point.

With regard to the impacts on neighbouring properties in terms of overbearing or blocking light, it is considered that the proposal would not be harmful. 8 Kelmscott Close is located at a sufficient distance from the proposal site, and therefore, no harm would be caused. Although No. 6 is adjacent to the proposal site, the proposed two-storey rear extension would not extend beyond the rear building line of No. 6, and the properties are positioned at an angle. The first-floor side extension would be behind the existing garage roof and would not extend beyond the frontage of 6 Kelmscott Close. Therefore, the proposal as a whole is not considered overbearing or likely to block light to the neighbouring properties.

The proposal is large in scale; however, the site has a spacious rear garden, which is sufficient to accommodate this size of development. The rear garden would still provide enough space for outdoor activities upon the completion of the proposed development.

The alteration of the front boundary wall, which would include one vehicle gate and one pedestrian gate, along with the installation of black metal railings on top of a 1m solid boundary wall to enclose the front garden, is considered to offer security benefits for the residents.

For current and future occupiers, the proposed development will provide additional ancillary accommodation on the plot, benefiting the occupiers and improving the overall quality of accommodation

at the site. However, given the size of the proposed extension and the potential ease for internal alterations to divide up the accommodation fairly simply, as a precautionary measure it is considered necessary and relevant to include a condition specifying that the extension hereby permitted shall not be occupied at any time other than for purposes ancillary to the residential use of the main dwelling. This is to accord with the terms of the application, and to ensure that separate occupation of the extension/building would not detract from the amenities or living conditions of neighbouring residential properties (or the character of the locality) in accordance with Policy H9 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

Natural Environment

There are no trees within 15m of the proposed site; therefore, no risks have been identified in terms of trees. The proposed sedum roof for the side extension is supported in principle, but further details are required to ensure it is implemented and will be maintained accordingly. As such a pre-occupation condition would be included in the permission to secure full details of this welcomed element.

Ecology

As per the comments from GS Ecology, following the submission of a bat survey, no issues are raised in this regard.

6. CONCLUSION

Overall, the proposed development has been assessed as set out above and is considered to be acceptable on that basis, subject to the following conditions.

7. RECOMMENDATION

Approve with Conditions

Recommended Conditions:

Approved Plans

Time Limit

Materials (To Match)

Use of Roof Restricted

No New Openings

Obscure Glazing

Privacy Screen

Ancillary use

Sedum Roof