

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Caversham Heights Ward

App Ref: PL/25/0574 Householder planning permission

Address: 1 GRAVEL HILL COTTAGES, BLAGRAVE LANE, CAVERSHAM, READING, RG4 7DY

Proposal: Two storey and single storey rear and side extensions

Applicant: Mr R Walker

Received date: 14/04/2025

Target Decision date: 30/06/2025 (EXT)

Case Officer: Huimin Chen

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is a semi-detached property located on Blagrove Lane, sharing an identical character with the adjoining property. It is situated within a predominantly suburban area characterised by a mix of detached and semi-detached dwellings. The surrounding area features established residential neighbourhoods with mature landscaping and a generally quiet environment. Gravel Hill, located to the west of the site boundary and within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), consists of open countryside lying outside the Reading Borough settlement boundary. No. 3 Gravel Hill Cottages, to the north of the site, is a Grade II listed building.

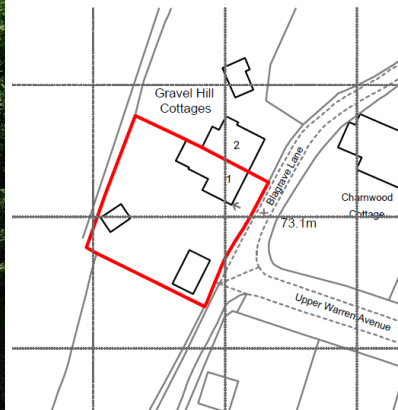


Fig 1 & 2: Front of 1 Gravel Hill Cottages, taken on 28/04/2025; Location Plan

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The proposal seeks permission for part two-storey and part single-storey extensions to the rear and side of the property, including internal alterations and changes to fenestration. The development involves the removal of the existing dormer and conservatory to facilitate the proposed works. According to the application form, the proposed roof would be finished with red roof tiles, and all windows and doors would be white UPVC.

With regard to the proposed part two-storey rear and side extension with a crown roof, it would be partially constructed on top of the existing rear extension projecting from the rear mono-pitched roof, while the remainder would be erected from ground level, filling the existing southwest corner of the host dwellinghouse and aligning with the existing rear and side building lines. One openable floor-to-ceiling window would be installed at the corner facing west, with another floor-to-ceiling window on the rear elevation at first floor level. The ground floor would feature one door and an adjacent window of the same height to the side elevation along with a smaller window. The proposed eaves and maximum heights are approximately 4.89 m and 5.59 m, respectively.

Turning to the proposed single-storey rear extension with a crown roof, it measures approximately 5.5 m in depth. The proposed eaves and maximum heights are approximately 2.3 m and 3.21 m, respectively. The extension would span approximately 10 m in width, projecting from the entire rear wall of the existing dwelling. Upon completion, approximately 3.3 m of the extension would form part of the principal elevation of the host dwelling. The proposal includes three full-height windows, one large sliding door, and one small window.

The proposed developments overall aim to provide a larger dining/kitchen/lounge area, a utility cupboard, a hall, a new entrance area, and an enlarged bedroom on the first floor.

Plans/documents considered:

- Drawing No. 00625-01 – Existing Plans
- Drawing No. 00625-02 – Existing Elevations
- Drawing No. 00625-03 – Proposed Plans
- Drawing No. 00625-04 – Proposed Elevations
- Drawing No. 00625-05 – Location and Block Plan
Received 14/04/2024.
- Tree Protection Plan received 23/06/2025.
- BS5837:2012 Tree Survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment, prepared by GHA trees arboricultural consultancy, ref: GHA/DS/160445:25, dated 20/06/2025, received 23/06/2025.
- Planning Statement, prepared by Creative Design and Structure Ltd., dated and received 24/06/2025.



Fig 3: Existing Floor Plans and Elevations submitted



Fig 4: Proposed Floor Plans and Elevations submitted

Planning histories:

PL/08/0709 – Erection of a pair of semi-detached cottages. Refused 28/03/2008.

3. CONSULTATIONS

- **Reading Borough Council, Natural Environment Consultee:** response received 26/06/2025.

“It is unclear what is happening with the patio as it’s not shown on existing or proposed plans. It currently extends from the rear up to and around the Oak – clarity on this is required to confirm if ground works are taking place within the RPA.

Some mitigation for the shrub and additional lawn loss would be reasonable - a landscape principles plan would be required.

If the above requests are not provided prior to a decision, we would conclude no objections and condition Arboricultural Method Statement and hard and soft landscaping scheme”

- **Public Consultation:** A site notice was displayed on 28/04/2025 in front of the application site. The 21-day consultation period ended on 19/05/2025.



Fig 5: Site Notice Photo

One letter of representation has been received from Caversham and District Residents Association (CADRA) as follows, dated 15/05/2025:

“CADRA has concerns about the proposed side extension at No. 1 Gravel Hill Cottages that need addressing.

Historical maps show that Nos. 1 and 2 were constructed by 1913 and formed a matching pair, built in open countryside near the only other dwelling at the time—the now Grade II listed No. 3 Gravel Hill Cottages. Together, these buildings represent the original historic fabric of Blagrove Lane.

While we appreciate the homeowner's desire to extend the property, we believe modifications could better preserve the architectural integrity and symmetry of this early 20th-century cottage pair. The current proposal harms the rural character and setting of these cottages and no. 3 the listed building next to them, which have remained historically and visually linked for over a century.

To address our concerns while accommodating the homeowner's needs, we ask Council planners to require sensitive treatment and appropriate mitigation measures. Specifically, we suggest requiring:

- Brick that closely matches the original building materials
- Roof tiles consistent with the existing structure
- Window styles that complement the original design
- Additional hedge planting to reduce visibility of the extension from both the front and side of the property

These modifications would help maintain the historical context of this small but significant group of buildings, while aligning with the principles of heritage protection outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework and the Reading Local Plan.

Without such modifications the Caversham and District Residents' Association asks that the application be refused."

- **Discussion with Agent:**

The agent was informed on 20th May 2025 that the submitted proposal would be recommended for refusal if no amendments were made to ensure compliance with Policies CC7 and H9 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019. However, apart from a Planning Statement received on 24th June 2025, no revised plans have been provided. Therefore, the proposal has been assessed based on all plans and documents submitted to date.

For further details regarding the assessment of the proposal, please refer to the appraisal section.

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

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

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 submission draft of the Local Plan was submitted on 9th May 2025.

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. EN 13 states that whilst no part of Reading Borough falls within an AONB, there are two AONBs in close proximity. Development in this area must nevertheless take into account any impact on these AONBs. The rear boundary of the application site borders one of the adjacent AONBs, and the policy states that development should not affect the setting of an AONB nor have a detrimental impact in terms of design.

The property dates back to 1910 and is paired with No. 2 Gravel Hill Cottages. It is characterised by identical windows/doors, side porches, as well as a mono-pitched rear extension with a moderate dormer, representing the historic fabric of Blagrove Lane. Both properties have existing conservatories, but these are modest.

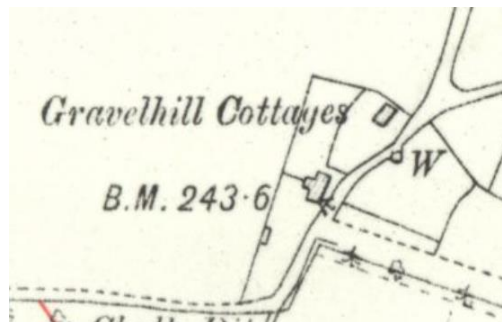


Fig 6: Abstract of Historic Map, dated 1910

With regard to the part two-storey and part single-storey side and rear extensions, it is considered that the proposal does not complement the original dwelling due to its roof design and the overall scale of the new extensions.

The proposed development features two crown roofs, whereas the original roofs are pitched. The proposal would, therefore, create uncharacteristic roof forms and due to the overall depth and width of the proposal, the extensions would be visually dominant and would have a detrimental effect on the appearance of the existing rear steeply pitched outrigger, considered to form part of the character of this pair of properties. The width of the proposed single-storey rear extension is approximately 10 m, which is around 3.3 m wider than the host dwelling, making it readily visible from the public realm along Blagrove Lane, representing a dominant addition to the host property.

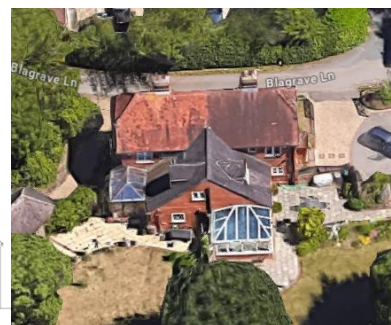
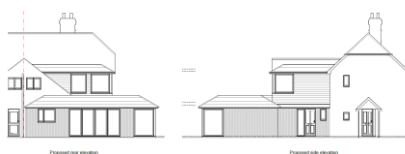


Fig 7 & 8: Proposed Elevations submitted; Google Street View image of the rear elevation, taken 27/06/2025

The proposed development would be partially visible from the street. Although it would change the appearance of the property and somewhat impact the streetscene, it is not considered to be significantly harmful, as the development would be mainly situated at the rear of the property. However, the proposed visually dominant additions are deemed to detract from the wider area because its design is not in keeping with the surrounding landscape, resulting in a loss of visual cohesion.

Regarding the proposed arrangement and size of windows in relation to the host dwelling and the adjoining property, it is considered that they would not reflect the character and appearance of the existing dwelling and would significantly alter the established pattern of the building's side and rear elevations. Most of the new windows are larger than the existing ones and do not match those of the adjoining property. Paragraph 6.4.1 of the House Extensions SPD states: "*Proposals are refused if windows and doors are featured in the design that are inappropriate in terms of size, scale and/or placement. This can be particularly noticeable on semi-detached dwellings.*" Furthermore, the proposal also involves the removal of the small, pitched roof side facing dormer within the roofscape of the existing rear outrigger, which would contribute to the overall significant alteration to the roof character of this pair of properties.

Furthermore, the west (rear) of the proposal site directly faces an AONB. The proposal's design is not considered acceptable and, as such, it fails to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the features of this area.

It is acknowledged that the agent/applicant has expressed willingness to include additional hedge planting as part of the proposal, as indicated in the submitted Planning Statement. However, this is not considered sufficient to mitigate the harmful impacts arising from the proposal.

Overall, the proposed development is considered to detract from the character and appearance of both the host dwelling, the adjoining property and the wider area. Consequently, it does not comply with Policies H9, CC7 and EN13 of the Reading Borough Local Plan, nor with the Design Guide to House Extensions SPD 2021.

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.

Although the proposal includes the installation of south-facing windows, no risks to privacy or overbearing impact have been identified, as there are no properties located to the south of the site. It is not considered that the proposed development would reduce light to No. 2, given that most of the two-storey element would be constructed on top of the existing rear extension, integrated with the steeply pitched roof, and extension beyond the existing footprint of the dwelling to the rear would be single-storey. The property benefits from a relatively large garden, ensuring sufficient outdoor space would remain upon completion of the proposal, in accordance with Policies H9, H10, and CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

Trees

Policy EN14 requires 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. The quality of waterside vegetation will be maintained or enhanced.

There is one Turkey oak and one Beech tree within the curtilage of the property. In accordance with the Validation Requirements for Planning Applications 2021, an Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) was requested to support this application. The submitted AIA and Tree Protection Plan indicate that the proposed development would not encroach upon the Root Protection Areas of either the Turkey oak or the

Beech tree. Tree protection fencing has also been indicated in the submitted Tree Protection Plan. Therefore, the proposal is considered acceptable in terms of tree protection.

However, it is worth noting the comments from the Natural Environment Officer in the consultation section. Should a further application be submitted pursuant to this approval, clarification regarding ground works and a landscape principles plan may be required.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the proposed part two-storey and part single-storey rear and side extensions are not considered complementary to the existing house due to their roof design and overall scale. Given that the outrigger side extension and first-floor extension would be partially visible from the street and do not complement the host dwelling, the proposal would create some harm to the street scene. Additionally, the arrangement and size of windows, roof design, and scale of the proposal fail to respect the character and appearance of the existing house and the adjoining property in terms of fenestration and design.

Although no adverse amenity impacts on neighbouring occupiers have been identified, and no objections have been raised regarding trees, the proposals would provide additional space for current and future occupants, this benefit is not considered to outweigh the harmful design impacts in the overall planning balance. Therefore, it is considered that the proposal should be refused.

7. RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE

1. The proposed part two-storey and part single-storey rear and side extensions due to their uncharacteristic crown roof design, overall scale, both in terms of width and depth, would be visually dominant and overbearing additions, and would detrimentally affect the character and appearance of the dwelling and the area, including the existing steeply roofed outrigger, which forms part of the character of this pair of properties. Additionally, the arrangement and size of windows would fail to respect those of the existing house. Overall, therefore, the proposal would have a detrimental effect on the character and appearance of the existing house and the wider area and would not be complementary additions, contrary to Policies CC7 (Design and the Public Realm), H9 (House Extensions and Ancillary Accommodation) and EN13 (Major Landscape Features and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).