

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Caversham Heights Ward

App Ref: PL/25/0485 Householder planning permission

Address: BLAGRAVE LODGE, BLAGRAVE FARM LANE, CAVERSHAM, READING, RG4 7JX

Proposal: Loft conversion with rear dormer

Applicant: Mr & Mrs Toby and Jennifer Adamson

Received date: 27/03/2025

Target Decision date: 18/07/2025 (EXT)

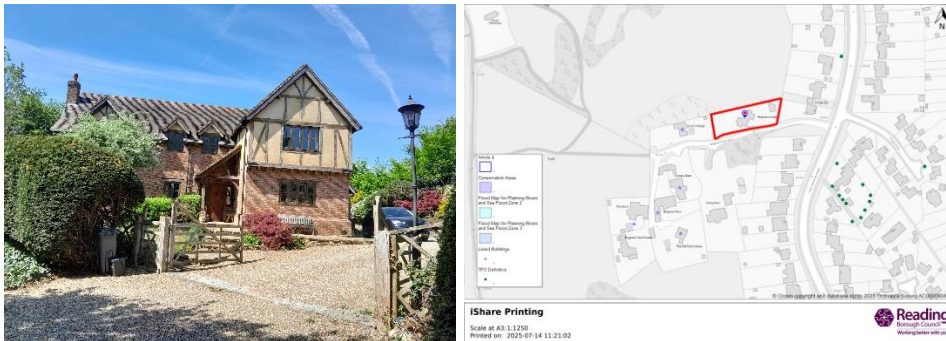
Case Officer: Huimin Chen

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The property is a large, detached dwelling situated north of Blagrove Farm Lane in Caversham Heights. Permitted development rights were removed under condition 2 of permission PL/00/0152 (00/00080/FUL) as follows:

2. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (or any order revoking or re-enacting that Order with or without modification) no further development shall be carried out without the permission of the local planning authority. Reason: as unrestricted development or various minor operations to or around the curtilage of the dwelling could have a serious impact on adjoining properties and the area in general and should therefore be controlled.

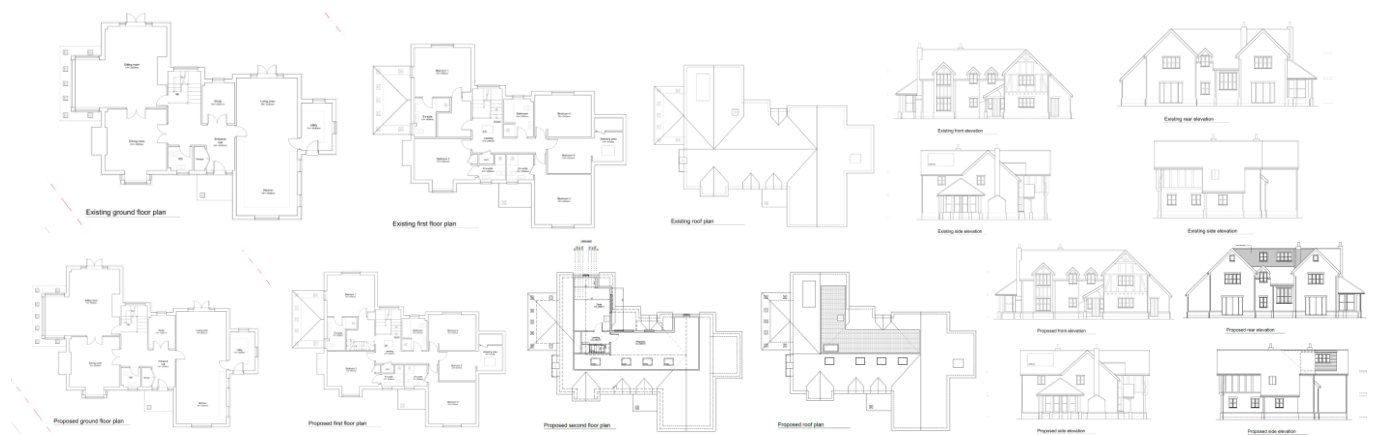
There are five listed buildings located to the west and southwest of the application site along Blagrove Farm Lane, adjacent to the boundary of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to the north.



Figs 1&2: View from the front of the property (28/04/25); Location Plan from Council's GIS system (14/07/25)

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The proposal is for a loft conversion featuring an L-shaped rear dormer with a flat roof. The additional space is intended to be used as a study room and a playroom. The rear dormer would be set within the existing rear roof plane of the host dwelling and would measure approximately 2.2m in total height. The development includes the installation of three sets of windows: two of which would be the same size and aligned vertically with the existing window openings below, while the third set would also be of the similar size. Additionally, two small windows would be installed on the existing rear wall at roof level. New tiles would be hung to match the existing. As confirmed in the agent's email, the proposed materials for the window installations would also match the existing materials.



Figs 3-13: Existing and Proposed Plans and Elevations

Plans considered:

- Drawing No. 02825-01: Existing Ground Floor Plan received 27/03/2025.
- Drawing No. 02825-02: Existing First Floor Plan received 27/03/2025.
- Drawing No. 02825-03: Existing Roof Plan received 27/03/2025.
- Drawing No. 02825-04: Existing Elevations (Front & Side) received 27/03/2025.
- Drawing No. 02825-05: Existing Elevations (Rear & Side) received 27/03/2025.
- Drawing No. 02825-06: Proposed Ground Floor Plan received 27/03/2025.
- Drawing No. 02825-07: Proposed First Floor Plan received 27/03/2025.
- Drawing No. 02825-08 Rev A: Proposed Second Floor Plan received 16/05/2025.
- Drawing No. 02825-09 Rev A: Proposed Roof Plan received 16/05/2025.
- Drawing No. 02825-10: Proposed Elevations (Front & Side) received 27/03/2025.
- Drawing No. 02825-11 Rev A: Proposed Elevations (Rear & Side) received 16/05/2025.
- Drawing No. 02825-12 Rev A: Location & Block Plans received 14/07/2025.
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (DBW), Ref: SPH/NP/PEA-25/29.04, prepared by Urban Tree Experts, dated 13/05/2025, received 16/05/2025.
- Ecological Survey Report (BATS), Ref: SPH/ESR-25/20.06, prepared by Urban Tree Experts, dated 02/07/2025, received 03/07/2025.

& An email from the agent, dated 14/07/2025 confirming that all proposed materials for the window installations would match those of the existing building.

Planning history:

- PL/98/0003 (old ref: 98/00815/FUL) – Proposed 4 bedroom house. Refused 10/03/1999.
- PL/00/0152 (old ref: 00/00080/FUL) – Erection of 1 x 5 Bedroom House and Garage (Amendment to Scheme Previously Approved under Reference 98/0815). Approved 09/03/2000.

3. CONSULTATIONS

- Ecology, Reading Borough Council – response received 01/04/2025.

The site is surrounded by habitat of good suitability for use by foraging and commuting bats – connected gardens with trees neighbour the house to the east, south and west, with a golf course directly to the north and pond 350m west. Features of the house that are potentially suitable for use by roosting bats, for example raised or missing roof tiles, may be lost during the works. Moreover, we have records of bats roosting in nearby properties. As such, there is a risk that the proposals will affect roosting bats and a bat survey report will need to be provided before this application can be determined.

Planning Officer Note: Following communication with the agent, a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (DBW), Ref: SPH/NP/PEA-25/29.04, prepared by Urban Tree Experts and dated 13/05/2025, was received on 16/05/2025. Further comments from Ecology were received on 20/05/2025 as follows:

The bat survey report (Urban Tree Experts, May 2025, ref: SPH/NP/PEA-25/29.04) has been undertaken to the appropriate standard and concludes since there are raised roof tiles and lead flashing, further survey should be undertaken to confirm whether the building hosts a bat roost. The results of the survey should be provided prior to the determination of the application, or the application would need to be refused on the grounds that insufficient information has been provided for the council to determine the likely impact of the proposals upon bats, which are a protected species and material consideration in the planning process.

Planning Officer Note: An Ecological Survey Report (BATS), Ref: SPH/ESR-25/20.06, prepared by Urban Tree Experts and dated 02/07/2025, was submitted on 03/07/2025. Further comments from Ecology were received on 07/07/2025 as follows:

The bat survey report (Urban Tree Experts, July 2025, ref: SPH/ESR-25/20.06) has been undertaken to the appropriate standard and details the results of one dusk emergence survey carried out on 20 June 2025. The report concludes that the building is unlikely to host roosting bats and as such, there are no objections to the application on ecological grounds.

Site Notice:

A site notice was displayed on 28th April 2025 in front of the application site. The 21-day consultation period ended on 19th May 2025. No letters of representation have been received.



Fig 14: Site notice photo

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)

EN13 (Major Landscape Features and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty)

H9 (House Extensions and Ancillary Accommodation)

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. Policy EN13 states that planning permission will not be granted for any development that would detract from the character and appearance of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), with the site adjacent to the boundary of the Chilterns AONB.

Although the proposed L-shaped rear dormer is substantial in size, it is considered appropriate in terms of scale, design, and choice of materials in relation to the existing dwelling. Given the large scale of the existing roof and the design that the dormer would be set within the main roof plane, the development would integrate well with the host property. The new windows are designed to reflect the existing fenestration pattern by aligning vertically with the window openings below. Where no window openings exist below, the proposed windows would match the size of the existing ones. Furthermore, all proposed materials are to match those of the existing dwelling.

As such, the proposal is considered to respect the character and appearance of the existing property and would not detract from the Chilterns AONB. Additionally, as the development is primarily located at the rear of the property and is not visible from the streetscene, it is not expected to have any adverse impact on the visual amenity of the area. The proposal complies with Policies CC7, H9, and EN13 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

Residential Amenity

Policy H9 states that an extension will be acceptable where it does not result in an overbearing impact on neighbours. 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.

The application site comprises a detached dwelling, with the proposal located within the existing rear roof structure. The rear of the site faces Caversham Heath Golf Course to the north, with no neighbouring properties in that direction. Therefore, no adverse impacts in terms of privacy, overbearing effect, or loss of sunlight and daylight have been identified. This complies with Policies H9 and CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

Ecology

The site is surrounded by habitat of good suitability for foraging and commuting bats, including connected gardens with trees to the east, south, and west, a golf course immediately to the north, and a pond approximately 350m to the west. The property itself contains features potentially suitable for roosting bats. Therefore, a Bat Survey was required.

Following communications with the agent, a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and a subsequent Ecological Survey Report were submitted on 16 May 2025 and 3 July 2025, respectively. According to comments from GS Ecology, following the review of both bat surveys, no ecological issues have been raised.

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)