28 May 2025

Reading Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	**PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT**
Ward	Caversham Heights
Planning Application Reference:	PL/24/1659 (FUL)
Site Address:	Land at Atterbury Gardens, Land to the rear of 23-25 Richmond Road, Caversham
Proposed Development	Erection of 4no. two-storey detached dwellings (3 x 3-bed, 1 x 4-bed) including access via Atterbury Gardens, parking, and associated works
Report author	Anthony Scholes
Applicant	Mr Steve Hicks
Deadline:	Agreed extension of time to 30 June 2025
Recommendations	Delegate to the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services (ADPTPPS) to i) GRANT full planning permission, subject to: a) the satisfactory completion of a s106 legal agreement and delegate to ADPTPPS to make such minor changes to the conditions, Heads of Terms and details of the legal agreement as may be reasonably required to issue the permission, and b) receipt of a satisfactory arboricultural impact assessment. OR c) ii) Refuse full planning permission if the legal agreement is not completed, and/or satisfactory information relating to arboricultural impacts is not provided by 30/6/2025 (unless officers on behalf of the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services agree to a later date for completion of the legal agreement, and provision of satisfactory arboricultural information)
S106 Terms	Contribution toward affordable housing equivalent to 10% GDV (£134,750)
Conditions	1. TL1 Standard three year time limit 2. AP1 Approved Plans 3. M2 Materials (to be approved) 4. C2 Construction Method Statement(CMS) 5. C1 Hours of construction/demolition (0800-1800 Mon-Fri; 0800-1300 Sat (not at all on Sundays/BankHolidays)) 6. L2 Landscaping plan (to be approved) 7. L7 Arboricultural method statement (to be approved) 8. L3 Boundary treatments to be approved 9. C03 Contaminated land assessment to be submitted)

	10. C04 Remediation scheme to be submitted 11. C05 Remediation scheme (implement and verify) 12. C06 Reporting of unidentified contamination 13. DC1 Vehicle Parking (as specified) 14. DC3 Vehicle access (as specified) 15. DC5 Cycle parking (as specified) 16. DC8 Refuse and recycling (as specified, including presentation area, and collection) 17. DC24 Electric Vehicle charging points (detailed to be provided, approved by LPA, and implemented prior to occupation) 18. C4 No bonfires 19. Pre-commencement construction environmental management plan (to be approved) 20. Pre-occupation Lighting scheme (to be approved) 21. Pre-commencement biodiversity enhancements scheme (to be approved) 22. Pre-commencement variegated yellow archangel eradication strategy (to be approved) 23. PD1 Permitted development extension rights removed (Class A (enlargement, improvement or other alteration), Class B (enlargement of a dwellinghouse consisting of an addition or alteration to its roof), and Class E (building or enclosure, swimming or other pool required for a purpose incidental to the enjoyment of the dwellinghouse) 24. PD2 Permitted development extension rights removed (no new openings) 25. PD3 Obscure glazing (to specific windows facing neighbouring properties, including maintaining in perpetuity)
Informatives	1. IF1 Positive and proactive 2. IF2 Pre-commencement conditions 3. IF3 Highways 4. IF32 Biodiversity Net Gain Plan (To be approved) 5. IF4 Section 106 (accompanies approval) 6. IF5 Terms 7. IF6 Building Regulations Approval required 8. IF7 Complaints about construction 9. IF8 Encroachment 10. IF9 Contamination 11. I11 Community infrastructure levy (Chargeable) 12. I17 Do no damage the verge

1. Executive summary

1.1. This report concerns the application for full planning permission for the erection of 4 no. detached dwellings on land to the south of Atterbury Gardens, previously the garden of no's 23-25 Richmond Road. A previous application was approved in 2021 (which has now lapsed) for 3 no. dwellings on the same site. The proposal would provide additional dwellings on a windfall site, with a policy compliant affordable housing contribution. , The proposal would result in an on-site loss of biodiversity, but would provide an off-site biodiversity net gain, and overall it is considered on balance to be acceptable, and the recommendation is to grant subject to completion of a s106 agreement, and receipt of a satisfactory arboricultural impact assessment.

2. Introduction and site description

2.1. The application is a ‘minor’ application and is presented to Committee at the request of Councillor Ballsdon citing concerns around amenity impacts, and community concerns.

2.2. The application site comprises land to the south-east of Atterbury Gardens and to the north of No’s 23 and 25 Richmond Road. The plot is approximately 016ha in size, and is ‘L’ shaped, extending further into the former garden of no. 23 Richmond Road than it does the former garden of no. 25 Richmond Road.

2.3. The surrounding area is predominantly residential with a mix of building styles. There are several trees in the area, some of which are subject to a Tree Preservation Order

2.4. The site is within an area of potential contaminated land and a green link runs through the site.

Figure 1 - Site location plan and aerial image

Figure 2 - Panoramic view of site (Richmond Road properties in background)

Figure 3 - Fence to site as viewed between no's 2 and 3 Atterbury Gardens

Side of no.2 Atterbury Gardens

View to front of 3-5 Atterbury Gardens (Application site to right)

Figure 4 - Site photos of Attebury Gardens properties

3. The proposal

3.1. The proposed development seeks full planning permission for the erection of 4 x 2-storey dwellings with associated parking, bin and cycle storage and soft landscaping. The dwellings would be set out with rear gardens facing toward no. 23 Richmond Road, and the rear of no.6 Woodford Close respectively.

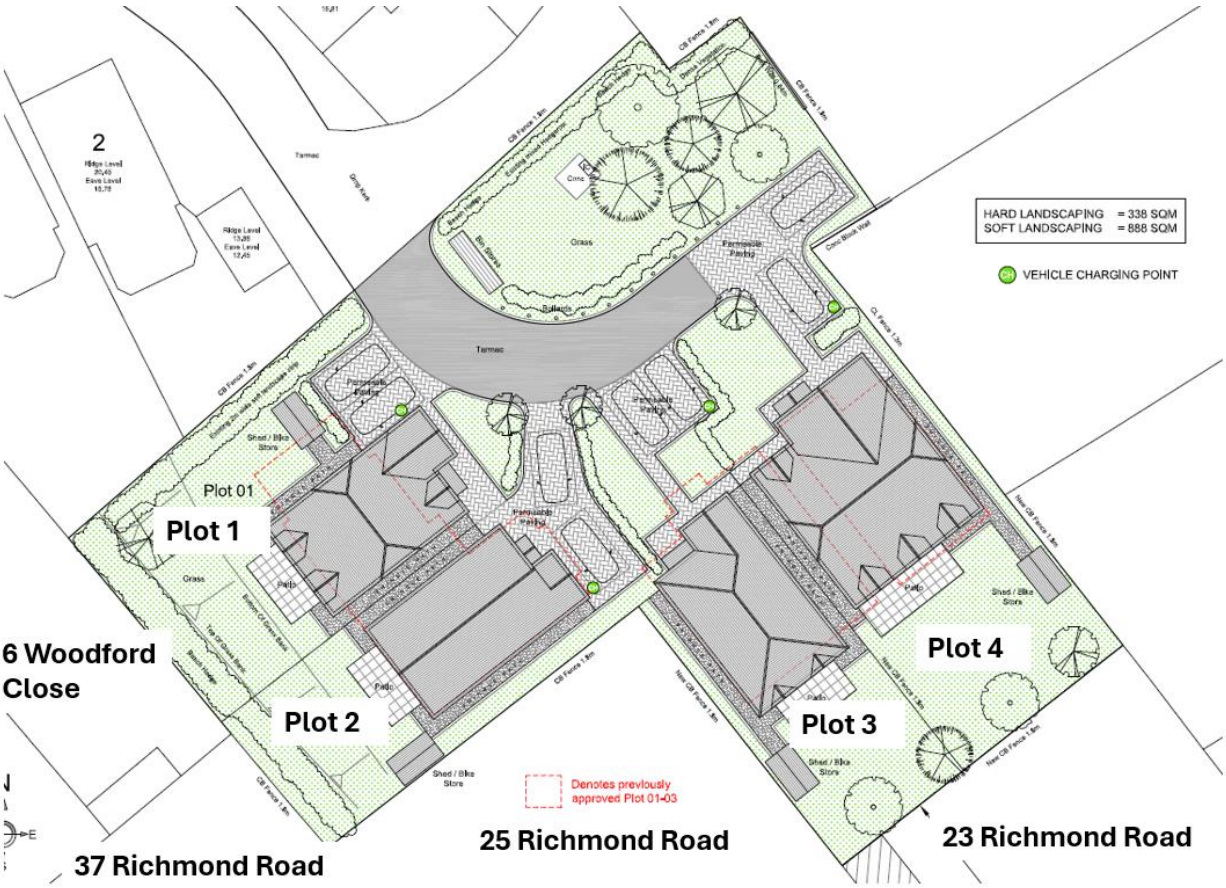


Figure 5 - Proposed Site Plan (as amended 2 May 2025)

3.2. The proposed dwellings would be accessed via Atterbury Gardens and each dwelling would have 2 parking spaces as well as cycle storage and vehicle charging points.

3.3. The proposed materials are to include external brick detailing, with tiled roofs.

3.4. The proposal will be a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) liable development. The applicant has provided the CIL Additional Information Form. Based on the information provided by the applicant and the 2025 CIL rate, this is estimated to amount to approximately £98,050.68 (533m2 of the proposals x £120 per m2 x 2025 indexation). An informative will be attached to the decision notice to advise the applicant of their responsibilities in this respect.

3.5. Plans and supporting information considered are /include:

Drawing No. TPO759-01-00 – Existing Site Plan

Drawing No. TPO759-01-02 – Existing Site Plan

Drawing No. TPO759-01-03 – Proposed Site Plan

Drawing No. TPO759-01-05 – Proposed Plot 01 Elevations

Drawing No. TPO759-01-06 – Proposed Plot 02 & 03 Floor Plans & Elevations

Drawing No. TPO759-01-07 – Proposed Plot 04 Floor Plans

Drawing No. TPO759-01-08 – Proposed Plot 04 Elevations

Drawing No. TPO759-01-09 – Proposed Refuse Vehicle Tracking Plan

The 'Lustre Consulting', Phase 1 Desk Study reference 3170 - 190503 – JMrv1, dated May 2019 (including appendices)

The ‘Davis Planning’, Affordable Housing, Heads of Terms and Energy/Sustainability Statement

The ‘Harrison Arboriculture’, Arboricultural impact assessment, protection plan and method statement reference 659-2026-9/3/2024, dated 5 December 2024

The ‘Arbtech’, Biodiversity net gain assessment, dated 5 November 2024

The ‘Arbtech’, Preliminary ecological appraisal and roost assessment, dated 30 October 2024

The ‘Davis Planning’, Planning, design and access statement

As received 11 December 2024

Drawing No. TPO759-01-03A – Proposed Site Plan Rev A

As received 17 March 2025

Drawing No. TPO759-01-03B – Proposed Site Plan Rev B

The ‘Arbtech’, Biodiversity net gain assessment, dated 31 March 2025

The ‘Arbtech’, statutory biodiversity metric calculation tool, dated 31 March 2025

As received 31 March 2025

Drawing No. TPO759-01-03C – Proposed Site Plan Rev C

Drawing No. TPO759-01-00C – Existing Site Plan Rev C

Drawing No. TPO759-01-01C – Existing Site Block Plan Rev C

Drawing No. TPO759-01-02C – Existing Site Plan Rev C

Drawing No. TPO759-01-03C – Proposed Site Plan Rev C

Drawing No. TPO759-01-04C – Proposed Plot 01 Floor Plans & Elevations Rev C

Drawing No. TPO759-01-05C – Proposed Plot 02 Floor Plans & Elevations Rev C

Drawing No. TPO759-01-06C – Proposed Plot 02 Floor Plans & Elevations Rev C

Drawing No. TPO759-01-07C – Proposed Plot 04 Floor Plans Rev C

Drawing No. TPO759-01-08C – Proposed Plot 04 Elevations Rev C

Drawing No. TPO759-01-09C – Proposed Refuse Vehicle Tracking Plan Rev C

The ‘Arbtech’, Biodiversity net gain assessment, dated 2 May 2025

The ‘Arbtech’, Statutory biodiversity metric calculation tool, dated 2 May 2025

As received 2 May 2025

Drawing No. 25.29-001 – Refuse vehicle swept path

As received 15 May 2025

4. Planning history

4.1. 20/0759 (FUL) Erection of 3no. detached dwellings. Permitted 12 November 2021 (Lapsed)

4.2. PL/14/1625 (FUL) Erection of two x three-bed detached houses with detached garages. Refused.

4.3. PL/13/1368 (OUT) – Outline application for the erection of a detached house with detached garage. Withdrawn.

Nearby Relevant applications

4.4. 35 Richmond Road - 191952/FUL - Proposed 3-bed detached dwelling with a detached single garage on a 0. 06 Ha plot subdivided from existing land within the curtilage of the application site. Permitted.

4.5. 37 Richmond Road 150753/FUL - Demolition of existing 4 bed bungalow and replacement with 2x5 bed properties, including highways and landscaping. re-submission of refused application 14/1660. Refused and allowed at appeal.

Figure 6 - Nearby application references (as outlined above)

5. Consultations

RBC Ecology Consultant

5.1. RBC's Ecologist consultant has provided a comprehensive response in relation to the proposal. In summary, the site is considered to have limited ecological value which would be a constraint to the development, and the removal of invasive plant species is required. There is a small risk of impacting species during construction which is required to be managed through condition (construction environment management plan). The proposal will be required to provide a scheme for biodiversity enhancements, including mammal gaps given its identification as a 'Green Link' as per policy EN12. Full details of lighting will also be required to mitigate impact on surrounding habitats.

5.2. With regard to biodiversity net gain (BNG), the application is subject to mandatory biodiversity net gain under other legislation. An informative is required that states that the planning permission would be subject to the automatic conditions for biodiversity net gain. RBC's ecologist is satisfied that the BNG requirements can be met as detailed.

RBC Transport Development Control

5.3. RBC transport control officers are satisfied that the proposal provides parking, including cycle parking, in accordance with the adopted supplementary planning document (SPD). The access for vehicles is suitable, and waste collection vehicle tracking was updated on 15 May 2025 demonstrating refuse collection vehicles can access and turn within Atterbury Gardens. Details of fencing to ensure appropriate heights that do not block visibility splays will be secured by condition. A construction method statement, and full details of electric vehicle charging is recommended to be secured by condition.

RBC Waste

5.4. The proposal includes suitable refuse storage bins, and collection of waste within Atterbury Gardens is considered appropriate, access via the gates would need to be ensured by the applicant, and waste operatives are satisfied that collection would be achievable.

RBC Natural Environment Officer Comments

5.5. This application is likely to be supported subject to securing an Arboricultural method statement via condition and landscaping via condition. Prior to a decision, it is reasonable, however, to seek an amended AIA to clarify the issues raised below. This AIA has yet to be received, and should any information on this be forthcoming, it will be provided in any update report.

Site notices and objections

5.6. Two site notices were placed, one being along Richmond Road, and the other within Woodford Close. One site notice would have been sufficient to meet the statutory requirements on the LPA.

Caversham and District Residents Association (CADRA)

5.7. A summary of CADRA's objection is provided below:

- Overdevelopment of the site (out of keeping with character of the area)
- Significant risk to pedestrians from increased vehicle trips
- Emergency vehicles will not be able to access the development
- Bin collection arrangement are not acceptable, and would result in bins within Woodford Close
- Concerns around loss of biodiversity of the land
- Management of construction needs to minimise impacts on residents
- Foul drainage issues within the area

5.8. 19 objections were received and are summarised below:

- Overdevelopment of the land out of keeping with layout and density of the area
- Highways safety concerns
- Traffic and parking issues
- Concerns around bin storage and collection
- Loss of green space, habitat, and biodiversity (various animals transit the site)
- Concerns around construction activities (clear construction method statement required, noise, dust, and fumes)
- Foul drainage and flood risk concerns
- Negative impact on character or appearance of the area
- Concerns over disabled persons' access
- Lack of consultation with Woodford Close residents
- Overbearing, and overshadowing to neighbouring properties
- A previous application was refused
- Some information is inaccurate
- No parking for visitors
- Over provision of parking *Officer Note – this objection is/was based on original plans showing 10 no. spaces*
- Concern over contaminated land and health risks
- Loss of privacy and outlook
- Impact on wildlife and limited space for landscaping
- Insufficient detail on sustainability and building materials
- Development will not contribute toward zero carbon reading
- Lack of publicity of previous application due to lockdowns
- Impact on trees
- Concerns over sinkholes

5.10 All material planning considerations are considered in the Appraisal section below. Other points not addressed include:

- Foul drainage: The application would need to seek permission from utility providers to connect the development. Such consent/s would likely have to be subject to the capacity of the relevant systems. Maintenance related matters are for the statutory undertakers to resolve and are not a material planning consideration.

- Concern over sinkholes: Though this is noted as a recent occurrence in the Caversham area. Matters of suitable stability would be addressed through the Building Regulations.

- Lack of publicity of previous application: The previous application was commented on by a number of neighbours, though the lack of comments on another application is not relevant to the current application being considered.

- Potential inaccuracies: Officers have considered the plans as presented, which appear accurate for planning purposes. Should issues arise in the future as a result of inaccuracies, the applicant will require subsequent approvals (variations, or a new application).

6. Legal context

6.1. 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 (NPPF paragraph 12).

6.2. In this regard, the NPPF states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the Local Plan 2019 according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).

6.3. Accordingly, the latest NPPF and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

National Policy – National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2024)

Section 2 – Achieving Sustainable Development
Section 4 – Decision Making
Section 5 – Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
Section 8 - Promoting healthy and safe communities
Section 9 - Promoting sustainable transport
Section 11 – Making Effective Use of Land
Section 12 - Achieving well-designed places
Section 15 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 Policies

CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction
CC3: Adaptation to Climate Change
CC5: Waste Minimisation and Storage
CC6: Accessibility and the Intensity of Development
CC7: Design and the Public Realm
CC8: Safeguarding Amenity
CC9: Securing Infrastructure
EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network
EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodland
EN16: Pollution and Water Resources
H1: Provision of Housing

H2: Density and Mix
H3: Affordable Housing
H5: Standards for New Housing
H10: Private and Communal Outdoor Space
H11: Development of Private Residential Gardens
TR1 Achieving the Transport Strategy
TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging

Supplementary Planning Documents and other guidance

Affordable Housing (2021)
Planning Obligations under S106 (April 2015)
Sustainable Design and Construction (Dec 2019)
Employment, Skills and Training (2013)
Parking Standards and Design (2011)
Reading Tree Strategy (2021)
Reading Biodiversity Action Plan (2021)

Local Plan Partial Update

6.4 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. The submission draft of the Local Plan Partial Update was submitted on 9th May 2025.

6.5 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. Officer advice in respect of the Local Plan policies pertinent to this application and listed above 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'

7. Appraisal

- Principle of Development
- Ecology and biodiversity
- Design considerations
- Residential amenity
- Environmental health matters
- Transport matters
- Sustainability
- Affordable housing
- CIL
- Other matters
- Matters raised in representations

7.1. Principle of Development

7.1.1. The NPPF (paragraph 124) states that LPAs should *"… promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions. Strategic policies should set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously-developed or 'brownfield' land".* The site would therefore be considered a 'windfall' site as defined by the NPPF. Paragraph 73 (d) of the NPPF states that *"small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirements of an area … (LPAs should) … support the development of windfall sites through their policies and decisions – giving great weight to*

the benefits of using suitable sites within existing settlements for homes". As such, great weight is afforded to the benefits of provision houses within this established and well serviced area.

7.1.2. Therefore, it is clear that the priority for development should be on previously developed land, in particular vacant and derelict sites and buildings. However, that does not mean that the development of private residential garden land is unacceptable in principle, rather that previously developed land should be the first choice for housing development.

7.1.3. Policy H11 (Development of Private Residential Gardens) requires that *new residential development that involves land within the curtilage of private residential gardens will be acceptable where:*

1) It makes a positive contribution to the character of the area;
2) The site is of an adequate size to accommodate the development;
3) The proposal has a suitable access;
4) The proposal would not lead to an unacceptable tandem development;
5) The design minimises the exposure of existing private boundaries to public areas;
6) It does not cause detrimental impact on residential amenities;
7) The emphasis is on the provision of family housing;
8) There is no adverse impact on biodiversity, and
9) The proposal does not prejudice the development of a wider area.

7.1.4. Therefore, while the proposed site is not 'previously developed land', the principle of redevelopment would be acceptable providing the criteria outlined in Policies H11 and H2 (relating to general location, accessibility, density and housing mix matters) are met.

7.1.5. Policy H2 (Density and Mix) states that: *"The appropriate density of residential development will be informed by:*

- *the character and mix of uses of the area in which it is located, including the housing mix, and including consideration of any nearby heritage assets or important landscape or townscape areas;*
- *its current and future level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport;*
- *the need to achieve high quality design;*
- *the need to maximise the efficiency of land use; and*
- *the need to minimise environmental impacts, including detrimental impacts on the amenities of adjoining occupiers…*

Indicative densities for different types of area are set out in figure 4.5, but the criteria above may indicate that a different density is appropriate. …Net densities of below 30 dwellings per hectare will not be acceptable."

Wherever possible, residential development should contribute towards meeting the needs for the mix of housing set out in figure 4.6, in particular for family homes of three or more bedrooms"

7.1.6. The proposed development would be at a residential density of approximately 24 dwellings/hectare, which falls below that set out within Policy H2. As per the above policy text, the character of the area in which it is located informs appropriate densities. The low density of the area may make a proposal at 30 dwellings per hectare inappropriate with regard to all other maters. Accordingly, it is considered that in responding to the whole of Policy H2, and Policy H11 it is considered that in this specific instance, given the site characteristics and constraints (i.e impact on neighbours discussed further below) that the density of development is appropriate, with the proposal making an efficient use of the space/land available. Furthermore, in terms of mix, the proposed development seeks to provide 3x3-bed and 1 x 4-bed. In terms of the housing mix (size of units), the principle of providing additional housing on a windfall site, with the entire provision being family-sized accommodation is considered to weigh in favour of the proposal

7.2. Ecology and biodiversity

7.2.1. Paragraph 187 of the NPPF (2024) states that: *"Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan)… d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures and incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs…".*

7.2.2. From 12 February 2024, biodiversity net gain (BNG) is mandatory for most development, including this. This policy change has occurred since the decision on the previous planning application in 2021.

7.2.3. Policy EN12 states that: *"key elements of which are shown on the Proposals Map, shall be maintained, protected, consolidated, extended and enhanced … Areas with potential for biodiversity value and which stitch the Green Network together – designated Local Green Space and open green spaces, and existing and potential Green Links. … On all sites, development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity and geodiversity, and should provide a net gain for biodiversity wherever possible".*

7.2.4. The site is identified as a 'green link' on the local plan proposals map. The application has also shown that the proposed development would result in a biodiversity net loss on site. The development will impact upon the green link. Policy EN12 requires "*new development shall demonstrate how the location and type of green space, landscaping and water features provided within a scheme have been arranged such that they maintain or link into the existing Green Network and contribute to its consolidation. Such features should be designed to maximise the opportunities for enhancing this network. All new development should maximise opportunities to create new assets and links into areas where opportunities are as yet unidentified on the Proposals Map."*

7.2.5. The proposal is required to ensure the continued functional integrity of the green link. TTo achieve this proposal will required building biodiversity enhancements, native planting, and appropriate boundary treatments with mammal gaps to enable birds, bats, badgers, and hedgehogs to continue to traverse the gardens of the new development.

7.2.6. the proposed development results in an on-site loss of biodiversity. This would weigh against the proposal in isolation. However, an off-site biodiversity net gain is required by legislation and would apply as a condition to the development if granted. This would lessen the harm identified though would not directly mitigate the biodiversity in this specific site. Though, as the separate regime for biodiversity net gain exists, and the proposal could be considered to comply with Policy EN12 which seeks a biodiversity net gain wherever possible, this aspect of the proposal is considered to be neutral in the planning balance.

7.2.7. As per the Biodiversity Net Gain Hierarchy, and Policy EN12, the applicant should prioritise on-site biodiversity gains. The applicant is seeking to provide as much on-site biodiversity improvements. This includes the improvement of the green area to the north-east portion of the site, with 6 new trees, and an improved biodiversity value. This could be considered a significant biodiversity enhancement and may need to be included within a s106 agreement, rather than by condition. An update report will be provided to clarify the correct mechanism for this.

7.3. Design considerations

7.3.1. Policies CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) and H11 (Development of Private and Residential Gardens) both seek to ensure that new development enhances and preserves the local character. Policy H10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space) of the Local Plan

requires the design of outdoor areas to respect the size and character of other similar spaces in the vicinity. The 2024 NPPF (paragraph 135) seeks to ensure developments: function well, are visually attractive, are sympathetic to local character, maintain a sense of place, optimise the potential of the site, and create places that are safe, inclusive, accessible with a high standard of amenity for residents.

7.3.2. It is noted that the officers report for the previously approved application (PL/20/0759(stated:

"Whilst the plot sizes would be less spacious to those of Richmond Road to the south and Consisboro Avenue to the east, they would be comparable to those of Atterbury Gardens to the north and Woodford Close to the west. Indeed, given that the proposals would be accessed from the Atterbury Gardens Road, and would therefore largely be viewed in the Atterbury Gardens context, it is considered that the overall plot sizes would align with Atterbury Gardens character.

Further to the above, it is considered of relevance that the Inspector for application 150753 37 Richmond Road, nearby to the south west of the site, in allowing the appeal for 2 proposed dwellings (following demolition of bungalow), placed great emphasis on the differing urban grain, mass and scale of dwelling and plots in the wider area when looking at prevailing context. This is considered to support the rationale to view the proposals in the Atterbury Gardens context in terms of plot size and space to the boundaries and overall character of the area.

In terms of detailed design, there is a variety of design styles within the area including the more modern townhouse style of Atterbury Gardens, and the larger detached properties and bungalows of Richmond Road and Conisboro Avenue to the south and east respectively. The proposed dwellings would be comparable in height to those of surrounding properties and would utilise red brick similar to that of Atterbury Gardens. Albeit the proposed dwellings would be of different design and scale to each other, when seen from all nearby vantage points, this is not considered to be overwhelming and is instead, in this very specific instance, considered to acceptably respond to its context and the constraints of the site.

Overall, the proposed development is considered to have a satisfactory design and appearance which would cause no adverse harm to the character and appearance of the area, given the location and existing context of neighbouring properties. However, officers also acknowledge and consider that the amount of development proposed is the maximum permissible at this site, owning to the site constraints and surrounding characteristics of the immediate area. Given the above, in respect of both the proposed buildings themselves and the nearby context, the proposals are considered satisfactory in design terms."

7.3.3. The planning permission to which the above assessment relates has lapsed and is therefore not a material planning consideration. The assessment, and its findings, were made against the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019, in conjunction with the relevant NPPF (date). The Local Plan policies remain the assessment benchmark for consideration of the current planning application, with limited weight afforded to the partial update noted above, given its current stage.

7.3.4. Notwithstanding the above, the proposal is for 4 dwellings. It falls to be acknowledged that the site sits within an area that transitions from a significantly lower density, and more spacious character along Richmond Road and Conisboro Avenue. Atterbury Gardens and Woodford Close (1970s), including recent developments highlighted above including land to the rear of 35-43 Richmond Road. The area to the south and east is made up of houses within substantial plots with the area to the north and west being smaller modern developments with garages and generally of a much smaller plot size. Atterbury gardens, and some of Woodlands Close are back land plots which have organically formed over time. The site is accessed via the area of a much tighter urban grain, containing generally two-storey dwellings.

7.3.5. As the prevailing urban of Atterbury Gardens is smaller and of a tighter grain than Woodford Close, the proposal, with its footprint, plot coverage, heights and house sizes would sit well within its immediate context, and not appear out of keeping with that prevailing character.

7.3.6. Similarly, the proposal provides dwellings which are separated by relatively narrow gaps to boundaries, including between one another. The gapping between other properties within Atterbury Gardens is equally tight, or in the case of no's 3-5 is less distinguishable than the proposal. Therefore, the proposal is not considered to be overly cramped compares to the immediate character of the area and pattern of development.

7.3.7. The proposal is accessed via a narrow private driveway, which is proposed to be continued to service the new dwellings. These are provided with two parking spaces each. The surrounding dwellings, have a variety of surface treatments, including hardstanding to the majority of the frontage of no's 3-5 Atterbury Gardens. The area of retained green space in the north-east of the site, along with landscaping around the frontages of each dwelling, and to the north-west of the site would provide sufficient setting to the proposed development and would not appear to be overly dominated by the hardstanding for parking, especially as compared to Atterbury Gardens.

7.3.8. The amended plans, include further variation in dwelling design as compared to the original submission. There is slight variation in design within the area, sufficient to avoid uniformity. The Design proposal changes the orientation of main architectural features such as the gable end wall to the front of each dwelling. In this context, the appearance of the proposal would be far from incongruent with the surrounding architecture and would contribute to the townscape of the wider area. Moreover, the isolated location of the plot would limit the bearing of the development on the surrounding public realm.

7.3.9. Accordingly, the proposed development is considered to comply with Policy CC7, and H11 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 with regard to design, and layout.

7.4. Natural Environment, Trees, and Landscaping

7.4.1. Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) seeks that development is of high design quality and maintains and enhances the character of the area in which is it located including landscaping. Policy EN14 (Trees, Hedges and Woodlands) requires new development to make provision for tree retention and planting. (Policy EN12 (Biodiversity and The Green Network) requires that new development should provide a net gain for biodiversity where possible and should incorporate biodiversity features into proposals where practical. As noted above, the application site is part of a designated Green Link.

7.4.2. A tree survey plan has not been provided in respect of trees that may be affected by the proposals including that of an off-site tree at 5 Conisboro Avenue. In addition, there are protected trees in the rear garden of 9 Consisboro Avenue (as shown below), near to the boundary, wherein details of the root protection areas should also have been provided to confirm any impact of the parking proposed to the front of Plot 3. Officers have requested an arboricultural impact assessment (AIA) be provided for consideration. At the time of writing, no such report has been provided. The previous permission (PL/20/0759) was found to be acceptable with regard to offsite trees, and as such it is not anticipated that there would be a significant issue to the proposal, however updated information is required prior to determining the application. This information is forthcoming, it is not expected to raise significant issue as to alter the recommendation.

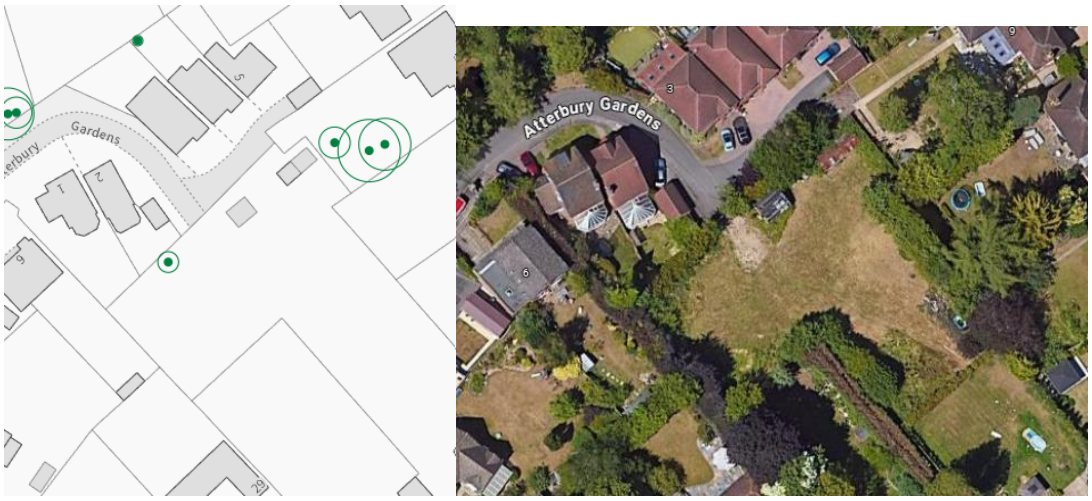
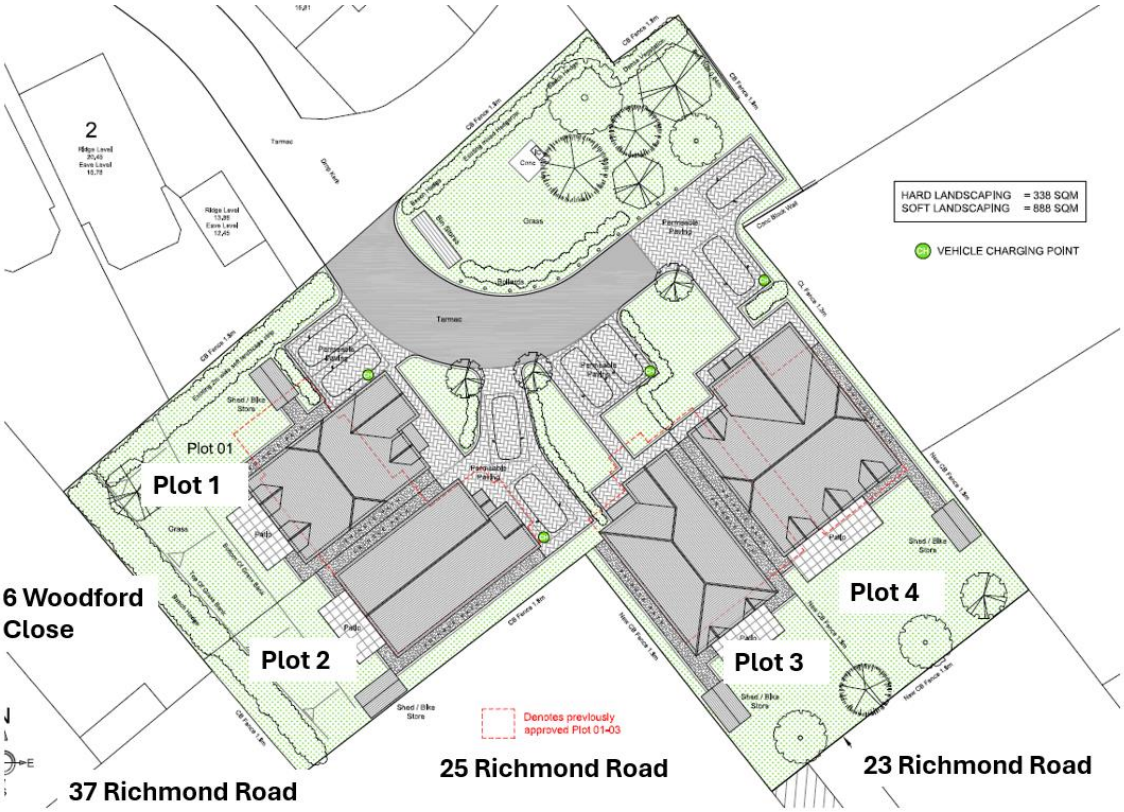


Figure 7 - Tree Preservation order plan, and ariel image showing trees in locality for consideration within an AIA

7.5. Residential amenity

7.5.1. Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) which requires developments to not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing properties in terms of: Privacy and overlooking; Access to sunlight and daylight; Visual dominance and overbearing; Harm to outlook; Noise and disturbance; Artificial lighting; Vibration; Dust and fumes; Smell; and Crime and safety.

7.5.2. Concern has been raised by objectors that the proposals would be overbearing to the occupiers of No's 1 and 2 Atterbury Gardens to the north west. It is acknowledged that plot 1 will be located close to the rear boundaries of No's 1 and 2 Atterbury Gardens. However, there will be a distance of 20m from the dwelling to No.1 and separation of 15m to No.2 Atterbury Gardens. The element of built form closest to the boundary will be a two-storey portion, with a roof hipped away from the boundary which will minimise the impact. Given this, whilst clearly visible to the occupiers of these properties, it is not considered that there will be any significant material loss of amenity in terms of loss of light or overbearing effects. No first floor windows are proposed on the flank elevation facing towards No's 1 and 2, which will also be secured by way of condition and as such there would be no loss of privacy/overlooking.



7.5.3. In relation to No.29 Richmond Road, to the south, given the distance from the proposed dwelling (plots 2) to the boundary with this property and distance to the dwelling itself combined with the orientation of the proposed dwelling, it is not considered to result in any material loss of light or overbearing effects. A first floor window is proposed that would face across the rear of the garden of No.29. Given that it would face across the rearmost part of the garden and that any views would be at an oblique angle, combined with the existing and proposed vegetation/tree planting, it is not considered to result in any significant material loss of privacy to occupiers of this property such to warrant a refusal on this basis.

7.5.4. In relation to No.6 Woodford Close, to the west/north west, as above, given the distance of plot 1 from the proposed dwelling to the boundary with this property and distance to the dwelling itself combined with the orientation of the proposed dwelling, it is not considered to result in any material loss of light or overbearing effects. A first floor window is proposed that would face across the rear of the garden of No 6. Given that it would face across the rearmost part of the garden and that any views would be at an oblique angle, combined with the existing vegetation, it is not considered to result in any significant material loss of privacy to occupiers of this property such to warrant a refusal on this basis.

7.5.5. In relation to No.25 Richmond Road to the south east, whilst the proposed dwelling within plots 3 and 4 would be close to the rear boundary of this property, there would be a distance of over 30m to No.25 itself and as such the proposals would not result in any material loss of light or overbearing effects. There would be two first floor windows on the south east facing elevation. However, given the aforementioned distance between the properties, which algins with the guidance of 20m distance outlined within Policy CC8, the proposals are not considered to result in any significant material loss of privacy to the occupiers of this property.

7.5.6. Policy H10 and H11 both seek to ensure developments are provide functional gardens. The supporting text of policy H10 provides guidance around previous policies which sought a minimum of garden area being no less than the floor area of the dwelling. The policy also states that these areas should respect the size and character of similar spaces

in the vicinity. The gardens range from approximately 74m^2-138m^2 (useable area) with the GFA's being 117m^2 for all but plot 4 which is 182m^2. These gardens are smaller than a prevailing garden size within the area. Though the gardens sizes are consistent with those within Atterbury Gardens. These gardens would provide for functional open space for future residents. Given these smaller gardens in the vicinity, it is not considered objectionable to fall short of the policy guidance in this instance, as it would meet the overarching policy text.

7.5.7. Usually, the proposed dwellings could be subject to significant further extensions and alterations under subsequent permitted development rights, which could negatively impact on the amenity of nearby occupiers. Extensions allowable under permitted development rights have the potential to have negatively impact upon the area through inappropriate plot coverage, built form resulting in overbearing, or potentially privacy concerns. Given the tight urban grain of the area and the gardens being at a minimum that would be acceptable further extensions without planning permission could result in unacceptable impacts. In order to mitigate this, it is considered necessary and reasonable to apply conditions to remove permitted development rights under Classes A (alterations), B (roof additions) and E (outbuildings).

7.5.8. In terms of noise, vibrations, dust and fume considerations were permission to be granted, it is considered that both during the construction phase, and subsequently, the proposals will be acceptable subject to a variety of conditions for any permission. A construction method statement will therefore be secured via condition and is required from a highway safety perspective too. As such in overall terms, considering all nearby residential occupiers, impacts of construction activities are recommended to be controlled through conditions.

7.5 Transport matters

7.5.9 The proposed dwelling provide parking in line with the maximum parking requirements contained within the relevant SPD. The access would be suitable, subject to full details of fencing. Though via an unadopted road, it remains suitable for access from private vehicles, waste and delivery vehicles as well as emergency vehicles.

7.5.10 Revised waste vehicle manoeuvring details were provided on 15 May 2025 which demonstrated an RBC waste vehicle can enter and exit Atterbury Gardens for waste collection. This would result not only in the collection of waste for the development from Atterbury Gardens but also provide a moderate benefit to the existing residents of Atterbury Gardens that their waste could be collected from the kerbside in front of or closer to their properties. This would also mean that residents of Woodford Close would no longer have 5 no. waste bins stored within the culs-de-sac.

7.5.11 Each dwelling is shown with a charging point, with details to be secured by condition should the application be approved. To protect residents from disturbance from construction activities, a construction method statement would be required as recommended in the conditions above.

7.6 Sustainability

7.6.9 The applicant's Energy/Sustainability Statement references the scheme incorporating on-site renewable energy and/or an efficient supply of heat, cooling and power which would be welcomed. Notwithstanding, Policy H5 (Standards for New Housing) requires that all new build housing integrates additional measures for sustainability.

7.6.10 However, the requirements for improved energy efficiency over building regulations at the time of adoption (2019). These requirements are considered to be met through mandatory compliance with current building regulations. The local plan partial update includes further requirements for improvements beyond current building regulations. These include

optional standards for water efficiency (or water neutrality), and achieving net-zero and to achieve additional energy performance requirements.

7.6.11 As outlined above, the partial local plan update is in an early stage, with submission on 9 May 2025.The update is still afforded limited weight due to the stage within the examination process. As such, no additional conditions are required in this instance.

7.7 Affordable housing

7.7.9 Policy H3 (Affordable Housing) requires that for development proposals of 1-4 dwellings, the application should make a financial contribution to enable the equivalent of 10% of the housing to be provided as affordable housing elsewhere within the Borough. The policy goes on to state that where, as a result of viability considerations, proposals fall short of the policy target the onus is on the developer to clearly demonstrate the circumstances justifying a lower affordable housing contribution.

7.7.10 The applicant has agreed to pay a contribution of £134,750 towards affordable housing, which has been agreed as representing 10% of the GDV of the site and would therefore be policy compliant. The contribution would be secured by a legal agreement should approval be forthcoming. As such, the proposal would make an appropriate contribution to meeting the identified housing needs of the Borough and achieving sustainable mixed and balanced communities.

7.8 Other matters

<u>Scheme Revisions</u>

7.8.9 A number of revisions to the scheme were presented during the course of the application. These were in response to issues and matters raised by officers. No addiitonal public notification was conducted as the amendments were considered to generally lessen potential harm identified.

<u>Environmental health matters</u>

7.8.10 Policy EN16 (Pollution and Water Resources) required that developments on land affected by contamination can be satisfactorily managed or remediated against so that it is suitable for the proposed use. The development lies on the site of an historic gravel pit which has the potential to have caused contamination and the proposed development is a sensitive land use.

7.8.11 In terms of contaminated land, Environmental Protection colleagues recommend that in the event of a permission, the standard four-stage contaminated land conditions are applied, to ensure that the possible presence of contamination is thoroughly investigated and removed/mitigated if necessary (3 of the conditions would be pre-commencement). With such conditions the proposal is considered to accord with Policy EN16.

8 Equality implications

8.5 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

8.6 The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation. It is considered that there is no indication or evidence that the

protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular application

9 Conclusion & planning balance

9.1 As with all applications considered by the Local Planning Authority, the application is required to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise, as per Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

9.2 Any harmful impacts of the proposed development are required to be weighed against the benefits in the context of national and local planning policies, as detailed in the appraisal above. Having gone through this process officers consider that the proposed development would provide additional family sized dwellings on a windfall site would provide be a significant benefit. In addition, the proposal would contribute, in line with policy, a 10% GDV of £134,750 toward offsite affordable housing elsewhere in the borough. The proposal would result in a direct impact upon the biodiversity of the site though, as a result of the BNG requirements, is in accordance with Policy EN12 which seeks a net gain wherever possible. This off-site biodiversity net gain would therefore be neutral in weight. Subject to some additional information with regard to impacts on existing trees the proposal would comply with the Local Plan.

9.3 It is considered that officers have applied a suitable planning balance when reaching this conclusion. As such, this application is recommended for approval on balance, given the significant weight attached to the provision of housing, and the policy compliant contribution toward affordable housing elsewhere in the borough, in assisting the Council in meeting its housing targets and providing for the increasingly high need for affordable housing.

Case Officer: Anthony Scholes

Plans & Appendices

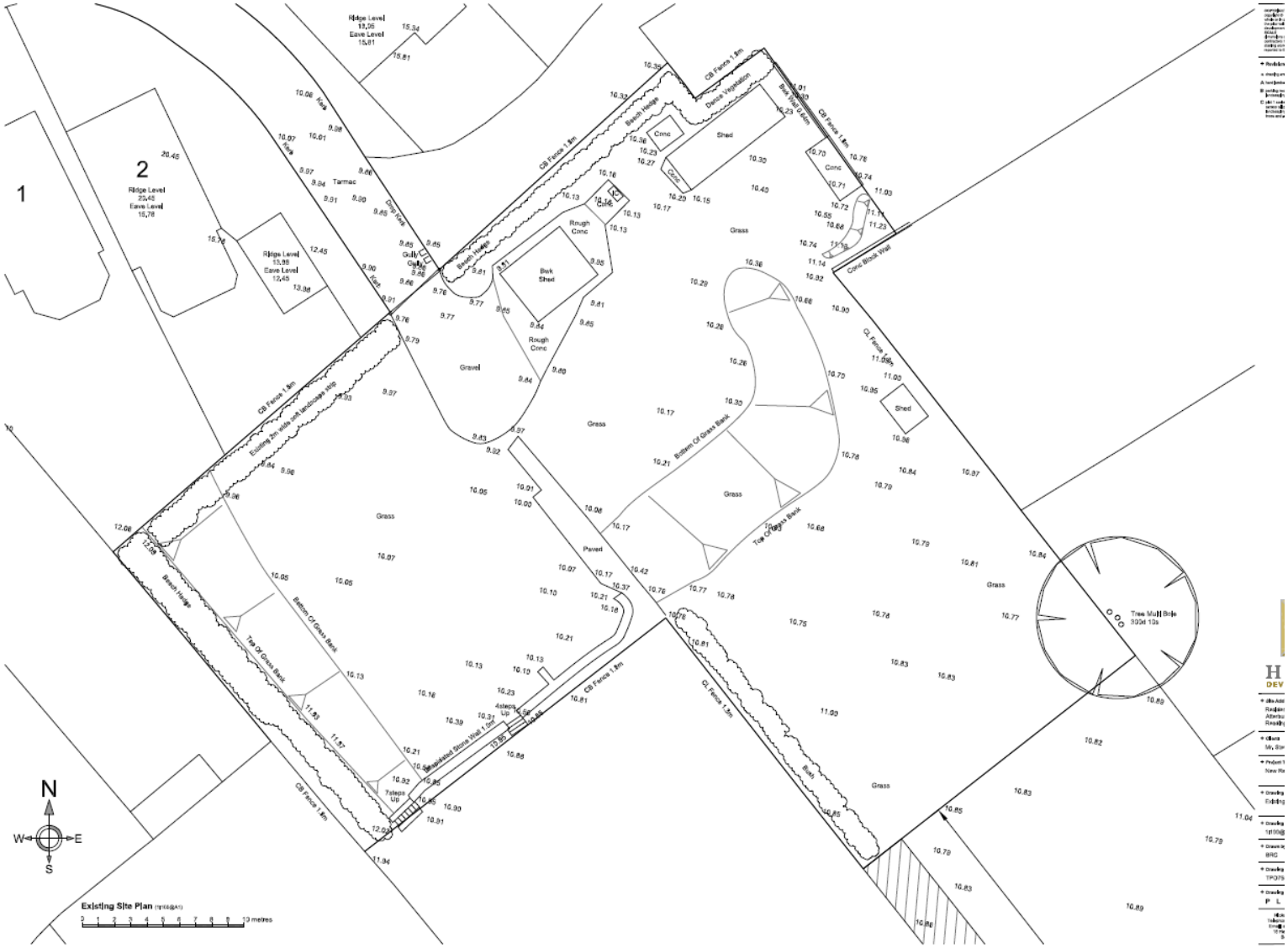


Figure 8 - Existing site plan with contours

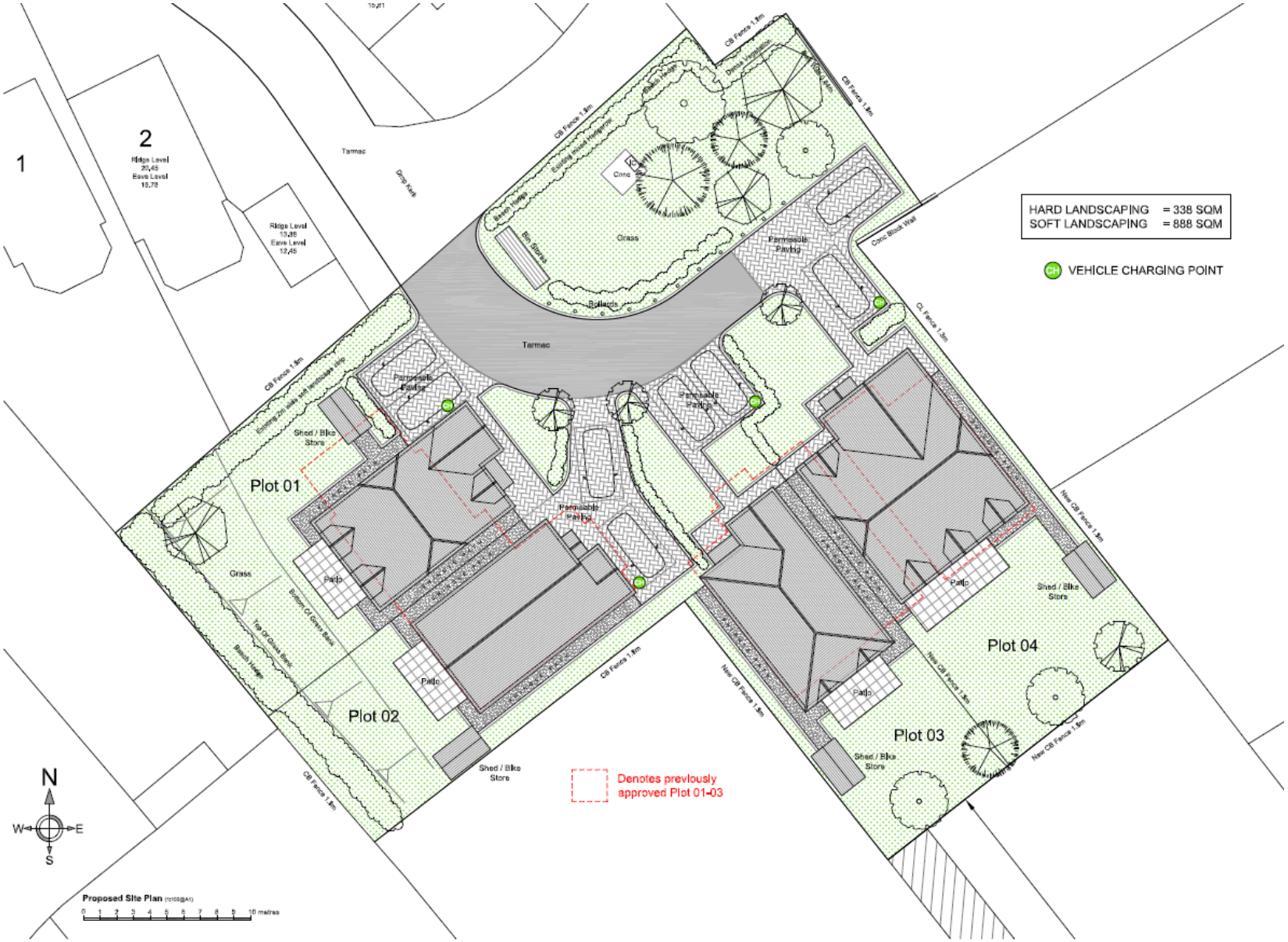


Figure 9 - Proposed site plan

Figure 10 - Plot 1 Proposed plans and elevations

Figure 11 - Plot 2 Proposed plans and elevations

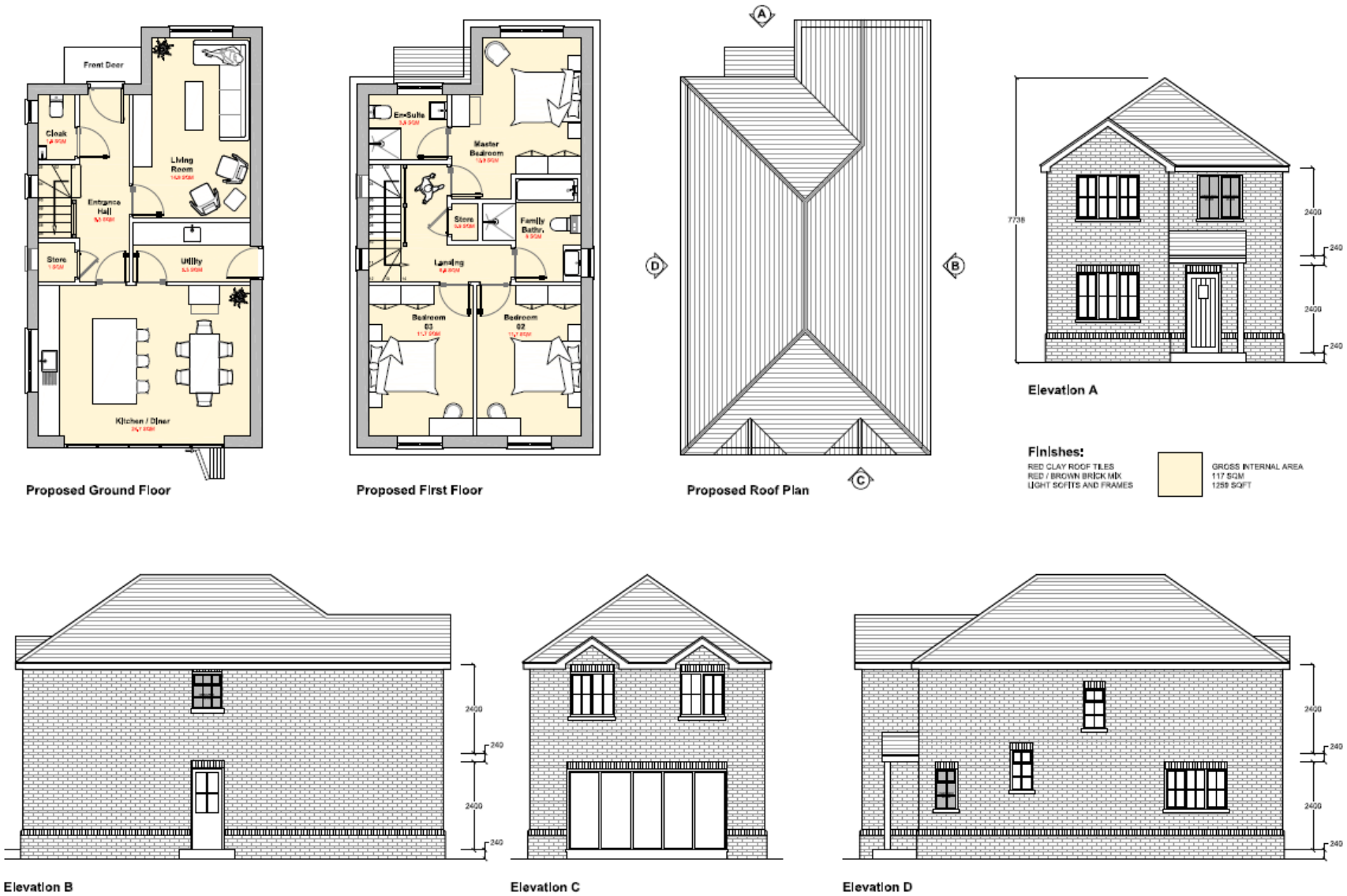


Figure 12 - Plot 3 proposed plans and elevations

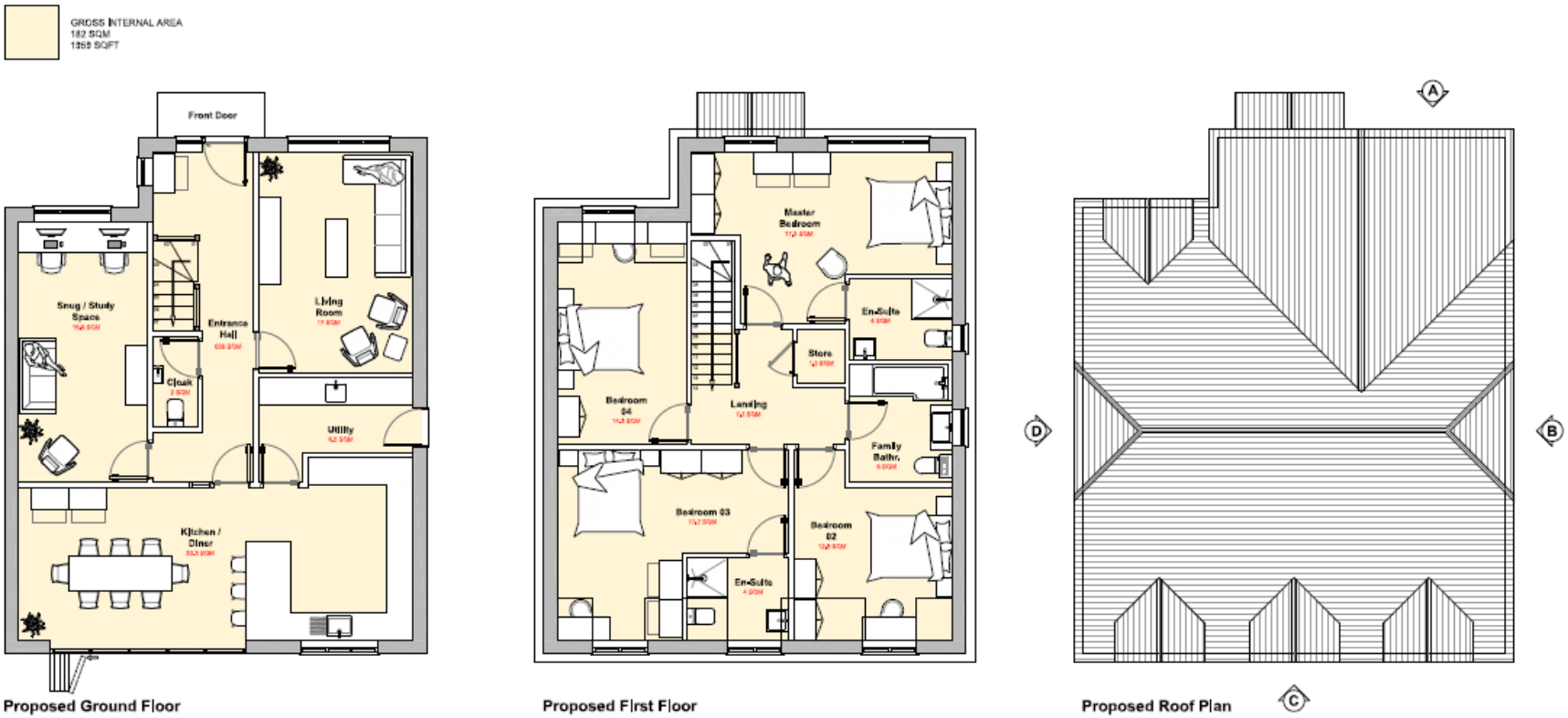


Figure 13 - Plot 4 Proposed floor plans

Figure 14 - Plot 4 proposed elevations