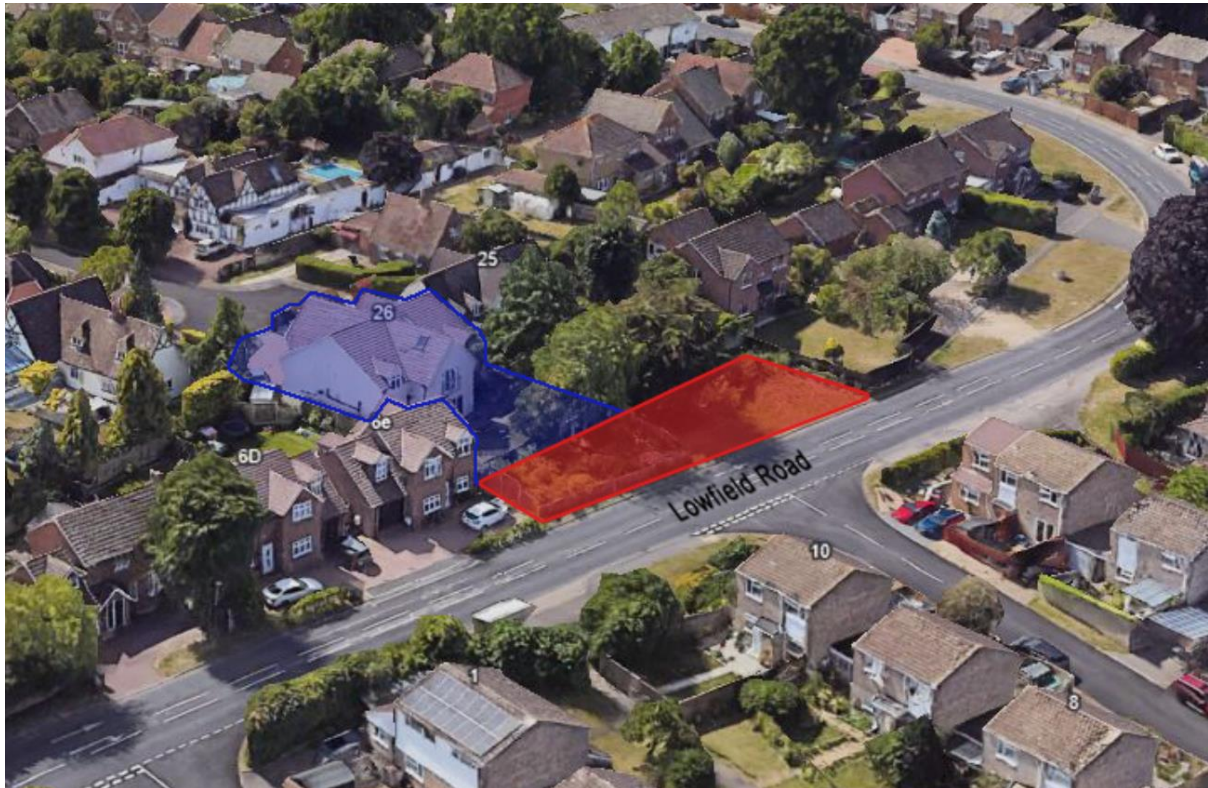


Planning Design & Access Statement

Application for proposed rear garden development of land within the site boundary of 26 Woods Road, Caversham, Reading, RG4 6NA:-

Erection of new 1 no. two bedroom dwelling with associated landscaping and new access from Lowfield Road.



Prepared on behalf of
Build Vantage Ltd

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CONTENTS

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To be read in conjunction with the following TW-2 Architects drawings: -

GDW-TW2-XX-DR-A-010	Location Plan and Existing Site Plan
GDW-TW2-XX-DR-A-015	Proposed Site Plan
GDW-TW2-XX-DR-A-016	Proposed Parking Visibility Splays
GDW-TW2-XX-DR-A-020	Proposed Elevations and Floor Plans
GDW-TW2-XX-DR-A-030	Proposed Axonometric

1. SITE DESCRIPTION AND SURROUNDINGS

- 1.1 The Site is 26 Woods Road, Caversham, Reading, RG4 6NA within Reading Borough Council boundaries.

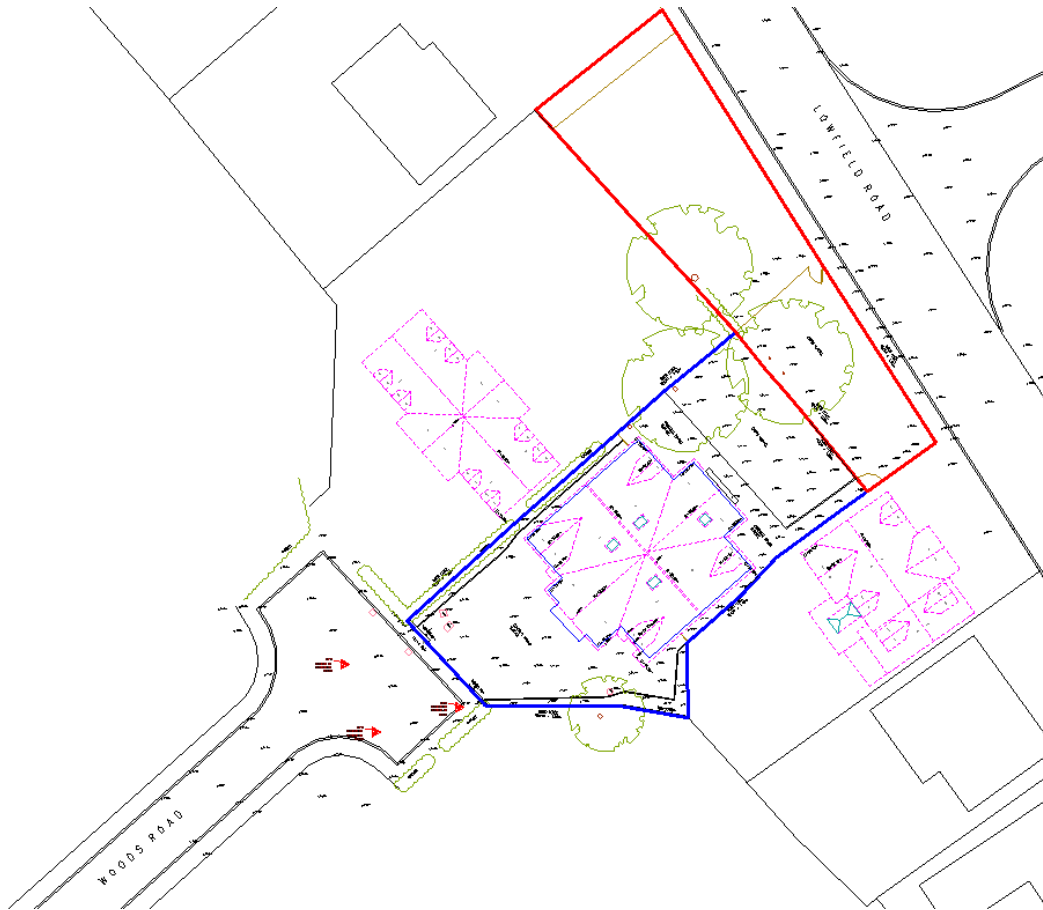


Fig 1 Aerial view of site

- 1.2 The site contains the existing 26 Woods Road property, a two-storey building that is located in the west side of the site. It has a north east facing garden which is fenced in line with the neighbouring 25 Woods Road property. There is residual land that is currently an overgrown grassland strip that extends to Lowfield Road from the rear of 26 Woods Road and continues around the rear of the neighbouring 25 Woods Road.
- 1.3 The properties along Lowfield Road follow no urban regularity due to the cul-de-sacs that run perpendicular creating no defined street frontage. Front, side and rear elevations at varying distances to the road form a unique streetscape that don't address the road.



Fig 2 Existing Frontage of Lowfield Road (Left to Right: 2 Lowfield Green, 6e Lowfield Road and 26 Woods Rd, 7b and 7a Lowfield Road)

- 1.4 Similarly, the houses on the opposite side to the road do not address Lowfield Road with access given to them from Earlsfield Close and Dacre Avenue.
- 1.5 There is no pedestrian access along the sites side of the street with a grass verge acting as the separation between road and the site boundary.
- 1.6 The site is not located in a conservation area and there is no listed building or structure on its land.
- 1.7 The site is located in Flood Risk Zone 1, meaning it has a very low risk of flooding.
- 1.8 The site is in a sustainable residential location, within a short distance to various bus stops with direct routes to central Reading that in turn has train links to London and the surrounding area. Caversham has numerous shops and schools in proximity to the site. In the Local Plan there is scope for infill development and development involving residential gardens, 8.2.2.
- 1.9 The wider area is characterized by late 20th century suburban development. The predominant materials being red/orange brick walls and pitched tiled roofs, gables and dormers are a prevalent design feature of the house typology in the area. Scale and number of bedrooms in a property vary in the surrounding area with the majority being detached properties.



Fig 3 Surrounding Properties on or adjoining Lowfield Road

- 1.10 The site although in some places fenced is unused and over-grown with brambles, nettles and weeds. Disassociated with the garden and property of 26 Woods Road is has become a wasteland that sits in close proximity of the road adding nothing of value to the streetscape.



Fig 4 *View of Site from Lowfield Road*



Fig 5 *View of 26 Woods Road with current condition of site*



Fig 6 *Relationship between neighbouring 7b Lowfield Road, 25 Woods Road and Site*

- 1.11 The site is linear in nature and tapers from its thinnest point at the southern end, 6.5m to 12.4m at its northern end. It covers an area of approximately 360 square metres. Its size and position are rather under-utilised with the existing surrounding properties plenty of metres away from the boundary, this creates a spacious feeling and light plot.
- 1.12 There are three trees currently on site of no particular merit as part of the application the replacement of these to accommodate the scheme will be factored in.
- 1.13 The site is bordered by an existing 1.90m fence along the boundaries of the neighbouring properties.

2. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY AND POLICY

- 2.1 There are two refused planning applications on record for this site one being a resubmittal of the same scheme.

182005 | Erecting a 3 Bedroom Detached House. Resubmission of 181118

181118 | Erecting a 3 Bedroom Detached House

- 2.2 The feedback provided on the refused application noted that in order for a development to be a positive addition to the surrounding neighbourhood there would need to be:

- 2.2.1 Positively relate to existing houses, gardens, verges adjacent to the highway and green space, corresponding to the existing building line and rhythm of the plot frontages.
- 2.2.2 The design failed to minimise exposure of existing private boundaries to public areas as secure boundaries were undefined.
- 2.2.3 The design was contrived to fit into the space available rather than responding to the site. The roof was dominated by numerous large dormer windows, not reflective of other buildings in the vicinity.
- 2.2.4 Given the prominent nature of the site on the street scene its design will need to be harmonious and well-designed incorporating the local character to integrate the design.
- 2.2.5 The location and design of the rear of the proposed property would produce a large blank façade near to the boundary with 27 Woods Road, creating an overbearing impact plus the presence of overlooking from the first floor towards 27 Woods Road. This is considered to result in a significant detrimental impact to the living environment of the garden of that property in respect of privacy and overlooking and visual dominance/overbearing, contrary to Policy DM4.
- 2.2.6 The planning application has failed to demonstrate/present access arrangements, parking and access layouts and visibility splays for the proposed development, in order to enable the highways, traffic and transportation implications of the development to be assessed, which could adversely affect the safety and flow of users of Lowfield Road, contrary to Policy DM12

- 2.3 It should be noted that this scheme was of particular poor quality and without pre-app guidance and given the prominence of the site a pre-app would be of benefit to any scheme moving forward.

- 2.4 In the Local Plan, proposals for new residential development that includes land within the curtilage or the former curtilage of private residential gardens will be acceptable where:

- 1) The proposal makes a positive contribution to the character of the area in terms of:

The relationship of the existing built form and spaces around buildings within the surrounding area;

A layout which integrates with the surrounding area with regard to the built-up coverage of each plot, building line(s), rhythm of plot frontages, parking areas, and existing pattern of openings and boundary treatments on the site frontage;

Providing appropriate hard and soft landscaping, particularly at site boundaries. This includes features such as the variety of trees, hard standing/lawns and hedges, etc;

Compatibility with the general building height within the surrounding area;

The materials and elevational detail. These should be high quality, and where appropriate distinctive and/ or complementary;

The arrangement of doors, windows and other principal architectural features and their rhythm between buildings.

- 2) The application site provides a site of adequate size and dimensions to accommodate the development proposed in terms of the setting and spacing around buildings, amenity space, landscaping and space for access roads and parking;
 - 3) The proposal includes access, which meets appropriate highway standards;
 - 4) The proposal does not lead to tandem development;
 - 5) The design and layout minimises exposure of existing private boundaries to public areas, and avoids the need for additional physical security measures;
 - 6) The proposal does not cause a significant detrimental impact to the amenity of adjacent and nearby occupants;
 - 7) The emphasis is on the provision of family-sized housing;
 - 8) The development provides biodiversity net gain wherever possible, and would not have an adverse impact on biodiversity in terms of the fragmentation of blocks of gardens, which as a unit or in association with adjacent green space are deemed to make an important contribution to biodiversity and contribute to the green network; and
 - 9) The proposal does not prejudice the satisfactory development of a wider area.
- 2.4.1 Any development will have to respect the general scale, bulk and massing of the buildings in the area as well as the established existing building lines both the front and to the rear. Given the position of the site, subject to an acceptable design and articulation, potentially a generous 1 and a half storey building with two bedrooms would fit the urban fabric best. The council would normally encourage modern design and will, offer, great weight to outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.
- 2.4.2 The NPPF identifies that design policies should concentrate on guiding the overall scale, density, massing, height, landscape, layout, materials and access of new development in relation to neighbouring buildings and the local area more generally. Policy H11 includes a number of criteria which provide further detail regarding the matters which will be considered when assessing whether a proposal for residential development in garden land makes a positive contribution to the character of an area. These criteria include that a proposal should have a layout which integrates with the surrounding area with regard to the built-up coverage of each plot. This particular aspect could include the consideration of the plot widths and lengths of existing properties.
- 2.4.3 The Council has adopted the national space standards with respect to size of the dwelling units and will expect the scheme to respect the national space standards. The dwelling should benefit from sufficient daylight and outlook.
- 2.4.4 The council has required that all new build housing will be accessible and adaptable in line with M4(2) of the Building Regulations.
- 2.4.5 Dwellings will be provided with functional private open space, including green space wherever possible, that allows for suitable sitting-out areas, children's play areas, home food production, green waster composting, refuse storage, general outdoor storage and drying space. The design of these should respect the size and character of other similar spaces in the vicinity. They should not compromise the relationship of other buildings which may be detrimental in terms of overlooking, overbearing or overshadowing.

- 2.4.6 Policy H11 includes reference to high quality materials and elevational details, which where appropriate should be distinctive and/or complementary; there may be instances where the existing prevailing vernacular is poor and a contrasting contemporary style would be an improvement. There will be instances, therefore, where a modern innovative design that complements the surrounding area will be acceptable.

2.5 There is precedent for development in the curtilage of rear gardens:

160059 | Erection of 2 x 4-bed dwellings with associated vehicle parking and cycle storage. New access from highway.

181573 | Erect 1 pair of semi-detached & 1 no detached dwelling at rear of 4a and 5 Woods Road. Demolish No 5 Woods Road & replace with new detached dwelling. Provide new access.

3 Opportunities and Constraints

3.1 Opportunities

- To rejuvenate wasteland site facing Lowfield Road.
- Numerous rear garden developments in area suggest scope for feasibility.
- To improve the appearance of site for neighbouring properties.
- To make best use of a redundant and semi-derelict piece of land.
- Due to current design aspirations the final design will be of a high quality.
- The area of the site will mean that the space standards will be exceeded and spacious external amenity space can be provided along with adequate parking and refuse storage.

3.2 Constraints

- Site is narrow and the design that can best fit needs to be bespoke and well thought out.
- Due to the narrowness of the site placement of parking and associated site lines need to be considered from the offset.
- Range in development and no clear street frontage could lead to problems integrating with existing street scape.

4 Proposal

Design, Scale and Layout

- 4.1 The application is to construct a one and a half storey dwelling that can accommodate a 2 bed 4 person (family) in the rear garden of the curtilage of 26 Woods Road.
- 4.2 Providing safe access to the proposed dwelling with the fixed vision splays and 43m distances became a prominent driver to the massing and composition of the site. To ensure the vision splays were maintained the entrance to the building is aligned to this creating a dynamic street profile as the building angles towards the boundary.
- 4.3 The one and a half storey mass of the building is positioned away from the road edge in order to stay more in keeping with the rhythm and order of the fragmented street scene.
- 4.4 The boundary line of 25 and 26 Woods Road splits the mass so that neither of the properties faced considerable overlooking, overbearing and overshadowing. The wall facing these properties is without windows and the eaves level is low so they don't have an expanse of brick at the end of their garden.



Fig 7 Proposed Site Layout

- 4.5 Overall, the proposal has been designed not to be unduly dominant in terms of bulk, scale and height within the street scene and the external materials, provide a finish that complements the existing palette of the street. Therefore, the proposal is sympathetic and in keeping with the surrounding area, respecting adjoining properties and would result in no adverse effects on the character and appearance of the street scene and therefore accords with both local and national policies.
- 4.6 The proposed access off Lowfield Road emulates the proposal of neighbouring 6e and 6d with two proposed parking bays, planting and refuse space provided.
- 4.7 The proposed dwelling will meet the nationally described internal space standard in accordance with the Local Plan. The house will be designed and built to comply with M4(2) of the building regulations.
- 4.8 Design in excess of the space standards has meant that the rooms are generous and the internal layout allows for flexibility in usage, demonstrating the client's wishes to create a dwelling that could be molded to an end-user's needs. The layout of the downstairs consists of an open dining/ kitchen space, lounge and snug/study with a downstairs toilet and two storage cupboards. The upstairs layout is a main bedroom with large built-in wardrobes and Juliet balcony a generous family bathroom and a twin single room. Both have roof lights and openable windows to aid lighting, ventilation and overheating concerns.
- 4.9 The amenity space is generous and allows for a secure and private space with little overlooking with a proposed garden fence running along the majority that aligns with the fence erected by 7b Lowfield Road.

2b 4p Dwelling	Space Standards	Proposed
Dwelling	79m ²	100m ²
Amenity	No less than gross floor area of dwelling	180m ²

- 4.10 A landscaping design that incorporates hard and soft landscaping elements will be formally proposed with the full application with materials for landscaping, paving and fencing to be determined.
- 4.11 The ridge height of the building will be lower than the properties to the rear on Woods Rd so that it is considered subservient to reducing the effect of overbearing.



Fig 8 *Proposed Street Elevation*

5 PRE-APP RESPONSE

5.1 The application scheme has been revised to suit the pre-application enquiry response dated 29th November 2024 (reference PL/24/1377). The key points to note are as follows:

a) Character and design

The proposed dwelling is an improvement on the previously refused two-storey, 3-bedroom dwelling due to its reduced scale. However, the previous reason for refusal relating to failure to positively respond to the existing rhythm of the surrounding area is still relevant. The proposed layout itself leaves little relief for the proposed dwelling from Lowfield Road and would appear at odds with the prevailing building line, and typical urban grain of the area in which it is located.

We have produced a diagram to demonstrate the existing urban grain for the site. This demonstrates that there is a lack of street rhythm and therefore contradicting the statement made by the Officer in the pre-app response.

The building has also been set away from the road with a grassed verge.

b) Residential amenity

With regards to the amenity of future occupiers, the scale and form of the proposed dwelling minimises any risk of harm. Principal windows are positioned in a way to prevent overlooking and allow adequate access to natural sunlight/daylight. The internal layout is considered acceptable, and the proposed side garden is of adequate size.

With regards to nearby residents, the proposed dwelling has a rear/side arrangement which puts the side of the proposed dwelling and the rear façade of nos. 26 and 27 Woods Road at under 20m. Although this is not likely to result in overlooking or loss of privacy, it is still likely to appear overbearing and dominant.

A 3d visual has been provided to show the building in context. The building is low level and concealed behind a large tree.

c) Transport and Parking

As previously advised Lowfield Road is a classified road and therefore visibility splays of 2.4m x 90m are required. Splays illustrated on the submitted proposed site plan have been incorrectly illustrated as the line of sight passes through the adjacent property.

Any full submission should also include details for an electric charging point on site.

An electric charging point has been provided. Please see attached transport statement from Consultant regarding the council's response regarding visibility splays.

d) Biodiversity and Landscaping

It is not possible to comment in full without understanding the ecological baseline of the site. There are three trees on site and a number in close proximity within the adjacent residential gardens. Two of the three trees on site would need to be removed to facilitate the development, although details of the condition of the trees have not been provided, they nevertheless contribute positively to the visual qualities of the street due to their size and visibility and their loss is unlikely to be acceptable.

A Biodiversity assessment has been carried out and a recommendation for off-site contribution has been made by the Ecologist.

d) Affordable housing and CIL

The proposed dwelling would be liable for an off-site contribution to affordable housing in Reading, at a rate of 5% of the Gross Development Value. This would be secured by way of a S106 legal agreement.

The applicant agrees to an off-site contribution to affordable housing.

6 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 There has been precedent for new residential development that includes land within the curtilage or the former curtilage of private residential gardens in the vicinity of the proposed design.
- 6.2 The land is currently under-utilised and over-grown acting as a break in the residential frontage to the street.
- 6.3 There is a loose rhythm to the street and the proposal should fit harmoniously in with that in regards to scale, material and character.
- 6.4 Consideration has been given to the relationship between the existing surrounding houses and the proposed dwelling where possible reducing the potential for overbearing, overlooking and overshadowing.
- 6.5 The dwelling has been laid out to exceed space standards in order to provide a generous small family home.