Planning, Design and Access Statement

Plot on The Warren
Caversham
Reading
RG4 7TH

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Introduction

This statement is submitted in support of a planning application by Mr Michael Skehin for the erection of a detached dwelling following removal of all existing buildings. The proposed dwelling will be for a self-build property for the applicant.

The Design and Access element of the Statement has been produced in accordance with guidance published by the Commission for architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) and covers the following:

- An analysis of the site as existing, the immediate area and the wider context.

- A description of the design process followed to reach the final design solution, covering the subjects of Use, Amount, Layout, Scale, Landscaping, and Appearance. It considers the constraints of the site and relevant local and national planning policies to demonstrate that the proposed scheme is well conceived with the aim of integrating with its surroundings.

- Considers accessibility within the site and the proposals relationship to transport links in the surrounding area, as well as inclusive access for the elderly and the disabled. It justifies the location of pedestrian and vehicular access points to the site and establishes accessibility to public transport.

The application is accompanied by the following reports:

i) Planning, Design and Access Statement – Davis Planning Ltd

ii) Landscape and Visual Appraisal – LVIA Ltd

iii) Ecological Assessment (August 2024) – Aluco Ecology Ltd

iv) Contaminated Land Assessment Phase 1 Desk Study Report – STM Environmental

v) Flood Risk Assessment – UNDA

vi) Tree Survey and AIA – GHA Trees

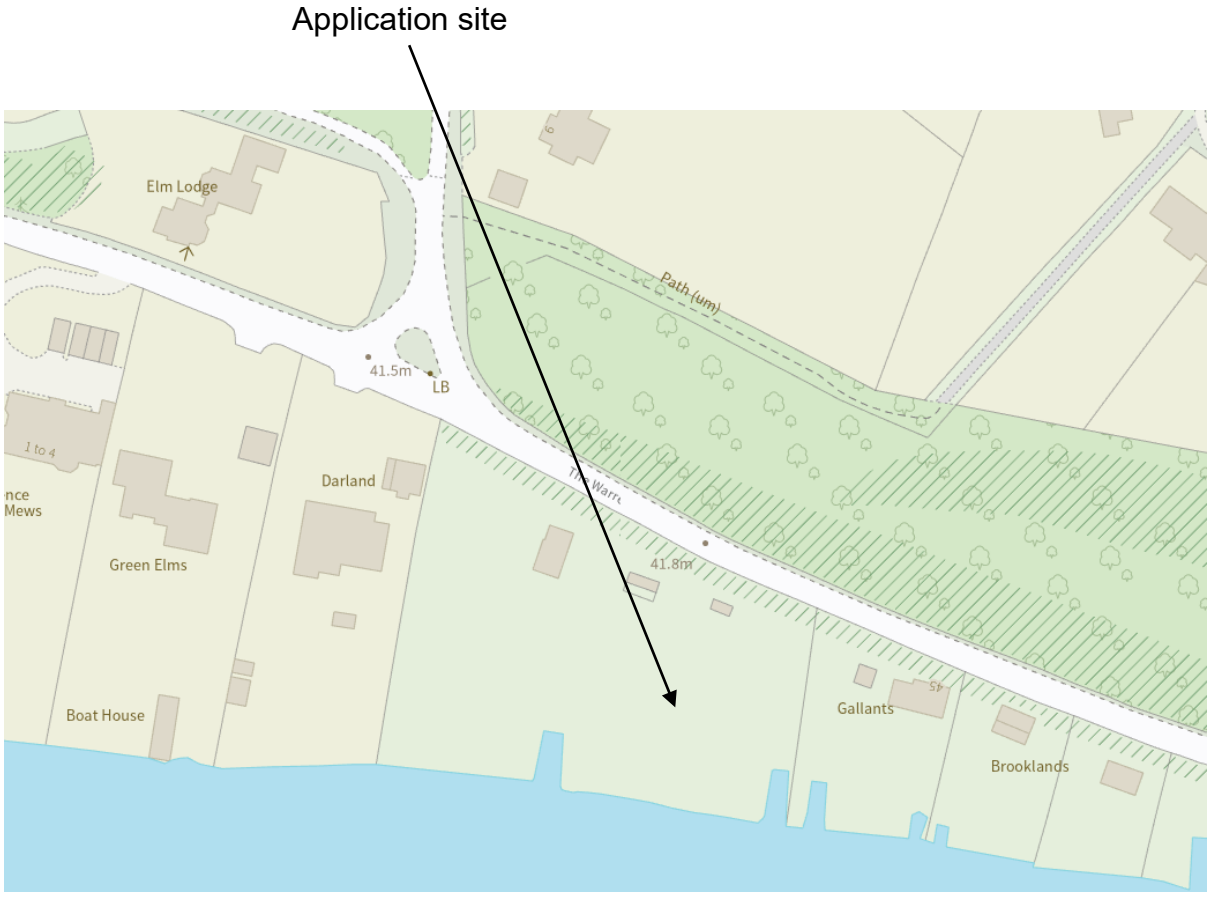
vii) Flood Risk Sequential Test – Davis Planning Ltd

1 The Site and Surroundings

The application site lies on the southern side of The Warren in Caversham. The site lies immediately to the east of a long run of frontage facing detached properties all of which have varying architectural character and features. The closest property to the west is 'Darland'. To the east is a parcel of largely open land before the continuation of frontage facing residential properties, the closest of which is 'Gallants'. The southern boundary of the site is defined by the River Thames where there are private moorings. The site itself has an historic use as a garden.

The Flood Risk Assessment confirms that the site falls with Flood Zones 2 and 3a. Levels fall away sharply further towards the river. This proposal seeks to take advantage of the change in levels.

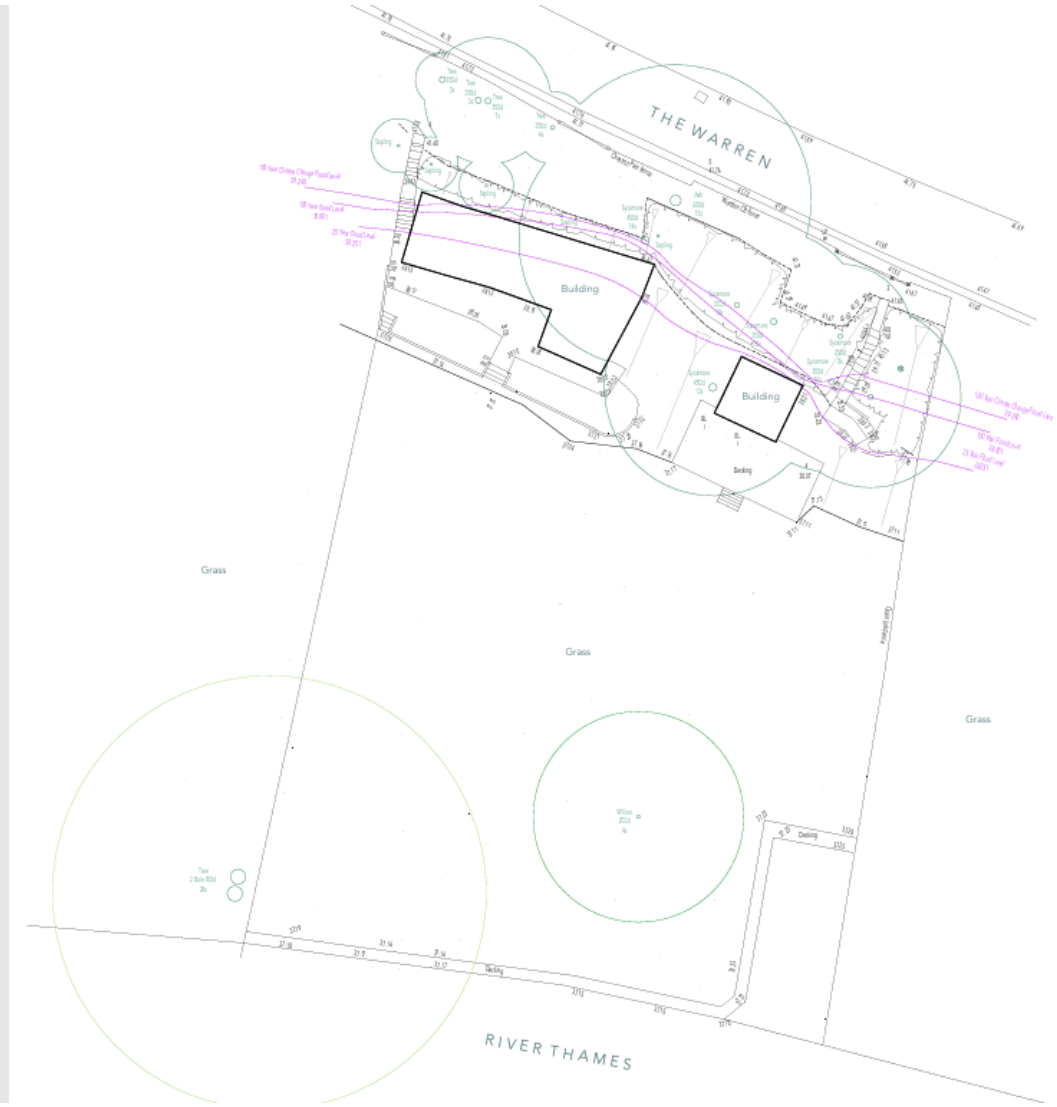
Site location plan



The application site currently contains two buildings, one of which already has a substantial footprint (60sq.m). The total on site floorspace is circa 70sq.m with additional hardsurfacing and wooden decking to the rear of each building (see survey below). The site has an unkempt appearance (see below) and does not make a positive contribution towards the Thames Valley Major Landscape Feature.

There are no dwellings currently on the site and therefore this application submission is accompanied by a Sequential Test.

<u>Existing site survey</u>



Existing views of the application site

The application site is considered to fall within the demise of the built-up area of Caversham (Reading) as defined in the adopted Local Plan Proposals Map. In addition, the site forms part of a wider area defined as being a 'Major Landscape Feature'. The impact of the proposal against this designation is considered within the Landscape and Visual Appraisal provided by LVIA Ltd.

The Warren is defined as an existing or proposed 'Green Link'. It is sustainably located close to a range of services and transport links.

2 Pre-Application discussions and planning history

A planning application to develop the land for a single dwelling was submitted and withdrawn in 2023 on the grounds that an emergence bat survey would be required (ref.231084). This forms part of the current submission.

The planning application followed a pre-application submission for a single dwelling. The main points in the pre-app. response (dated 7 February 2023) are set out below:

- The scope of the Sequential Test should be widened to include the Brownfield Land Register (BLR), local agents and research. Response: The Sequential Test is updated to include an analysis of the BLR, a search and an assessment of plots with local agents through online searches.

- The proposal would result in the loss of previously undeveloped open space within a Major Landscape Feature. Response: The site has existing buildings and a developed character. The provision of a well-designed dwelling will not be in conflict with Policy EN8.

- A new dwelling would detract from the character and appearance of the MLF. Response: As stated above, the proposal will replace existing unsightly uses and buildings with a high-quality architect designed scheme reflecting existing levels and presenting an interesting facade to the river.

- The design would deviate from that of existing properties. Response: The existing location and street is characterised by individually designed properties of varying age. The proposed contemporary building is sympathetic to the site. It will present a single storey frontage and a two-storey elevation to the rear reflecting the levels change.

- Unlikely to be any harm to neighbouring properties. The amenity quality for new occupiers is acceptable. Response: Noted.

- Contamination: Advised that the site is located 250m from a landfill site and a Phase 1 Desk Top Study would need to be submitted with an application. Response: Noted and submitted.

- Affordable housing policy H3: The Council will expect provision which will be as a financial contribution equivalent to 10% of the housing to be provided as affordable housing elsewhere in the Borough. The Council will expect this to be by way of a Section 106 Legal Agreement. Response: Noted.

- Details of access required. Response: Noted and provided.

- An ecological assessment will need to be submitted. Response: Noted and provided.

- A tree survey should be provided. Response: There are no trees on the site.

3 Relevant Planning Policies

National Planning Policy Framework (2024): The main relevant points in support of this proposal are:

The NPPF places significant weight and benefit on pre-application engagement which it states *'…has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties'.* (Paragraph 40).

Planning policies and decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land (paragraph 129).

Paragraphs 131-135 are concerned with design. It states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. Paragraph 135 states that planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments:

- Will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- Are visually attractive as a result of good architecture layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- Sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting
- Establish a strong sense of place;
- Optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development;
- Create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible;

Reading Borough Local Plan (adopted November 2019): The following policies are considered relevant:

Policy CC1 - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development. States that a positive approach to considering development proposals will be taken that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. Where appropriate, the Council will work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions

Policy CC7 – Design and the Public Realm. States that all development must be of a high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. The various components of development form include: layout; landscape; density and mix; scale (height and massing); and architectural details and materials. These will be assessed to ensure that the development makes a positive contribution to the following urban design objectives: Character; Continuity and enclosure; Quality

of the public realm and provision of green infrastructure and landscaping; Ease of movement and permeability; Legibility; Adaptability; Diversity.

Developments will be assessed to ensure that they, amongst other matters:

- Respond positively to their local context and create or reinforce local character and distinctiveness, including protecting and enhancing the historic environment of the Borough and providing value to the public realm;
- Are visually attractive as a result of good high quality built forms and spaces, the inclusion of public art and appropriate materials and landscaping.

Policy CC8 – Safeguarding Amenity. Requires that development does not result in a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties in terms of: Privacy and overlooking; Access to sunlight and daylight; Visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development; Harm to outlook; Noise and disturbance; Artificial lighting; Vibration; Dust and fumes; Smell; Crime and safety.

The position of habitable rooms, windows and outdoor living spaces will be particularly important. A back-to-back distance of 20 metres between dwellings is usually appropriate.

Policy H1 – Provision of Housing. Confirms that provision will be made for at least 15,847 homes (averaging 689 homes per annum) in Reading Borough for the period 2012 to 2036. Of the 689 homes per annum, small scale unidentified sites (i.e. <10 units) are expected to contribute 127 homes per annum (18.5% of the annual requirement).

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 are set out in figure 4.5. The site has a suburban context and therefore the density range is 30-60 dwellings per hectare. Wherever possible, residential development should contribute towards meeting the needs for the mix of housing set out in figure 4.6. This confirms that 41.5% should be 3 bed properties and 18.5% should be 4 plus bed properties.

Policy H3 – Affordable housing. On sites of 1-4 dwellings, a financial contribution will be made that will enable the equivalent of 10% of the housing to be provided as affordable housing elsewhere in the Borough. Where proposals fall short of the policy target as a result of viability considerations, an open book approach will be taken with the onus on the applicant to demonstrate the circumstances justifying a lower affordable housing contribution.

Policy H5 – Standards for New Housing. States that new built housing should be built to the following standards, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that this would render a development unviable:

a. All new build housing outside the Central Area as defined on the Proposals Map will comply with the nationally-described space standard.

b. All new build housing will be built to the higher water efficiency standard under Regulation 36(3) of the Building Regulations;

c. All major new-build residential development should be designed to achieve zero carbon homes.

d. All other new build housing will achieve at a minimum a 19% improvement in the dwelling emission rate over the target emission rate, as defined in the 2013 Building Regulations.

e. All new build housing will be accessible and adaptable in line with M4(2) of the Building Regulations, unless it is built in line with M4(3).

f. On development of 20 or more new build dwellings, at least 5% of dwellings will be wheelchair user dwellings in line with M4(3) of the Building Regulations.

Policy H10 – Private and Communal Open Space. States that dwellings will be provided with functional private or communal open space, including green space wherever possible, that allows for suitable sitting-out areas, children's play areas, home food production, green waste composting, refuse storage, general outdoor

storage and drying space. Houses will be provided with outdoor private space. The design of outdoor areas will respect the size and character of other similar spaces in the vicinity and should not be compromised by the relationship of other buildings which may be detrimental in terms of overlooking, overbearing or overshadowing.

Policy EN12 is concerned with 'Biodiversity and the Green Network'. It requires that proposals do not have a negative impact and should not result in a net loss of biodiversity.

Policy EN13 relates to 'Major Landscape Features and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty'. It states that planning permission will not be granted for any development that would detract from the character or appearance of a Major Landscape Feature. The first MLF noted in the policy is 'The Thames Valley' which the application site lies within.

4 The Application Proposal

The proposal is for the redevelopment of the site to provide 1No. detached dwelling as a self-build property. This chapter addresses the principal considerations for a site of this nature.

i) Principle of development;

ii) Design and local character;

iii) Amenity of neighbouring and future occupiers

iv) Housing mix and affordable housing;

v) Trees, landscaping and ecology;

vi) Transport.

i) Principle of Development

The site is located within a sustainable location close to a range of services and amenities and public transport links. The NPPF and the Development Plan supports housing in such locations and there are no policies which would seek to resist the redevelopment of the site in principle. The Council referred to Policies EN8 and H11 in the pre-application response. In respect of EN8 (Undesignated Open Space), this is not a policy that is considered to be applicable it relates to land that provides 'important recreational and amenity resources'. The site does not perform either of these two functions. The Council's main policy for developing private residential gardens (H11) does not seek to restrict development of these sites but instead imposes a series of requirements that proposals are required to meet (see below).

In terms of sustainability, the NPPF sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 8 identifies three objectives to sustainable development comprising (i) economic, (ii) social and (iii) environmental. These are interdependent but need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways. The proposal meets with all of these roles, as follows:

An economic objective:

The proposed development provides a number of material benefits to the local economy:

- It provides 1no. dwelling (self build) assisting to meet identified housing needs and the national requirement to demonstrate and maintain a 5 year housing land supply;

- It would result in local employment opportunities in the construction industry. For every new home built, up to two jobs are created for a year (as set out in the Government Housing Strategy for England (2011);

- Provides contributions to the Council in the form of the New Homes Bonus that can be spent on local infrastructure enhancements;

- The new residents resulting from the scheme will help to sustain the key services in the area.

A social objective

Wider benefits to the wider community include:

- Providing high-quality residential accommodation which represents a high standard of design;

- Increases opportunities for home ownership;

- Increase the number of residents in the locality to support local community facilities.

An environmental objective

The scheme provides a number of benefits to the wider environment such as:

- The site is sustainable located within the urban area of Caversham, with public transport links and services located in close proximity;

- The proposal makes effective use of land;

- The scheme responds positively to local context, respecting the character and appearance of the area;

- Secures a landscaping scheme, to the benefit of the site and the surrounding area;

- Secures features which will enhance biodiversity.

By meeting the economic, social and environmental objectives the proposed development accords with the sustainable development principles contained within the NPPF.

ii) <u>Design and local character</u>

The context of the application site and the surrounding area has been carefully analysed and fully taken into account in designing the application proposal. In particular, the design of the proposal is informed by the local context. In

designing the proposal, regard has been had to policies within the adopted Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 as well as the NPPF. The result is an integrated and distinctive development that reflects the site's characteristics and the varied character of adjacent properties. It also responds positively to local character in the form of building designs, materials, layout and landscaping.

Adopted Local Plan Policy H11 states that proposals for new residential development that includes land within the curtilage, or the former curtilage of private residential gardens will be acceptable where certain criteria are met. This proposal is consistent with this policy for the following reasons:

- The proposal makes a positive contribution to the character of the area in terms of its built form, contemporary design and space around the building. The proposed development would be viewed in the context of the site's riverside location and the existing built frontage. A series of CGI's are attached at chapter 5.
- The proposal makes provision for hard and soft landscaping.
- The proposed building height is compatible with that of adjacent dwellings. The contemporary architectural design would be constructed with high quality materials, in keeping with the surrounding area.
- The application site is of adequate size and dimensions to accommodate the development proposed in terms of the setting and spacing around buildings, with adequate private space, landscaping and space for the access road and parking.
- The proposal provides for a suitable access with meets highway standards.
- The proposal is not a form of tandem development. It will take its access from The Warren.
- The application site does not significantly expose existing private boundaries to public areas.
- The proposed development takes into account the siting of existing residential dwellings and ensures that there would be no significant detrimental impact to the amenity of adjacent and nearby occupiers (see below).
- The emphasis is on family-sized housing for which there is most demand in Reading Borough.
- The application is accompanied by an ecological appraisal. The proposal would not have an adverse impact on biodiversity subject to the range of measures recommended.
- The proposal is sufficiently comprehensive.

In conclusion, the proposal would fully integrate with the surrounding area and would comply with Policy H11 as set out above. In providing for a high standard of design the proposal would also comply with Policies CC7 and H2 of the adopted local plan as well as the general design objections set out in the NPPF.

The applicant has also instructed a landscape expert to undertake a landscape and visual appraisal (LVA) for the proposed new dwelling. The appraisal

undertook several viewpoints to assess the impact (receptors) on the surrounding area.

The conclusion of the LVA was that, given the site's characteristics, the proposal would not be out of character with its surroundings when considered as part of the wider landscape. This conclusion was reached on the basis that there is already development lying in close proximity to the east and west of the application site.

The LVA recommends mitigation measures to aid the schemes 'visual blending' with the host environment. The overall effect is thus considered to be 'minor' when assessed against the visual baseline and this type of development is not out of character with the receiving landscape.

iii) Amenity of Neighbouring and Future Occupiers

The siting of the proposed dwelling has taken into account the siting of the adjacent dwellings including their window positions and ensures that no loss of amenity will occur as a result of loss of light, privacy or overbearingness. The pre-application advice did not raise the prospect of any issues in this regard.

Policy CC8 is therefore met as there would be no significant detrimental impact to the living environment of existing properties.

iv) Housing Mix and Affordable Housing

The proposal provides for a family sized property (i.e. 3, 4 and 5 bed properties) which meets an identified need in the Borough (supporting text to Policy H2 and Figure 4.6).

It is acknowledged that an affordable housing contribution will be required under Policy H3.

v) Trees, Landscaping and Ecology

The application proposal would not have any adverse impact on existing trees which are not currently in situ on the site. As the site is devoid of existing trees, the proposal has not been accompanied by a tree survey.

The application is also accompanied by an Ecological Assessment which addresses the biodiversity of the site in more detail (August 2024). Subject to a range of mitigation measures, the scheme would not have an adverse impact on biodiversity features. An emergence survey has been carried out.

vi) Transport

The proposed dwellings will be accessed from The Warren. The proposal provides for 3no. parking spaces.

5 Design

(a) Use

The site comprises of land currently used in conjunction with the applicant's main residence in The Warren as residential garden.

(b) Amount

The proposal is for 1No. family sized dwelling as a self-build dwelling for the applicant.

(c) Layout

The proposed layout has taken into account the constraints of the site, including the positioning of adjacent residential dwellings and the site's access.

Care has been taken to ensure that the proposed dwelling do not result in any harm to the amenity of adjacent residents. The siting of the dwelling fully respects the positioning of the adjacent properties and would not result in any loss of privacy, loss of light or overbearingness.

(d) Scale

The proposed dwelling respects the changing levels cross the site (single storey frontage changing to two storeys where the land falls towards the river).

(e) Appearance

The proposed new dwelling will have a contemporary appearance with a glazed rear faced designed to take advantage of the riverside location (see below).

All materials will be of high quality and will be subject to the approval of the LPA.

(f) Landscaping and Biodiversity

The proposal makes provision for generous new areas for planting.

The proposal is accompanied by an Ecological Assessment which assesses the impact of the proposal on biodiversity. The Survey recommends a series of mitigation measures. The extent of open space now being provided will enhance the Green Link.

(g) Access

The proposed new dwellings will be accessed via The Warren.

Proposed front elevation

Proposed rear elevation

6 Summary and Conclusions

The planning application provides for the redevelopment of the site to provide 1No. new dwelling as a self-build property. It should be supported for the following reasons:

- The proposal makes the best use of a site in a sustainable location well related to local facilities and public transport opportunities and as such receives strong support from national and local policy (i.e. NPPF and Local Plan Policy CC1).

- The application site has been the subject of pre-application discussions. The applicant has supplemented the application submission with a full Landscape Visual Assessment to demonstrate that the new dwelling will only have a 'minor' effect on the visual baseline. The proposal will provide for a high-quality contemporary design to replace an existing tired series of domestic outbuildings. The proposed footprint will reflect the existing siting of buildings avoid any additional spread of development across the site. The Thames Valley Major Landscape Feature will be enhanced.

- The proposal provides for a form of development that is in keeping with the character and appearance of the surrounding area in terms of its size, scale, layout, height and design in accordance with the NPPF and Policies CC7, H2 and H11 of the adopted Local Plan.

- It is not accepted that Policy EN8 is of relevance as it refers to undesignated open space. The site is used as additional domestic garden space by the applicant, and it contains large outbuildings.

- The proposal provides for a family sized dwelling in line with Policy H2. The need for a 10% affordable housing contribution is acknowledged.

- The siting of the dwelling has taken into account the positioning of adjacent dwellings and ensures that the proposal would not result in any loss of amenity to occupants of adjoining properties. Policy CC8 is therefore met.

- The proposal provides for additional landscaping and ensures that the biodiversity of the site and the Green Link will be enhanced. There are no ecological constraints to redeveloping the site subject to mitigation measures. The applicant has undergone the required emergence surveys.

- The site is accessible to public transport modes and provides for adequate and safe access and car parking.