

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

App Ref: PL/21/1340/FUL

Address: 8 Thornton Road

Proposal: Erection of 1 x 2-bed dwelling (C3 use)

Case Officer: Connie Davis

Target Decision date (agreed extension of time): 12th December 2025 (Ext)

INTRODUCTION

The application site occupies an exposed location on the corner of Thornton Road and Thornton Mews; it is not land that forms part of the rear curtilage of 8 Thornton Road. The existing residential development in Thornton Road mainly comprises relatively short terrace rows of two storey scale, set back from the road frontage along a clear and consistent building line with the main garden space conventionally positioned to the rear. The two storey semi-detached dwellings at the rear of the site in Thornton Mews are similarly laid out with front and rear gardens. Portman Road park is located nearby.

The site is not listed, nor in a conservation area.

PROPOSAL

The proposed development is for the erection of a detached 2 bedroom dwelling. The dwelling would have a width of 6.4m, maximum height of 6.5m and maximum depth of 10.9m. The dwelling would be located, at maximum, 2.5m from the boundary of the site. Off-road parking would be provided off Thornton Mews at the rear of the site.

Submitted Plans and Documentation:

PL-01 – Location Plan

Received 4th March 2022

L1 – Landscape Proposals Plan

Received 6th December 2021

PL-02 Rev 03 - Site Plan REV 03

Received 9th November 2021

Flood Risk Assessment Letter Report from pba dated 1st March 2016

Environment Agency data

Received 7th September 2021

PL-03 – Proposed Floor Plans

PL-06 Rev 01 – Street Scene

PL-05 – Visualization Proposed Building

PL-04 – Proposed Elevations

Application Form

Design and Access Statement

Received 16th August 2021

PLANNING HISTORY

Applications at land adjacent to 8 Thornton Road:

172155/FUL – Single storey two-bedroom bungalow – Application Refused for the following reasons:

- The proposed development's impact on the character of the area – it would result in a cramped development due to the proposed dwelling's proximity to site boundaries
- Lack of affordable Housing
-

Appeal dismissed for both reasons.

160460/FUL – Erection of one new detached dwelling – Application Refused for the following reasons:

- The proposed development's impact on the character of the area – the dwelling would be isolated
- Lack of affordable housing contribution

Appeal dismissed for both reasons.

Applications at 8 Thornton Road:

171589/HOU – Single storey rear and side extension – Application Permitted

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS WITH APPLICANT/AGENT

Revised plans were sought in response to Natural Environment and Transport consultation memos.

CONSULTATIONS

Internal

Transport – No objections subject to conditions

Natural Environment – No objections, subject to conditions

Ecology – No objections, subject to conditions

Environment Agency – Did not wish to be consulted

Thames Water – No objections

Public

The following addresses were consulted by letter on 08/09/21:

8 Thornton Road

1, 2, 3, 4 Thornton Mews

A site notice was displayed between 10th September – 1st October 2021

One comment was received from 8 Thornton Mews relating to the following matters:

- Considers dwelling should be in line with the terrace
- Development would be overbearing due to projecting further into the rear garden

Officer comment: *The above will be considered and responded to in the report*

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

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) which states at Paragraph 11 “Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development”.

For this Local Planning Authority the development plan is now in one document – the Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019). The relevant policies are:

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
EN7	Local Green Space and Public Open Space
EN8	Undesignated Open Space
EN12	Biodiversity and the green network
EN14	Trees, hedges and woodlands
EN18	Flooding and Drainage
H1	Provision of housing
H2	Density and mix
H3	Affordable housing
H5	Standards for new housing
H10	Private and communal outdoor space
TR1	Achieving the transport strategy
TR3	Access, traffic and highway related matters
TR5	Car and cycle parking and electric vehicle charging

Relevant Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) are:

Affordable Housing (2021)
Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)
Planning Obligations Under Section 106 (2015)
Sustainable Design and Construction (2019)

APPRAISAL

The main matters to be considered are:

- Principle of development
- Design and impact on the surrounding area
- Residential amenity and quality of accommodation
- Private outdoor space
- Transport matters
- The Natural Environment
- Affordable Housing
- Other Matters
- Equalities impact

Principle of development

The application site is over land currently vacant, greenfield land and represents an open, non-designated area of open space.

Paragraph 119 of the NPPF states that: "Planning policies and decisions 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 definition within the NPPF states that brownfield land (previously developed land) is defined as: "Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. This excludes: land that is or was last occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill, where provision for restoration has been made through development management procedures; land in built-up areas such as residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments; and land that was previously developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape."

Paragraph 118 goes on to state that: "Planning policies and decisions should ... recognise that some undeveloped land can perform many functions such as for wildlife, recreation, flood risk minimisation, cooling/shading, carbon storage or food production"

Policy EN8 of the Local Plan goes into more detail specific to Reading and states that "*There will be a presumption in favour of retention of undesignated open space ... Development should not result in the loss of or jeopardise use and enjoyment of undesignated open space ... The quality of existing open space should not be eroded by insensitive development on adjoining land*". Whilst the site is in private ownership, the supporting text to the Policy in paragraph 4.2.30 explains that "Reading has many areas of open space not identified in Policy EN7 (Local Green Space and Public Open Space) in both public and private ownership. It is important that these areas are retained where possible". The definition of open space in the glossary to the NPPF does not limit it to land in public ownership, but all open space of public value. Indeed, the NPPG (Ref: Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 37-001-20140306) confirms that open space can take many forms, including being an important part of the landscape and setting of built development.

Within the street scene of Thornton Road and Thornton Mews it is somewhat atypical of the area; the space laid to grass does not appear to have a particular function. The site is fenced off from the street meaning it is not used for members of the public or recreational value. As such, the use of the grassed open space for development is not considered unacceptable in principle when assessed in relation to Policy EN8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

The general principle of residential development in a residential area is accepted also. Furthermore, the proposal will contribute to the supply of housing in the area. The Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) sets a target of 15,847 homes over the period 2013 to 2036 (an average of 689 homes per annum) and so therefore accords with Policy H1 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

Design and impact on the surrounding area

Policy CC7, and H11 (as part of the development site includes areas previously used as residential gardens) seek to protect and enhance the character and appearance of the area, and require a *“high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located.”*

Policy CC7 outlines a number of considerations to ensure development would protect and enhance the character and appearance of the area including:

- *Layout: urban structure and urban grain;*
- *Landscape;*
- *Density and mix;*
- *Scale: height and massing; and*
- *Architectural detail and materials*
- *Character - a place with its own identity and sense of place*
- *Continuity and enclosure*
- *Quality of the public realm and provision of green infrastructure and landscaping*
- *Ease of movement and permeability*
- *Legibility - clear image and easy to understand*
- *Adaptability – capable of adaptation over time*
- *Diversity – meets a wide range of needs.*
- *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;*
- *Create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder or fear of crime does not undermine quality of life or community cohesion;*
- *Address the needs of all in society and are accessible, usable and easy to understand by them, including providing suitable access to, into and within, its facilities, for all potential users, including disabled people, so that they can use them safely and easily;*
- *Are visually attractive as a result of good high quality built forms and spaces, the inclusion of public art and appropriate materials and landscaping.*

In addition, the NPPF (para. 64) states: *“Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions”.*

The existing street scene along Thornton Road generally comprises of small blocks of terrace properties with a largely consistent building line. As can be seen from the planning history, two previous schemes on the land have been refused (and dismissed at appeal) due to the impact on the character of the area.

160460/FUL

The first application for a new two storey dwelling was refused due to the dwelling being

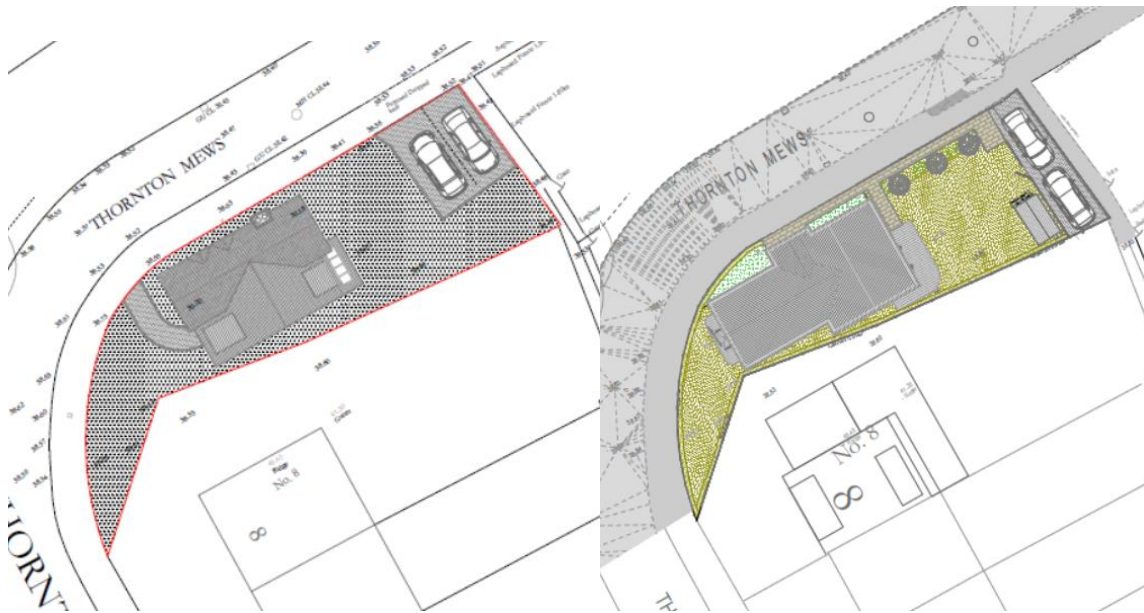
isolated in the street scene, as it would be located a sufficient distance from 8 Thornton Road. In response to this, 8 Thornton Road constructed a single storey side extension, meaning the separation distance between no. 8 and a new dwelling would be less. During this appeal, the Inspector concluded that the development would not be considered cramped in the curtilage. This current application sees a new dwelling in the same positioning as this previous application, however the design of the dwelling has been amended.

172155/FUL

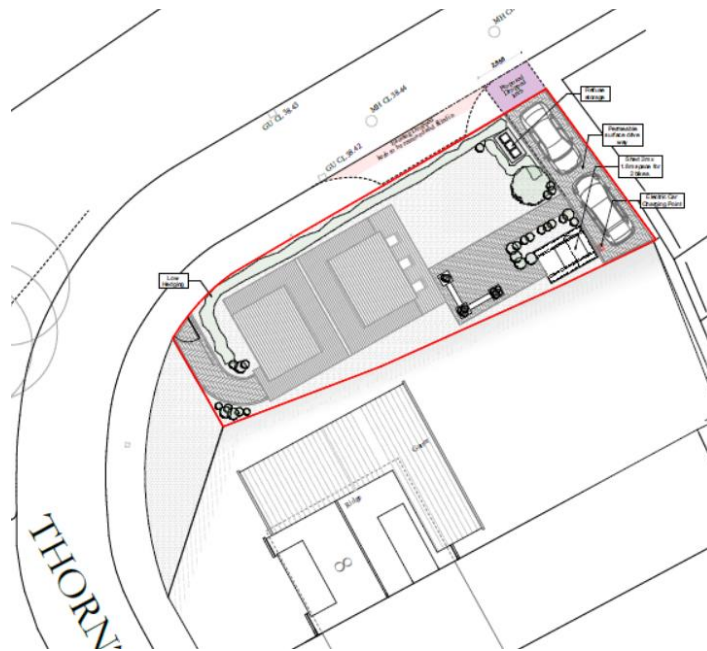
In the second application, a bungalow was proposed which was considered a cramped addition to the street due to the proximity to site boundaries but not cramped in relation to the extension that had been constructed at no. 8.

This proposal seeks to combine comments from the previous refusals. The extension at no. 8 continues to mean new development on the site would not be considered isolated development. The scheme has now been pulled off from site boundaries (by a maximum of 1.2m) to appear a less cramped addition within the curtilage of the site.

The proposed dwelling would be set back slightly back from the building line of the terrace, this is not considered so disruptive to result in refusal of the application which is considered to sufficiently respond to the neighbouring comment. The set back of the dwelling from the main building line was not commented on by the Inspector under the application which saw a dwelling in the same position. The extension at no. 8 Thornton Road has also now been built out (was not under previous applications). As such, the dwelling, whilst detached, would not be considered an isolated feature given that built form will be in close proximity to the dwelling.



Site plans. Left: first application 160460, right: second application 172155



Site plan – current application

The design of the dwelling displays features found on those in the vicinity, namely front and rear flat roofed dormers with a hipped roof. The overall scale of the proposed dwelling is also comparable to those in the terraces. Whilst the design is not considered contemporary, there is not resistance to such features given the design of the road and Officers appreciate that the applicant is making effort for the new dwelling to integrate with surroundings. The dwelling would be constructed from brick and tiles, although further materials details would be secured via condition. Boundary treatment will also be secured via condition to ensure the plot is not overly exposed on the corner of the road.

As such, based on the conclusions of previous appeals at the site and efforts from the applicant to address the issues raised, it is considered that the siting, spacing and design of the dwelling is acceptable in relation to policy CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019). Previous concerns over a dwelling on the plot having an isolated or cramped appearance are considered to have been overcome.

Residential amenity and quality of accommodation

Policy CC8 seeks to protect the amenity of surrounding occupiers whilst Policy EN16 seeks to ensure development is not harmful in terms of pollution.

Policy H5 includes a number of standards for new development. The proposed dwelling would meet internal space standards for a new 2 bedroom, 2 storey dwelling, including bedroom sizes. All habitable rooms would be served by windows, with double doors to the ground floor rear. The dwelling would therefore be considered to provide acceptable light levels and outlook for future occupiers.

The proposed dwelling would be set, at maximum, 2m off the boundary with 8 Thornton Road. As described above, this property has a single storey side extension which was not constructed when the previous applications were submitted. Whilst the extension was built for the purpose of meaning a dwelling on the land would not be isolated, consideration of development on the extension (and dwelling generally) still has to be considered. The one representation made was also from the owner of this property.

The dwelling would project approximately 4m beyond the rear elevation of no. 8 Thornton Road. The neighbouring property has one rear facing first floor window which is set away from the application site, and closer to 6 Thornton Road. As such, this window would not result in a substantially harmful loss of light, nor would a 45 degree light angle be breached. At ground floor, again, windows are considered to not result in a substantial level of light given the development at the rear is part single storey. The overall depth of the dwelling beyond the rear elevation of no. 8 Thornton Road is also in line with the LPA's general guidance on House Extensions (that they should not project to a depth of more than 4m; in this case it would only marginally project above this figure). Concerns were raised about the development being overbearing. However, the development would be set of the site boundary, with a separation distance between no. 8 at the shared boundary also. No. 8's rear amenity space, would, on the large part, not be encompassed by development and so is not considered to preclude the enjoyment or use of the rear space. Furthermore, no side windows are proposed that would result in a loss of privacy to this neighbour. A condition would be attached preventing any side windows being installed without separate planning permission in the interests of neighbouring amenity and the removal of permitted development rights to allow further development of the rear garden in order to minimise visual dominance and loss of light for existing occupiers.

Given the plot is on the corner of the road, there is no other directly adjacent neighbour. Properties at the rear of the site (1-4 Thornton Mews) would be situated in excess of 20m from the application site and therefore adequate separation distance is maintained in line with Policy CC8 to minimise overlooking and loss of privacy. All other dwellings on Thornton Road are considered a sufficient distance so as not to result in a loss of light, privacy or the development being overbearing.

The proposed development is considered to afford a good level of accommodation for future residents whilst protecting the amenity of existing residents in accordance with Policy CC8.

Private outdoor space

Policy H10 states that *"dwellings to be provide with functional private open space ... 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 private outdoor space whereas flats may be provided with communal outdoor space, balconies and/or roof gardens."*

The design of outdoor areas will respect the size and character of other similar spaces in the vicinity, clearly identify whether they are private or communal spaces, ensure that they are appropriately related to main entrances, enhance safety and the perception of safety for future residents and the general public, and not be compromised by the relationship of other buildings which may be detrimental in terms of overlooking, overbearing or overshadowing."

Although no specific criteria exist, the supporting text of the policy (4.4.87) states *"In the past, the Council has sought the following minimum provisions for private or communal outdoor space for each type of accommodation, and they provide a useful guide for proposals:*

(a) Houses: Useable private outdoor space should be no less than the gross floor area of the dwelling to which it relates (measured externally and including garage space)."

Whilst the dwelling would be set further into the rear garden than neighbouring plots, the rear garden space is considered to be sufficient for the purposes of complying with the aims of Policy H10 and would provide sufficient space for recreation, whilst also being largely similar in scale to those found elsewhere in the terrace. However a condition will be attached removing Permitted Development rights (Classes A and E) so that all development that could encroach rear garden space can be controlled by the Local Planning Authority.

Transport matters

The site is located in Zone 2, Primary Core Area, of the Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD. This zone directly surrounds the Central Core Area and extends to walking distances of 2 kilometres from the centre of Reading. In accordance with the adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD, the development is required to provide a parking provision of 1 space for the proposed 2 bedroom dwelling. Submitted site plan illustrates two off street parking spaces in tandem formation are to be provided for the new dwelling, this is in excess of the Councils current adopted standards but is deemed acceptable. No off road parking provision exists for no. 8 Thornton Road, and the situation will not change as a result of the development. A condition will be attached to keep the proposed parking spaces free for parking at all times.

In accordance with Policy TR5 of the Local Plan, all development for new houses must provide an electric vehicle charging point. This has been shown on the proposed plans.

Cycle storage for 2 bicycles along with bin storage have been provided in accordance with the Council's standards and within the curtilage of the site.

A new dropped kerb is proposed for the parking spaces. A license will need to be obtained from the Council's Highways department prior to any works being carried out on the carriageway. This will be reminded to the applicant via an informative. Parking spaces/ driveway should be constructed of permeable materials to prevent surface water flooding and this will be secured via a condition.

A construction method statement will be required for the development and this will be secured via pre-commencement condition.

Subject to conditions, the proposal is deemed acceptable in relation to Policies TR3 and TR5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

The Natural Environment

Policy EN12 states that *"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."*

Policy EN14 states that *"New development shall make provision for tree retention and planting within the application site, particularly on the street frontage, or off-site in appropriate situations, to improve the level of tree coverage within the Borough."*

Ecology

The site comprises of hardstanding and a smaller overgrown area. These habitats are not priority habitats and the site is unlikely to host protected species. There are therefore no objections to this application on ecology grounds.

However, in accordance with paragraph 180 of the NPPF and Policy EN12 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019), which states that "opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged" a condition should be set to ensure that enhancements for wildlife are provided within the new development. A pre-commencement condition will be worded as follows:

Prior to the commencement of the development, details of biodiversity enhancements, to include two integral bird or bat bricks on the new building and native and wildlife friendly

landscaping, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the council. The biodiversity enhancements shall thereafter be installed as approved.

Reason: To incorporate biodiversity in and around developments in accordance with paragraph 180 of the NPPF and Policy EN12 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

Subject to the inclusion of this condition, the proposal is considered acceptable in relation to Policy EN12 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

Trees

To align with the Local Plan's EN14 policy and the Tree Strategy's objective 4, it is expected that at least 1 tree and 5+ shrubs (as well as the already labelled hedge, or alternative higher vegetation) are provisioned as proposed planting.

Planting provision, planting type and numbers have been shown on the proposed plans which is above and beyond the requirements at this stage. However, it is noted that the service lines routes are not shown on the plans, but these are unlikely to overlap with the proposed 'Field maple' Streetwise' projected Root Protection Area, therefore these are not required with regards to trees. As such, it is not considered necessary to require the submission of service routes at a later date.

Overall the application is supported in terms of trees and landscaping, subject to condition that landscaping is implemented as specified in accordance with Policy EN14 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

Affordable Housing

In accordance with Policy H3 (Affordable Housing) the proposed development, being for 1 additional dwelling, would be liable for an off-site affordable housing contribution equivalent of 10% of the GDV of the development.

The applicant has agreed to provide a policy compliant contribution of £16,125.00. This will be secured via a S106 legal agreement in line with Policy H3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

Other Matters

CIL

The proposed development would generate a CIL liability.

Sustainability

Policy H5 requires additional sustainability measures including EV charging points, a 19% dwelling emissions rate improvement, and an improved water efficiency level which will be secured by conditions.

Equalities Impact

When determining this application the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to the particular planning application. Therefore, in terms of

the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

CONCLUSION

As detailed above, the proposal is considered acceptable in relation to national and local level planning policy.

Recommendation: **GRANT** permission subject to the following conditions:

All pre-commencement conditions have been agreed with the applicant's agent.

- 1) Time Limit
- 2) Approved Plans
- 3) Materials to be approved
- 4) Landscaping to be implemented
- 5) **[Pre-Commencement]** Construction Method Statement
- 6) Vehicle Parking (As specified)
- 7) Vehicle Access (As specified)
- 8) Cycle Parking (As specified)
- 9) Refuse and Recycling (As specified)
- 10) EV Charging Points
- 11) **[Pre-Commencement]** biodiversity enhancements
- 12) **[Pre-commencement]** Design Stage SAP
- 13) As built SAP
- 14) PD rights removed
- 15) No side windows on south-eastern side elevation to be installed without separate planning permission
- 16) Permeable materials to be used
- 17) Boundary Treatment

Informatives

- 1) Terms
- 2) Building Control
- 3) Complaints about Construction
- 4) Encroachment
- 5) Positive and Proactive
- 6) Pre-Commencement Conditions
- 7) S106
- 8) Highways
- 9) Access Construction
- 10) CIL