

DELEGATED HOUSEHOLDER APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Caversham Ward

App Ref: PL/25/1597

Address: 18 CHURCH ROAD, CAVERSHAM, READING, RG4 7AD

Proposals: The construction of a 1.5-storey side extension and a double-storey rear extension. removal of a masonry upstand/short brick wall and replacement with glass guarding and the regrading of existing garden steps.

Case Officer: Mishga Marshall

Applicant: Mr and Mrs Williams

Date received (valid from): 07/11/2025

Target Decision date: 02/01/2026

Agreed EOT Decision Date: 16/01/2026

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site relates to a two storey detached dwellinghouse with an attached garage and boat house from the inter war period. The site lies between Church Road to the north and River Thames to the south, located within the St Peter's Conservation Area and also within the settings of three listed buildings - No 20 (The Rectory) Including Garden Walls, Buckside, 2, Church Road, and Buckside Buckside Cottage at 6 Church Road. The property forms part of an established residential street characterised by dwellings of traditional form and architectural detailing, which collectively make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Site visit date: 09/12/2025

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Planning permission is sought for the construction of a 1.5-storey side extension and a double-storey rear extension, together with associated works including the removal of an existing masonry upstand/short brick wall, replacement with glass guarding, and regrading of existing garden steps.

The proposal includes a single-storey element extending approximately 4.4 metres in depth and 11.6 metres in width with a pitched roof reaching approximately 3.8 metres at its highest point. The double-storey rear element also extends approximately 4.4 metres in depth and incorporates roof-level alterations and dormer features spanning a substantial proportion of the width of the dwelling, together with a side extension, resulting in development across approximately 14 metres.

No works have been undertaken or started in relation to the proposed development.

This is a re-submission following the withdrawal of the previous planning application ref. PL/24/1573.

During the assessment of this application, concerns were raised to the applicant.

Firstly it was acknowledged that several positive amendments to the proposal at 18 Church Road—including the replacement of uPVC with black-painted timber windows, use of matching materials to the principal elevation, sustainability enhancements, and submission of updated bat survey work—but was advised that significant concerns remain following review with the earlier case officer and the Conservation Officer. These related primarily to the continued excessive scale and massing of the first-floor and roof-level rear extensions, the loss of original architectural detailing that contributed to the St Peter's Conservation Area, and the inappropriate and harmful contemporary design language proposed at the rear. It was requested that a full clarification of

all materials and fenestration details, submission of the 2022 Naturally Wild bat survey cited in the ecological assessment, and provision of 45-degree rule diagrams for both neighbouring properties be provided. The applicant was offered an opportunity to provide revised drawings and supporting information addressing these matters, noting that without such revisions the applications would proceed to refusal based on the current unsupported proposals.

The applicant confirmed that they would not amend the proposed design, arguing that the contemporary and expressive approach is appropriate within the Conservation Area and supported by national policy, with long-range views ensuring it will not appear intrusive. They note that the 2022 bat survey has already been submitted and provide clarification on the 45-degree sightline assessment, concluding that neither Mulberry House nor 18a would experience harm due to window positioning, levels, or existing obstructions. Details of materials—including matching brick and tiles, black painted timber and aluminium windows, PVC rainwater goods on the traditional extension, and Cor-Ten steel fascias—are reiterated as already provided on the submitted drawings.

The applicant has provided additional information in response to the Council's request for clarification on matters relating to design, heritage impact, neighbour amenity, and ecology. While the submission includes details of materials, 45-degree sightline assessments and the previously referenced 2022 bat survey, the revised justification does not address the fundamental concerns previously identified by officers. Following further review of the proposals alongside the relevant site history, consultation with the Council's relevant consultees, and assessment against the Reading Borough Local Plan, it remains the case that the scale, massing and contemporary design of the first-floor and roof-level additions would result in harm to the character and appearance of the St Peter's Conservation Area. As a result, despite the clarifications provided, the scheme continues to conflict with policies of the Local Plan and cannot be supported in its current form.

The applicant was given the opportunity to withdraw, however stated they did not wish to do so.

Plans submitted received 6th November 2025:

283.001A Site Location_Existing Block Plans A3 dated 16.09.2025

283.002A Existing Ground Floor Plan A3 dated 16.09.2025

283.003 Existing First Floor Plan A3 dated September 2024

283.004A Existing LGF_Roof Plan A3 dated 16.09.2025

283.005A Existing Elevations 1 of 2 A3 dated 16.09.2025

283.006B Existing Elevations 2 of 2 A3 dated 05.11.2025

283.007A Proposed Ground Floor Plan A3 dated 16.09.2025

283.008 Proposed First Floor Plan A3 dated September 2024

283.009A Proposed LGF_Roof Plan A3 dated 16.09.2025

283.010B Proposed Elevations 1 of 2 A3 dated 16.09.2025

283.011C Proposed Elevations 2 of 2 A3 dated 05.11.2025

283.012 Proposed Rear Visualisation A3

283.02.019A Proposed Block Plan A3 dated 16.09.2025

Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment [Sundance Construction Limited, prepared by: Ecus Ltd] dated October 2024

Bat Emergence Survey Report [Sundance Construction Limited, Prepared by: Cura Terrae Land & Nature] dated 2nd July 2025

Flood Risk Assessment [KRS Environmental Ltd; Prepared by: Ruth Evans] dated September 2025

Planning and Design and Heritage Statement [Prepared by Candid Planning Consultancy] dated November 2025

Covering Letter dated 11th November 2025

Plans submitted received 24th December 2025:

Bat Risk Assessment Report [Naturally Wild Consultants Limited, Prepared by: Ben Willers] dated 05/07/2022

Plans submitted received 07th January 2026:

283.014 First Floor 45 Degree Rule Diagram A3 dated Jan 2026

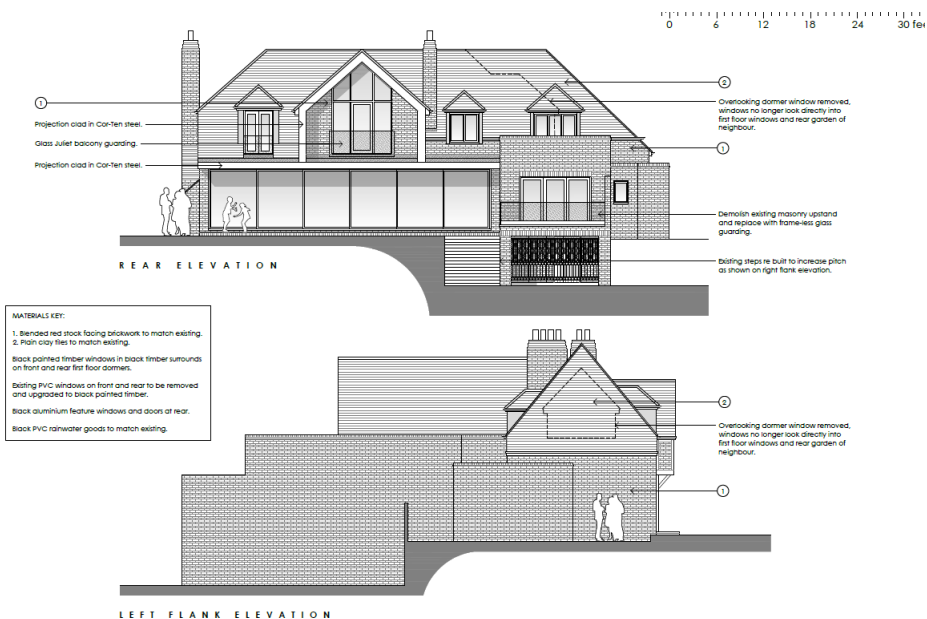
283.013 Ground Floor 45 Degree Rule Diagram A3 dated Jan 2026

Photos of Adjacent Windows on Neighbouring Properties

Existing Plans:



Proposed Plans:



3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

PL/13/0314 - Demolition of conservatory, various minor external alterations and replacement windows (amended description). - Approve

PL/13/0315 - Demolition of conservatory and front boundary wall; erection of new car port, boundary wall and replacement windows - Withdrawn

PL/24/1510 - Demolition of existing front boundary wall and gates and construction of replacement front boundary wall and gates. - Approve with Conditions

PL/24/1573 - Construction of 1.5 storey side extension with part single storey and part two storey rear extension, reduction of integral boat house floor level and conversion to habitable space, re grading of existing garden steps. - Withdrawn

4. CONSULTATIONS

Site notice displayed on 10/12/2025

No neighbour letters of representation have been received.

RBC Ecology: RBC Ecology advises that the applicant has not completed the required three nocturnal (emergence) bat surveys. Only two surveys were undertaken, even though current guidelines and the site's high bat-roost potential require three.

The applicant attempted to justify reducing the number of surveys in the Cura Terrae Land & Nature report (02/07/2025) by citing:

- A licensed bat worker's internal inspection in 2024, and
- Low bat activity recorded during the 2022 nocturnal survey.

However, the document submitted to RBC does not contain the results of any new nocturnal/emergence surveys. Instead, it includes only the 2022 Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment by Naturally Wild, which actually recommends three emergence surveys.

RBC Ecology therefore concludes that the results of the required nocturnal emergence surveys are still missing and must be provided.

RBC Conservation: Comments remain unchanged from those provided under application ref. PL/24/1573. It is considered that the proposal would result in harm to the significance of the St Peter's Conservation Area.

CADRA: CADRA considers the revised scheme to be a significant improvement compared to the withdrawn application. The Committee raises no objection in relation to flood risk and considers that access and egress would be achievable in extreme flood events, subject to confirmation from the Environment Agency.

RBC Transport: The proposed works do not change the existing on site parking or access arrangements, therefore there are no Transport objections to this application.

RBC Natural Environment: No objection subject to conditions and informatives

Equality Act 2010:

In determining this application, the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. However, there is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application. Therefore, in terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. The following local and national planning policy and guidance is relevant to this application:

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework 2024

National Planning Practice Guidance 2014 onwards

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC1 (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development)

CC2 (Sustainable Design and Construction)

CC7 (Design and the Public Realm)

CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity)

H9 (House Extensions and Ancillary Accommodation)

EN1 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment)

EN3 (Enhancement of Conservation Areas)
EN4 (Locally Important Heritage Assets)
EN5 (Protection of Significant Views of Heritage Interest)
EN6 (New development in a historic context)
EN12 (Biodiversity and the Green Network)
EN14 (Trees, Hedges and Woodlands)
EN18 (Flooding and Sustainable Drainage Systems)
TR3 (Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters)
TR5 (Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging)

SPD

Design Guide to House Extensions SPG 2021

St Peter's Conservation Area Appraisal Nov 2028

6. APPRAISAL

Character and Appearance - Impact of the St Peter's Conservation Area

Policy H9 states that an extension to a house will be acceptable where it respects the character of the house in terms of scale, location, materials and design and respects the character and pattern of neighbouring properties and the street as a whole in terms of scale, location, materials and design, and any important existing building line. Policy CC7 also sets out relevant considerations for design.

Policy EN1 'Protection and enhancement of the historic environment' of the Reading Borough Local Plan sets out the Council's aspirations for the historic environment. The policy requires that all proposals to protect and, where possible, enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings, *historic character and local distinctiveness of the area* in which they are located. It echoes the NPPF by stating, *"Proposals should seek to avoid harm in the first instance. Any harm to or loss of a heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification, usually in the form of public benefits"*.

Policy EN3 'Enhancement of conservation areas' of the Reading Borough Local Plan requires that development proposals within Conservation Areas contribute positively to local character and distinctiveness. This policy further states *"Positive consideration will be given to proposals which take opportunities to enhance the character of conservation areas."*

Policy EN6 'New development in a historic context' also requires *"New development will make a contribution to the historic character of the area by respecting and enhancing its architectural and visual qualities and considering how heritage considerations can influence the design of new development. When determining planning applications for new development, the following factors will be taken into consideration:*

- a. The positive contribution of the development to the existing historic townscape (scale, height, mass, proportion, plot size, street form, materials, significant vistas and views, and open space);*
- b. Sensitivity to historic context;*
- c. Reflection of borough-wide major heritage themes that contribute to local distinctiveness (e.g. patterned brickwork or former worker terraced housing);*
- d. Whether development promotes and/or improves access to previously undiscovered or neglected historic significance."*

The host dwelling makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the St Peter's Conservation Area through its established scale, form, roof profile and original architectural detailing. These elements form part of the significance of the designated heritage asset and contribute to the wider historic character of the area.

While officers acknowledge that limited improvements have been made since the previously withdrawn application, including revisions to materials and fenestration, the proposal continues to raise fundamental and unresolved concerns. In particular, the loss and erosion of original architectural detailing is considered to be a significant and harmful aspect of the scheme.

The proposed first-floor and roof-level extensions, including roof alterations and dormer features spanning a substantial proportion of the width of the dwelling, would materially alter the proportions, rhythm and architectural hierarchy of the original building. These elements would appear visually dominant and would result in the dilution and loss of historic detailing that contributes to the significance of the dwelling and its contribution to the Conservation Area.

Furthermore, the contemporary design approach to the rear elevation, including extensive glazing and modern detailing, remains incongruous and fails to respond positively to the historic context of the site. Rather than appearing as a subordinate and sympathetic addition, the development would read as an assertive and visually intrusive intervention that would detract from the architectural integrity and detailing of the host dwelling.

Taken cumulatively, the proposal would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the St Peter's Conservation Area and would result in substantial harm to the significance of this designated heritage asset. No public benefits have been identified that would outweigh this harm.

As such, the development is considered unacceptable, in compliance with Policies H9, CC7, EN1, EN3 and EN6.

Residential Amenity

Policy H9 states that an extension will be acceptable where it does not result in an overbearing impact on neighbours. Policy CC8 states an extension to a house will be acceptable where it will not cause a significant detrimental impact to the living environment of existing or new residential properties.

The proposed development has been assessed in terms of its potential impact on the amenity of neighbouring occupiers, with particular regard to issues of overlooking, loss of light, overbearing impact and sense of enclosure.

The proposed extensions are located to the side and rear of the dwelling. Due to the separation distances to neighbouring properties, the orientation of the site and the domestic context of the surrounding area, the proposal is not considered to result in an unacceptable loss of daylight or sunlight to neighbouring habitable rooms. While the extensions would increase the overall built form at the rear of the property, their siting would not give rise to a materially overbearing impact or an unacceptable sense of enclosure when viewed from adjacent residential properties.

In terms of privacy, no new windows are to be introduced as part of the development and as such, would not result in harmful overlooking beyond what is ordinarily expected within an established suburban environment. Where relevant, the relationship between the proposal and neighbouring boundaries is considered sufficient to safeguard residential privacy.

Overall, the proposal is considered acceptable in amenity terms and would not result in unacceptable harm to the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers. Accordingly, neighbouring amenity impacts do not form a reason for refusal in this instance.

Transport

Policy TR3 states that in determining proposals involving a new or altered access onto the transport network, improvement works to the transport network, the creation of new transport infrastructure or the generation of additional trips on the transport network, consideration will be given to the effect on safety, congestion and the environment.

The Council's Transport Officer has raised no objection to the proposal. The development would not alter existing access arrangements or on-site parking provision, and would not result in a material increase in vehicle movements associated with the site.

The proposal is therefore not considered to give rise to highway safety concerns and is acceptable in transport terms.

Natural Environment and Ecology

Policy EN12 states that individual trees, groups of trees, hedges and woodlands will be protected from damage or removal where they are of importance, and Reading's vegetation cover will be extended. The quality of waterside vegetation will be maintained or enhanced. 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.

The Council's Natural Environment Officer has raised no objection, subject to conditions and informatives if approved. The development would be confined to the existing residential curtilage and would not result in the loss of designated habitats or protected trees.

However, Ecology advised that the applicant has not met the requirement for three nocturnal (emergence) bat surveys, having undertaken only two. The reduction in survey effort was justified in the Cura Terrae Land & Nature report (02/07/2025) on the basis of an internal inspection undertaken in 2024 by a licensed bat worker and previously low bat activity recorded in 2022. However, the information submitted does not include the results of any recent nocturnal/emergence surveys. Instead, only the 2022 Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment by Naturally Wild has been provided, which itself recommends that three emergence surveys are necessary. The Council therefore maintains that the results of the required nocturnal emergence surveys are still outstanding and must be submitted to allow the application to be fully assessed.

In the absence of this information, the Local Planning Authority cannot verify the adequacy of the survey methodology or confirm that the proposal would not result in harm to protected species.

As such, the application fails to provide sufficient ecological information to allow the Council to properly assess the impact of the development.

Planning Balance

While the proposal would provide additional residential accommodation and has not raised objections from Transport or Natural Environment officers, these considerations carry limited weight.

Great weight must be given to the conservation of heritage assets. The identified harm arising from excessive scale and massing, inappropriate design, and the loss of original architectural detailing, together with the absence of sufficient ecological information, is not outweighed by the limited benefits of the proposal.

7. CONCLUSION

The proposal fails to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the St Peter's Conservation Area and has not been supported by sufficient ecological information.

8. RECOMMENDATION

1. Harm to the Conservation Area

The proposed development, by reason of its excessive scale and massing at first-floor and roof level, roof alterations and dormer features spanning a substantial proportion of the dwelling, inappropriate contemporary design approach, and the loss and erosion of original architectural detailing, would result in an over dominant and incongruous form of development. The proposal would fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the St Peter's Conservation Area and would cause harm to the significance of this designated heritage asset. The development is therefore contrary to Policies H9, CC7, EN1, EN3 and EN6 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

2. Insufficient Ecological Information

In the absence of the additional bat survey information requested by the Council's Ecology Officer, the Local Planning Authority cannot be satisfied that the proposal would not adversely affect protected species. The application therefore fails to provide adequate ecological information to support the development, contrary to EN12 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) and relevant national planning policy.