

Ward: Tilehurst
App Ref: PL/25/1431
Address: 110 Norcot Road, Tilehurst, Reading, RG30 6BT
Proposal: Erection of a detached 2 bed bungalow with parking
Applicant: Mr V Barry
Received date: 06/10/2025
Target Decision date: 24/12/2025
Case Officer: Louise Coveney Fuller/Richard Eatough

The application site contains a detached residential dwelling with an open frontage. It is chalet-style bungalow, with its gable facing towards the road, extended to the rear variously at ground floor. The house is largely hidden from view at the front by a large Leylandii hedge. A detached double garage is located to the side of the main dwelling (ie east, at a lower level). The surrounding area on this side of the road contains a mix of property styles, but they are set back from the main road, incorporating open frontages or low-level front boundary treatment. Off-road parking is provided to the front of the dwellings. The site adjoins 104 Norcot Road and five further rear gardens to houses on Chichester Road.

Erection of a detached 2 bed bungalow on land to the side of 110 Norcot Road with parking. Following the demolition of the existing garage.



(The site has an extensive planning history, the most relevant is listed below)

PL/10/0700-Change of use from garage to habitable accommodation ancillary to host dwelling to include single storey rear extension and raising of the roof-Withdrawn

CONSULTATIONS

Public Consultation

2 site notices were displayed on the 30/10/26 and remained in situ for the required 21 days. This has met the statutory consultation requirements for the application. There is no confirmation on the case file. Assume a site notice placed on Norcot Road and another on Chichester Road. Photo on file shows the Norcot Road notice.

The case officer also asked for letters to be sent to the following adjoining properties on Chichester Road:
32,34,36,38,38a, 38c, 40.

Two letters of representation have been received one raising the following concerns, the other making observations:

Objection points:

The new house will be on higher ground. This is held up by a retaining wall on the boundary between our properties. We don't want the retaining wall to be compromised due to the new house being built quite close to the edge of the high ground. We suggest a party wall survey or similar report is sensible to protect both of us. **Officer comment: party wall matters are essentially civil matters and unfortunately, not material planning considerations.**

The new house will be quite a bit higher than us, and a window will look directly down into our garden and house and concerned for privacy.

Seek reassurance that the common boundary fence will be repaired/replaced as part of the project. **Officer comment: ownership and responsibilities of boundary treatments is a civil matter between the respective landowners.**

Observations:

There should probably be a party wall survey as building close to a retaining wall. **Officer comment** – **see response above.**

Wants the boundary fence replaced **Officer comment – again, see above.**

Internal Consultations

Natural Environment (tree officer)- Object

Not supportive of this application as there is a significant increase in development and hard surfacing with very limited opportunity to incorporate enhancements to the soft landscape. Concerns that the garden amenity space is limited and impacted by the adjacent trees which may increase the pressure to remove the trees in the future (I am aware they are in adjacent land but complaints to the landowner can increase this pressure). The tree canopies do not appear to be plotted completely accurately and would appear to overhang the site more than that shown in the plans.

The revised documents don't seem to have alleviated any of these concerns. There is still very limited opportunity for planting to mitigate for the loss of soft landscaping. The adjacent tree canopies overhang the amenity space (almost entirely shading the area), and concerned about the related future pressure of this. The canopies have not been adjusted within the revised Arboricultural Protection Plan, August 2025, Drawing No. 05, Rev: A, to reflect the true spans of the tree canopies either, making it difficult to truly appreciate the level of canopy overhang.

The lack of a professional tree survey make it difficult for the tree officer to comment on the quality of the trees. In any case, the trees are within adjacent land (out of the applicant's control), are to be retained and protected and still need to be considered regardless of their quality as they overhang and shade the proposed amenity area to the rear (they are south of the dwelling). This makes the rear amenity space undesirable to use and limits the 'useable' amenity space to the small area to the west of the proposed dwelling. The amenity space to the west is also very limited with the indicative planting shown and will be shaded from the trees in the adjacent land to the south.

Ecology-Object.

The subject site comprises a large residential garden, which has been cleared of most vegetation prior to the application having been lodged. The site is within an identified 'green link' as per policy EN12 of the Local Plan (2019). In accordance with Policy EN12, all development would be expected to not result in a net loss of biodiversity. Any net gain should be provided wherever possible. Mandatory biodiversity net gain requirements as became law in 2024 also apply to the proposed development.

The garage to be demolished may host roosting bats and insufficient evidence had been provided to determine the likely impacts of the proposals on bats (which are a protected species and a material consideration in the planning process). The proposals are subject to mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain as well as local policy requirements (Policy EN12) which states: "On all sites, development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity". The applicant has stated on the application form that the proposals are not subject to BNG as the size of the site is under 25 square metres. This is not the case and the applicant has therefore failed to comply with the requirements of BNG Policy.

Highways-Object.

The proposed 2 bedroom dwelling would require 2 parking spaces (rounded up from the 1.5 SPD requirement). The plans illustrate 2 parking spaces provided for the new dwelling; however the layout would require each vehicle to use the other's parking space as a turning area, this therefore reduces the available parking to one. The existing dwelling would also need 2 spaces, and these would need to be provided with on-site turning given that this would have been currently accommodated, this has not been illustrated on the plans.

The submitted red line plan is up to the property boundary, there is a piece of third-party land between the house and the highway and therefore the applicant will need to confirm that access rights are available. ***Officer comment: noted but as this is an existing arrangement for the current property, so it is safe to assume such rights currently exist to pass over this land to access the application site.***

The layout does not conform to the Council's current parking standards and the access is not wide enough to accommodate 2 way vehicles from the carriageway past the existing dwelling to the proposed plot. Transport do not support this application and a reason for refusal is suggested: *"The proposed layout fails to demonstrate that it complies with the Local Planning Authority's standards in respect of vehicle parking. This could result in on-street parking/reversing movements on Norcot Road, adversely affecting road safety and the flow of traffic, and in conflict with local plan policies TR1 and TR3 of the Reading Local Plan 2019".*

Waste- comments:

The new bungalow would need to have its own space for 1 x 140L general waste bin, 1 x 240L recycling bin and 1 x 23L food waste bin. Developers should also consider upcoming changes to residential waste collection services as per Simpler Recycling requirements in the future. These requirements will increase the amount of material recycled/collected at the kerbside (i.e. addition of glass & soft plastics) and so additional refuse space should be allocated to allow for this. Note: glass can currently only be recycled at local glass bottle banks or the tip. The maximum distances that operatives should be required to wheel containers, measured from the furthest point within the storage/collection area to the loading position at the back of the vehicle are 15m for any 2 wheeled containers up to 360-litres and 10m for any 4 wheeled containers. As such, the resident would need to present their bins for collection each week at the designated collection point on the plan.

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.

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:

PLANNING POLICY

The following local and national planning policy and guidance is relevant to this application:

National Planning Policy Framework (2024)
National Planning Practice Guidance (2014 onwards)

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable
CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction
CC5: Waste Minimisation and Storage
CC7: Design and the Public Realm
CC8: Safeguarding Amenity
CC9: Securing Infrastructure
EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network
EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodland
H1: Provision of Housing
H2: Density and Mix
H3: Affordable Housing
H5: Standards for New Housing
H10: Private and Communal Outdoor Space
H11: Development of Private Residential Gardens
TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging

RBC Supplementary Planning Documents

Affordable Housing SPD (2021)
Planning Obligations Under Section 106 SPD (2015)
Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011)
Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2019)
Biodiversity Action Plan (2021)
Tree Strategy (2021)

Local Plan Update

The current version of the Local Plan (adopted in November 2019) turned five years old on Tuesday 5th November 2024. The Local Plan was reviewed in March 2023 and around half of the policies in the plan are considered still up to date. However, the rest need to be considered for updating to reflect changing circumstances and national policy. A consultation version of the draft updated version of the Local Plan was published on 6th November 2024.

Although there is a five-year period for carrying out a review of a plan after it is adopted, nothing in the NPPF or elsewhere says that policies automatically become “out of date” when they are five years old. It is a matter of planning judgement rather than legal fact whether a plan or policies within it are out-of-date. This will depend on whether they have been overtaken by things that have happened since the plan was adopted, either on the ground or through changes in national policy, for example.

It is considered in respect of the Local Plan policies pertinent to this application listed above that they remain in accordance with national policy and that the objectives of those policies remain very similar in the draft updated Local Plan. Therefore, they can continue to be afforded weight in the advice given below and are not considered to be ‘out of date’.

APPRAISAL

The main issues raised by this application are:

Suitability in terms of character of the area and residential amenity**Amenities of the dwellings****Tree issues****Ecology****Highways and parking****Waste matters****Affordable housing****Suitability in terms of character of the area and residential amenity**

Whilst Policy CC1 supports development which is sustainable and the housing policies (including H1, although it is not being invoked in the LP review period), it does not follow at all sites presented for development are suitable as residential infill plots. This one is not. It is noted that the Council is currently meeting its annual housing targets for general housing whilst there is an undersupply in the provision of Affordable Housing.

Policy CC7 aims to preserve or enhance the character of the area in which a development is in terms of layout, landscape, density, scale, height, massing, architectural detail and materials. Policy H11 seeks to ensure that development of land which includes land currently or formerly within the curtilage of private residential gardens: make a positive contribution to the character of the area, provide adequate size and dimensions to accommodate the development proposed, provides appropriate access, does not lead to tandem development, minimises exposure of private boundaries to public areas, does not cause significant detrimental impact to the amenity of existing nearby occupants, emphasises the provision of family-sized housing, provides a biodiversity net gain, and does not prejudice the development of a wider area.

The NPPF (Para 131) sets out that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. The National Design Guide identifies 10 key components for good design and of particular note is the characteristic of 'Context' and it states that "well-designed new development responds positively to the features of the site itself and the surrounding context beyond the site boundary. It should enhance positive qualities and improve negative ones." Additionally, there is specific reference to 'views inwards and outwards'.

The proposal would not generally be visible from public viewpoints, due to the secluded nature of the site behind a tall Leylandii hedge, but that does not mean that its siting would not be harmful to the character of the area (also there is no guarantee the hedge would be retained or survive long term). The design is rather convoluted, with a cramped layout, particularly for the new bungalow, but also worsens the situation for the retained dwelling as well, especially in terms of retained garden space.

The difference in ground levels between the application site with the new bungalow in close proximity, would mean that at the least there would be a perception of overbearing to adjacent properties to the rear, and possibly even via overlooking from the high-level windows, to the detriment of the enjoyment of the gardens of the Chichester Road properties. Without sectional plans it has not been demonstrated that the arrangement would be suitable.

Overall, the cramped nature of the proposal would produce an unsuitable layout.

Amenities of the dwellings

Policies CC8, H5 and H11 of the Local Plan relate to protection of, and provision for, amenity of residents. The proposed development would, as it is infill development introduce a new dwelling, windows, and potential concerns for the amenity of existing and proposed residents. Policy H10 requires development to be provided with functional open space to meet the needs of the development. The supporting text of Policy H10 states that a useful guide for proposals for dwelling is that the outdoor space should be no less than the gross floor area of the dwelling. The amount of actual usable amenity (garden) space in this instance would be heavily compromised and in reality, would amount to a small strip of lawn and shrubs around the side and rear of the new bungalow. The DAS tries to paint a positive picture of this, describing it thus:

“Good quality and appropriately sited private amenity space will be provided in the form of a Rear Garden [sic.] and front curtilage...”. As can be seen from the plans, the frontal area is a tight parking/turning area only with no opportunity for any softening, it would in fact rely for any greenery on the Leylandii hedge which overhangs the site, which itself will need significant cutting back to achieve the turning areas (which as described below, are unsuitable for the purpose).

Policy H10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space) states that the design of outdoor areas will respect the size and character of other similar spaces in the vicinity and also sets out the various functions that suitable garden space should be providing and it is considered that this is not possible/suitable with the limited area provided, much of which will be in shade due to the surrounding fencing.

For the above reasons the proposed garden is not considered to offer the quality of outdoor amenity space that is a key characteristic of the local area. As such, the proposal is not considered to comply with local plan policy.

The new bungalow would have generally acceptable internal amenity/layout, however, the exception would be that it would have poor outlook from its principal living room area, which is also the dining area, making it feel ‘hemmed-in’.

Tree issues

Policy EN14 (Trees, Hedges and Woodland) seeks to protect trees, groups of trees, hedges and woodland from damage or removal, extend the Borough’s vegetation cover and that development should make provision for tree planting whilst Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) seeks proposals should include appropriate landscaping. The loss of trees and cramped arrangement within the plot and the proximity to existing established trees and other vegetation would result in the unwarranted loss of trees and the need to prune remaining trees, harmful to the greening of the environment and suburban character of the area. The applicant’s response to these matters has been very general and does not convince the Council’s Natural Environment Team otherwise. This should form a reason for refusal.

Ecology

The requirements of policies H11 and EN12 are relevant. There are a number of clear concerns in relation to ecology:

- the lack of a bat survey, required at application stage by law (note too that the NPPF at paragraph 195 advises that if the requisite survey has not been done, this removes any presumption in favour of sustainable development)
- the subdivision of gardens is harmful to wildlife corridors, particularly in a green link where these routes are to be assisted

-lack of demonstration of mandatory BNG enhancements, which is probably impossible to achieve, given the nature of the cramped site and contrary to the hierarchy.
The application is unsupportable due to its harm to ecology and these matters should all be included in an ecology reason for refusal.

Highways and parking

Policies TR1 (Achieving the Transport Strategy), TR3 (Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters) and TR5 (Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging) seek to address access, traffic, highway and parking relates matters relating to development.

In this case, the crampedness of the layout fails to provide suitable parking and turning space on site in accordance with the Council's standards.. This would lead to vehicles for the two properties getting in each other's way (through the narrow width and the use of each other's parking spaces for turning, meaning insufficient parking on site), which would lead to vehicles reversing out and (temporarily) parking on Norcot Road, which is not only a Classified Road and a bus route but also a 'No Stopping' Red Route, or otherwise, blocking the pavement. This would produce an unsatisfactory and unsafe arrangement for highway users and pedestrians and should form a further reason for refusal.

Waste matters

Policies CC7 and CC5 apply. The Council's Waste Team has provided advice on the application. Whilst these points are noted, the Team advises that given the shape of the site, it will be necessary for the bins to be located in the refuse collection area shown. However, with the distance to the highway edge, this is shown not within the site, but on third party land, part of the access and it is not clear that this is suitable/achievable. This is not a suitable arrangement and given that another option is not immediately obvious (and therefore should not be conditioned safely) should form part of a reason for refusal.

Affordable housing

Policy H3 (Affordable Housing) requires that for schemes of 1-4 dwellings a financial contribution to enable the equivalent of 10% of the housing to be provided as affordable housing elsewhere within the Borough. In accordance with the adopted Affordable Housing SPD 2021 this equates to contribution equivalent to 5% of the GDV of the development. Whilst a suitable level for the contribution has been informally agreed, the application does not include a unilateral undertaking or agreed s106 and therefore this must form a reason for refusal (contrary to policies H3, CC9 and the s106 and affordable housing SPDs). An informative will specify that this reason for refusal could be overcome, in the context of an acceptable scheme in all other respects, by entering into a s106 or unilateral undertaking.

Other matters

The application includes detailed information in respect of construction, EV charging and the energy performance of the proposed dwelling. Whilst these are of course planning matters, these are generally technical matters to be dealt with most appropriately via planning conditions, therefore these matters are not considered to be determinative/useful in the overall planning assessment and not weight positively to the extent that they would outweigh any of the concerns identified above.

The DAS mentions noise impacts. It is not considered that this is a material consideration to this application. The DAS also mentions flooding, again, not a relevant issue.

The matters raised in the objections are considered to have been dealt with in the discussion above.

The proposal would be a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) liable development if approved. If the scheme had been acceptable an informative would have been attached to the decision notice to advise the applicant of their responsibilities in this respect.

Conclusion

The excessive scale of the proposed dwelling, loss of trees and cramped arrangement within the plot and the proximity to existing established trees and other vegetation would result in the unwarranted loss of trees and the need to prune remaining trees, harmful to the greening of the environment and suburban character of the area. Due to the loss of trees of trees and shrubs on site which is adjacent and partly within, an identified Green Link, and subdividing gardens, the proposed development would result in an unacceptable loss of biodiversity. The proposed development has failed to demonstrate adequate space for vehicle parking and turning and would result in increased danger on the highway.

Regard has been given to key policies at local and national level for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination. However, it is apparent that the substantial degree of harm would significantly and demonstrably outweigh any benefits.

For these reasons the proposal is therefore recommended for refusal.

**OFFICER RECOMMENDATION:
REFUSE**