

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Caversham

App Ref: PL/25/0533 Removal/variation of conditions

Address: 2 Priest Hill, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7RZ

Proposal: Erection of a free standing fitness studio [Section 73 application to vary conditions 2 (approved details) condition 3 (materials) and 5 (restrictive use) of planning permission reference PL/23/0662].

Applicant: Mrs Laura Bailey

Received date: 04/04/2025

Target Decision date: 17/06/2025

Case Officer: Steve Vigar

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is located at the corner of Hemdean Road and Priest Hill in a residential area of Caversham. The site comprises a three storey semi-detached dwellinghouse with a long narrow rear garden running uphill from the house alongside Priest Hill. The fitness studio building, the subject of this application, has already been constructed and remains in situ at the highest point of the garden. The neighbouring dwelling to the north has a garden which sits lower than the garden at 2 Priest Hill with a retaining wall on the boundary.

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The proposal seeks planning approval to regularise the existing studio building which has been constructed with significant variances from that which was permitted under reference 23/0662. The proposals include some changes to the cladding compared to that originally approved. It is also proposed to vary condition 5 which currently restricts the use of the outbuilding to a fitness studio only – varied to include “purposes that are ancillary to the residential use of the main dwellinghouse”.

3. CONSULTATIONS

Letters of objection have been received from 4 Priest Hill and 18 Hemdean Rd raising a wide range of concerns including the size of the building, its appearance, the deviation from the original proposals and the impact of artificial lighting. Full comments are available to view on the Planning Register.

4. 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.

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 because of the development.

The proposal can be considered under s.73 because the description of development remains the same and the matters relate to the conditions of the original permission.

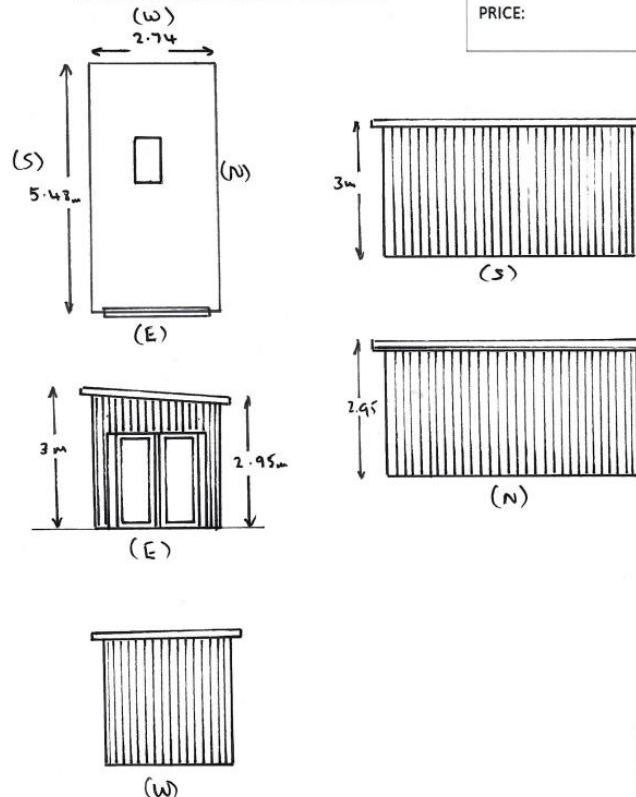
5. APPRAISAL

Character and Appearance

The 2023 permission granted a building with a simple mono-pitched roof and vertical cedar cladding. It is considered that the approved building has a simple restrained form and appearance and whilst prominent, would not appear out of keeping with the existing situation.

Customer Name:	LAURA BAILEY
Tel:	
Mob:	
Email:	
Site Address:	2 PRIEST HILL CAUERSHAM, READING BERKS,
Building style:	FITNESS STUDIO
Exterior size:	5.48m x 2.74m
Verandah size:	
Eaves height:	2.95
Ridge height:	3m
Roof covering:	Black Colour: GPM
Roof overhang:	10cm
Guttering:	YES
Skylights:	YES
Site access:	2.00
Cladding type:	Weatherboard
Cladding colour:	CEDAR
Window/Door colour:	GREY
Partition	
Store deck	
Internal white colour wash	Y/N
Insulated floor:	✓
Base by:	CURF
Electrics by:	✓ Sub-main- Y/N
W/E Basin/water heater:	
Shower cubicle:	
Kitchenette:	
Macerator:	
Planning Y/N	YES
Customer Approved	
Sign	
Date	

Design Layout Plan



ISSUE NO:	1
DATE:	
PRICE:	

Original 2023 approval

By contrast it is considered that the building that has been constructed has an overly bulky obtrusive character and appearance due to its strongly angular form and visually dominant roof, including a prominent protruding roof light and heavy overhanging soffit. These unsympathetic visual qualities are further worsened by the detailing of the building with exterior walling with horizontal green fibre-cement cladding boards replacing the vertical cedar cladding originally approved. It is noted that the proposals include changing the existing corrugated metal cladding which exist to the rear and northern side of the structure. Overall the materials used in the exterior have a stark synthetic quality which compares unfavourably with the cedar panels approved in 2023.

Attempts to screen the building with timber trellis have not been successful as the bulky form remains clearly discernible and the trellis simply serves to worsen the incoherent appearance of the development.

The large patio doors and the external lighting fitted to the building result in both internal and external lighting further adds to the visual impact of the building during hours of darkness.

Effect on Neighbouring Amenity

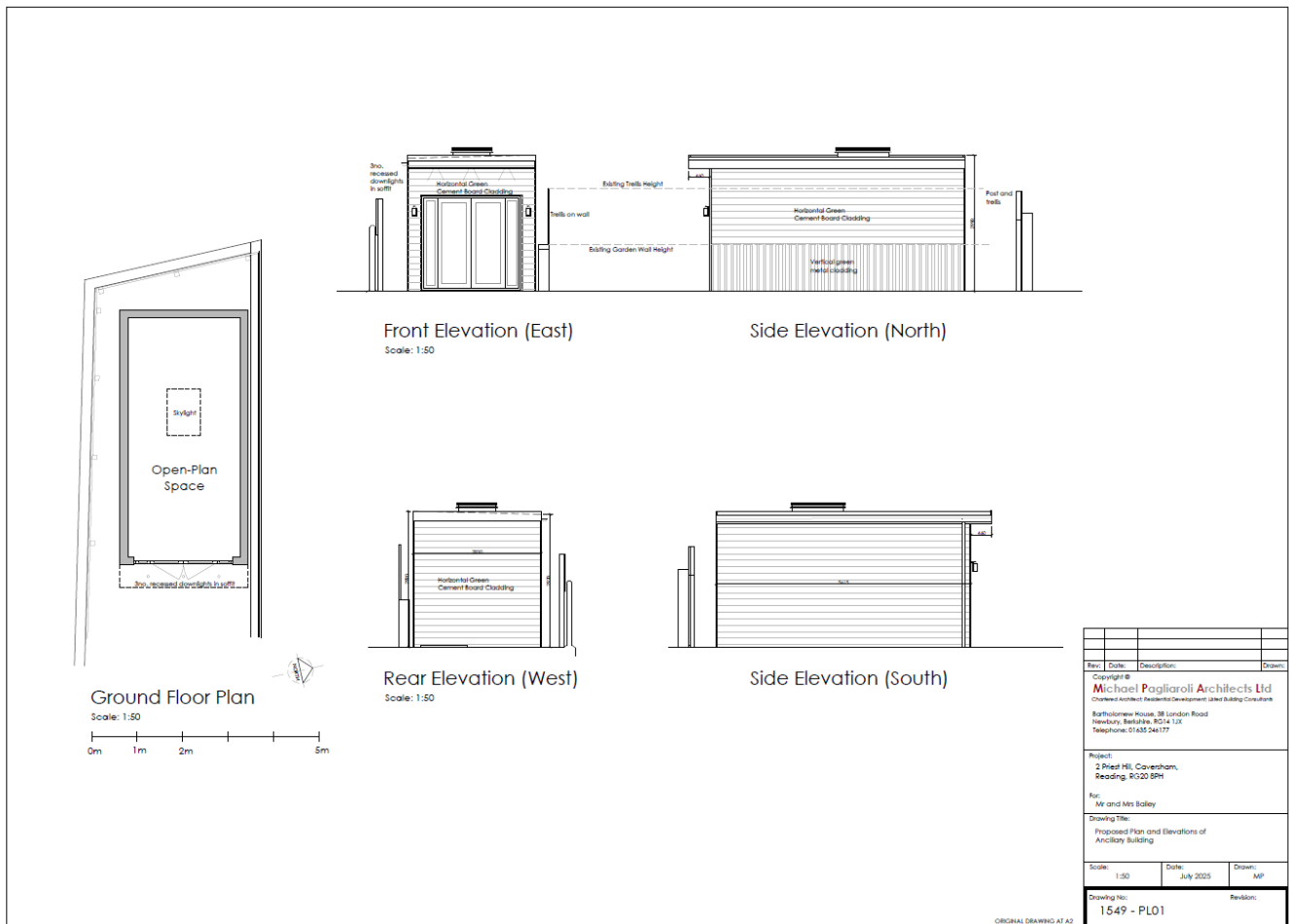
Although the scale of the building and its obtrusive nature make it a prominent feature viewed from the neighbouring garden, the building is sited at the end of the gardens and would not be overbearing or cause loss of light or loss of privacy to a significantly greater extent than that previously approved.

Concerns over artificial lighting are noted however the hours of use of lighting could be controlled by condition if the proposal were to be approved.

Policies H9 and CC8 apply.

Use

There would be no objection to the use of the building for purposes ancillary to the use of the main house in addition to the use as a fitness studio and Condition 5 could be amended accordingly.



Current Proposal

6. CONCLUSION

Taken as a whole, the appearance of the building is a significant departure from that approved in 2023. It is considered that the bulky unsympathetic form of the building, set in the elevated position relative to the street and combined with the unsympathetic external appearance results in an obtrusive form of development. Given this the proposal fails to respect the character and appearance of the street as a whole in terms of scale, location, materials and design and does not maintain and enhance the character and appearance of the area in which it is located.

As such it is considered that the proposal is contrary to Policies H9 and CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and paragraphs 135 and 139 of the NPPF 2024.

7. RECOMMENDATION

Refuse Planning Permission for the following **reason**:

1. The studio building by reason of its bulky form, elevated prominent position and stark unsympathetic external appearance, results in an obtrusive form of development which fails to respect the character and appearance of the streetscene in terms of scale, location, materials and design, with consequent harm to the character and appearance of the area. The development is therefore contrary to Policies H9 and CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and Paragraphs 135 and 139 of the NPPF 2024.

Informatives:

1. This decision relates to the following drawings and details:
1549-EX01 Existing Plans and Elevations of Ancillary Building dated July 2025
1549-PL01 Proposed Plan and Elevations of Ancillary Building dated July 2025
Block and Location Plan dated July 2025
Comparison Table: Approved vs. As Built
Covering Letter ref 4880 Bell Cornwell dated 12 August 2025
2. Positive and Proactive.





