

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Caversham Heights

App Ref: PL/25/1808 Full planning permission

Address: 39 Highmoor Road, Caversham, Reading

Proposal: Change of use from two flats to a single dwellinghouse (Class C3), including alterations to side elevation windows (amended description)

Applicant: Mr Bellamy-Rosser

Received date: 16 December 2025

Target Decision date: 30 March 2026 (extension of time)

Case Officer: Anthony Scholes

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is a substantial Edwardian semi-detached dwelling. Set over two floors, in red brick, with dual chimneys, a gable end wall with timber and pebbledash at roof level, with timber windows above ground level (to the front), and a recessed front porch. To the rear, a two-storey outrigger is attached to the semi-detached dwellings.

The property was converted into two flats, in 1997, though this was undertaken without planning permission. No certificate of lawfulness has been sought, nor given by the LPA to confirm the lawfulness of the use, though RBC's Council Tax team has confirmed its tax status as two dwellings since 1997. The property has been extended to the rear by way of a conservatory which appears to have undergone further works including re-roofing and internal alterations circa 2005.



Figure 1 - Site visit photos

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The proposed development seeks approval for the conversion of the existing 2 no. flats at 39 Highmoor Road, into one 4-bed dwelling. External alterations are limited to one enlarged window at ground floor on

the eastern elevation, and removal of one ground floor side facing window from the rear most portion (the converted conservatory).

The following plans and documents were submitted with the application:

Application form

CIL form

Drawing No: 24102.S.BC-01 – Existing Ground Floor Plan

Drawing No: 24102.S.BC-02 – Existing First Floor Plan

Drawing No: 24102.S.BC-03 – Existing Elevations

Drawing No: 24102.S.BC-04 – Proposed Ground Floor Plan

As received by the Local Planning Authority on 16 December 2025

Drawing No: 24102.S.BC-05 – Proposed First Floor Plan

Drawing No: 24102.S.BC-06 – Proposed Elevations

Drawing No: 24102.S.BC-07 – Location Plan

Drawing No: 24102.S.BC-08 – Block Plan

As received by the Local Planning Authority on 29 January 2026

Amended CIL form

Drawing No: 24102.S.BC-04 – Rev A – Proposed Ground Floor Plan

As received by the Local Planning Authority on 12 February 2026

Drawing No: 24102.S.BC-06 – Rev A – Proposed Elevations

As received by the Local Planning Authority on 30 March 2026

3. CONSULTATIONS

The following were consulted:

- Transport Development Control – No objection.
- Council Tax Consultations – Confirmed property has been two dwellings since 1 April 1997.

A site notice was displayed on the front fence of the property. No comments were received.



Figure 2 - Site notice photo

4. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

None applicable.

5. EQUALITY ACT

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.

6. 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 and Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework
National Planning Practice Guidance

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC1: PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
CC2: SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION
CC3: ADAPTION TO CLIMATE CHANGE
CC5: WASTE MINIMISATION AND STORAGE
CC7: DESIGN AND THE PUBLIC REALM
CC8: SAFEGUARDING AMENITY
H2: DENSITY AND MIX
H7: PROTECTING THE EXISTING HOUSING STOCK
H8: RESIDENTIAL CONVERSIONS

SPD

Residential Conversions (2013)
Sustainable Design and Construction (2019)

Local Plan Partial 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 pre-submission draft was submitted to the Secretary of State on the 9th of May 2025 and is currently at examination.

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.

Officer advice in respect of the Local Plan policies pertinent to this application listed above is that they remain in accordance with national policy and that the objectives of those policies remains very similar in

the draft updated Local Plan. Therefore, they can continue to be afforded weight in the appraisal below and are not considered to be 'out of date'.

7. APPRAISAL

Principle of development

The application seeks the loss of two residential units and the formation of a single dwelling house. Policy H7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan states that *"Planning permission will not be granted for any loss of residential accommodation or land unless there are exceptional circumstances. Planning permission will not be granted for a net loss in the number of residential units or gross floor area."*

Paragraph 4.4.56 of the Reading Borough Local Plan also states that; "(...) There may be exceptional circumstances where a loss of a limited amount of general residential would help to meet other key identified needs, for instance for a specific identified need for accommodation for vulnerable groups (see policy H6) or to reinstate a use more appropriate to the significance of a heritage asset, and this should be clearly demonstrated as part of any planning application."

In this instance, the applicant has put forward that the need for larger 4-bed houses would outweigh the loss of the two no. two-bed flats. As outlined within Policy H2 of the Reading Local Plan, *"Wherever possible, residential development should contribute towards meeting the needs for the mix of housing set out in figure 4.6, in particular for family homes of three or more bedrooms."* The development would also bring the dwelling back into its original and most viable use as a single family sized dwelling. The principle of the development proposed is acceptable.

It is noted that the change to a single family 4-bed dwelling would only be considered a benefit where the conversion to a small HMO is restricted. As such permitted development rights for the change of use to C4 (Small HMO) are recommended to be removed for the property.

Amenity

This proposal has also been assessed against Reading Borough Local Plan policy CC8: Safeguarding Amenity, which states that proposals are acceptable where they will not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties with regard to various factors, including (amongst others):

- Privacy and overlooking
- Visual dominance and overbearing effects of development
- Noise and disturbance
- Dust and fumes

The conversion of 39 Highmoor Road to a single dwelling is not considered to harm the living conditions of neighbouring residents along Highmoor Road as the proposal would likely result in reduced overall occupancy. It is considered that the conversion to one dwelling is more desirable than the retention of the property as two self-contained flats.

The proposed development would result in a single two storey, four-bed dwelling with a gross internal area of more than 171.9m², which meets the minimum Nationally Described Space Standards for a two-storey 4 bed dwelling.

Sustainability

Policies CC2, CC3, CC4, and CC5 cumulatively seek to ensure all development consider sustainability performance for developments. Including any methods for adapting to the risks of climate change.

The Sustainable Design and Construction SPD outlines that all non-major conversions must meet the BREEAM 'Very Good' standard. As such, a condition would be attached requiring pre-commencement

BREEAM interim certification that 'Very Good' could be achieved, and a final BREEAM certificate prior to occupation being submitted for approval by the LPA.

Community infrastructure levy

The development would be liable for CIL. An amended CIL form was submitted, and though missing floor space calculations, is considered sufficient. The proposal creates a new dwelling and would be liable for CIL. It would appear the site is currently in use, and a CIL liability is likely to result in £0 liability.

8. CONCLUSION

The proposed development would result in the loss of the existing 2 x 2-bed dwellings. However, it would not result in the loss of overall residential floorspace, and would create one large family dwelling, reverting the previously unauthorised conversion.

9. RECOMMENDATION

GRANT

Recommended Conditions:

1. Time Limit
2. Approved Plans
3. Materials (to match)
4. BREEAM – Interim certificate (to be approved)
5. BREEAM – Final certificate (to be approved)
6. PD rights removed for change of use from C3 to C4

Informatives:

1. Positive and proactive
2. Pre-commencement conditions
3. Highways act
4. Terms
5. Building regulations application required
6. Complaints about construction
7. CIL