

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Battle Ward

App Ref: PL/26/0199 Full planning permission

Address: Land to the rear of 24-26 Wantage Road, Reading, RG30 2SE

Proposal: Proposed erection of 2no. semi-detached dwellings following demolition of the existing garages.

Applicant: Mr Ajith Hettiaratchy

Received date: 13/02/2026

Target Decision date: 24/04/2026

Case Officer: Catrin Davies

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site comprises the rear gardens of 24 and 26 Wantage Road which front onto Wilson Road. Both properties have garages and parking accessed from Wilson Road which is a one-way road going north to south. The surrounding area is characterised by a mixture of two-storey semi-detached and terraced dwellings situated towards the front of plots. This part of Wilson Road includes some shallow plots, although this is generally not characteristic of the wider area.

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The application seeks planning permission for the construction of two dwellings (semi-detached). The dwelling would be two-storey with rear dormer creating habitable rooms within the roof space. The dwelling has a front projection with parking spaces to the side of the dwelling for 1 parking space. The proposed plans show that each dwelling would have two bedrooms however there is a habitable space within the loft space, this has been labelled at 'study' however this would meet space standards of a bedroom and have windows for light as such it is considered this could be used as a bedroom as such the proposal will be assessed on this basis. Each dwelling is provided with one (1) off road car parking space, which is partially underneath the first floor of each dwelling.

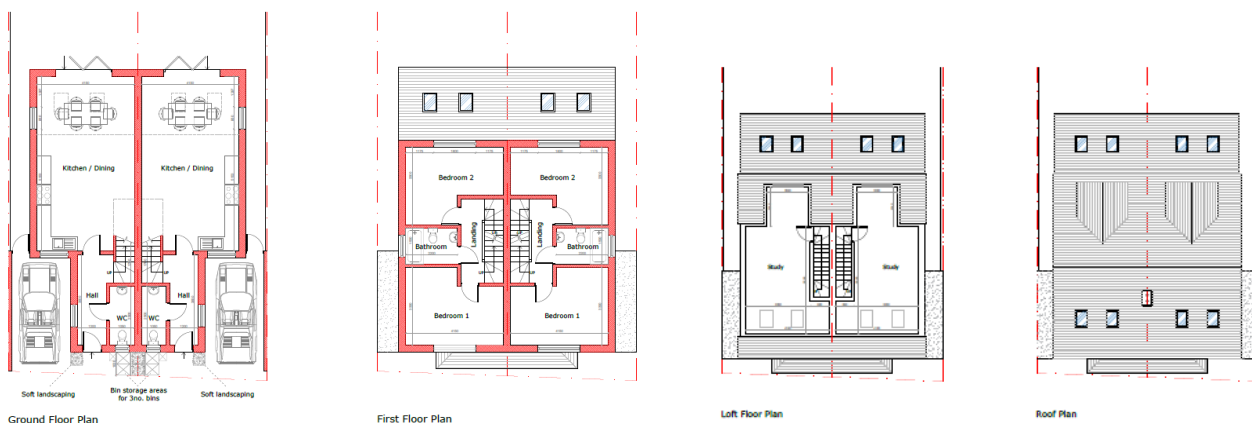


Figure 1: Proposed floor plans

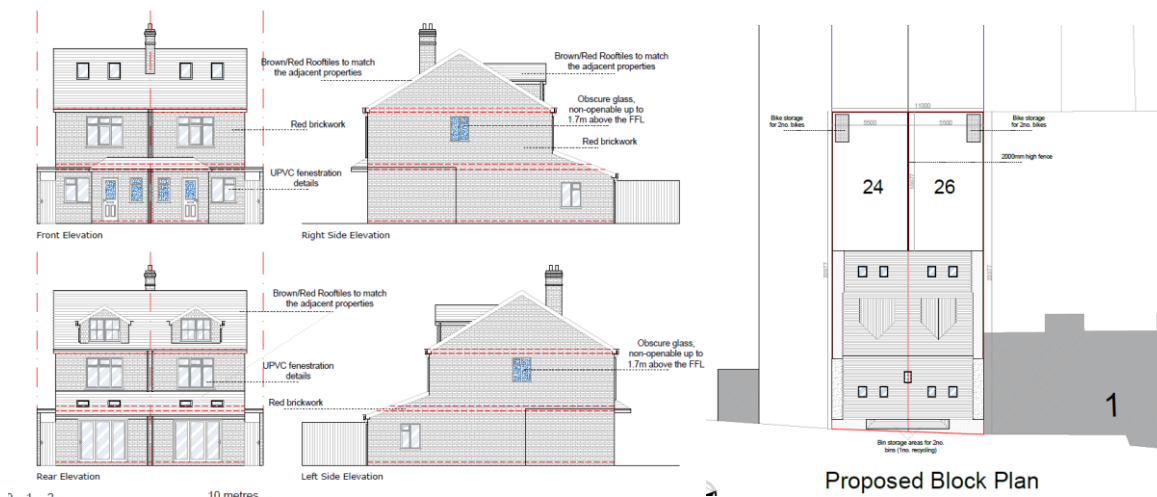


Figure 2: Proposed elevations and block plan

Planning History:

220032/FUL- Construction of 2 semi-detached houses at the rear of 24-26 Wantage Road with access from Wilson Road: Appeal against non-determination, appeal dismissed due to impact on neighbouring amenities and planning permission refused 10 January 2023. The LPA put forward the following reasons for refusal:

1. The proposed development, by reason of its overall scale in terms of two storey front projections, flank walls and large dormer windows would be visually prominent within its context and dominate views along this open section of Wilson Road. It would be an overdevelopment of the site, harmful to the wider streetscene and prevailing pattern of development. This would therefore fail to make a positive contribution to the character of the area and is not considered to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the area, contrary to Policies CC7, H2 and H11 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).
2. The proposed development, through the provision of uncharacteristically and unacceptably small gardens, in comparison to the prevailing size in the surrounding area and the significant reduction in size of the existing gardens at 24 and 26 Wantage Road would fail to provide an acceptable level of external amenity space for the existing residents and future occupants of the proposed dwellings. This would detract from their living conditions, contrary to Policies CC7, CC8, H10 and H11 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).
3. The proposed development, by reason of its inadequate separation distance, close proximity to neighbouring boundaries, overall scale and massing is considered detrimental to the living environment of existing residential properties in terms of loss of privacy and overlooking, access to daylight and sunlight, overshadowing, visual dominance, overbearing effects of the development and harmful to outlook contrary to policies CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) and H11 (Development of Private Residential Gardens) of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).
4. In the absence of a completed legal agreement to secure an acceptable contribution towards the provision of Affordable Housing, the proposal fails to contribute adequately to the housing needs of Reading Borough, contrary to Policy CC9 and H3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019), and the Council's Adopted Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document 2021.

Plans for refused scheme:



Figure 3: Refused plans

The site gained consent under application 161760/FUL (date), later varied by 191239/VAR (date). Development did not commence on site within the 3 year time limited imposed by Condition 1 as such the site has not have any extant consent.

Submitted Plans and documents

00-Location Plan received 13th Feb 2026
03-Proposed floor plans received 13th Feb 2026
04- Proposed floor plans received 13th Feb 2026
05- Proposed elevations received 13th Feb 2026
06- Proposed Block Plan received 13th Feb 2026
07-Proposed bike shed and fence received 13th Feb 2026
Biodiversity assessment dated 5th January 2026
Energy statement dated 7th January 2026

3. CONSULTATIONS

The following were consulted:

Ecology Consultations

The application site comprises the rear gardens of 24 to 26 Wantage Road. The site is located in a residential area of West Reading and the proposals are for the erection of two semidetached dwellings following demolition of the two outbuildings.

The application site has been subject to a number of recent planning applications including one for a single house (PA 231627/FUL) and more recently pre app advice was sought for a scheme similar to that currently submitted

Protected Species and Priority Habitats:

Given the urban location of the site and the nature of the outbuildings to be demolished, they are considered unlikely to host bats. However, a condition should be set to ensure that any clearance or demolition undertaken to facilitate the works should be carried out outside the bird nesting season (March – August).

Biodiversity Net Gain and Biodiversity Enhancements

From 2024, it is a legal requirement under the Environment Act 2021 that all developments (unless exempt) must demonstrate a net gain of at least 10%..

The plans provided show that the new houses will require the removal over 25 square metres of garden and as such the proposals would be subject to BNG requirements.

The applicant has submitted a Small Sites BNG metric calculation along with a report (Reach Planning Solutions 5/1/2026) , that shows the development will lead to a net gain in biodiversity of 0.08 Are Habitat Units equivalent to a net gain of 26%. Our advice however is that the calculation is incorrect and an updated calculation will need to be provided that addresses the following issues;

General Points

The spreadsheet should be completed in accordance with the Small Sites Metric (SSM) Guidance. If the metric is not completed correctly, the spreadsheet flags any errors in red. In this case, there are numerous red flags in the spreadsheet – these are used to highlight errors for correction before submission

For example – one such red flag refers to “invalid areas”. This error can be fixed by filling in all required information boxes within the metric – the “Desktop Assessment” page in this instance:

Another error refers to non matching habitat areas pre and post development. This is clearly identified in the spreadsheet with a red error flag which states that the “*Error – Area of habitat creation must match area lost*”

Furthermore:

No photos are included in the metric (there is a page called Supporting Information” that specially refers to the need for these). There are no maps showing the existing and proposed habitats

Compliance with Metric Guidance:

Turning to more specific errors, the current calculation does not comply with the Small Sites Metric guidance as :
The calculation includes two trees to be planted in the gardens.

All habitat within private gardens must be classed as “Vegetated garden”

Both of these issues are dealt with in the metric guidance, within the section on Private Gardens which reads:

The post-development private garden has no public access, and biodiversity net gains cannot be legally secured. As these gains cannot be secured you should only record habitats created within private gardens as either:

- ‘urban – vegetated garden’; or
- ‘urban - unvegetated garden’
-

When assessing habitat changes within a private garden, you should not:

- *record the creation of any new habitats as anything other than ‘urban – vegetated garden’ or ‘urban – unvegetated garden’ habitat types*
- *record the enhancement of any habitats recorded within the baseline [...]*

- For reference, guidance on the SSM is provided here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-biodiversity-metric-tools-and-guides>

Other Issues:

The accompanying report includes a number of typos, for example:

The report also includes a 3D view of the proposed scheme which shows habitats to the rear of the plot but the two trees are not on this along with the native hedgerow despite claims within the report and metric calculation.

Summary

Based on the above points and issues, the submitted BNG metric and documents are considered to be inaccurate and therefore the claim of a 26% net gain is unsubstantiated and cannot be relied on

The applicant should therefore submit an updated and corrected metric calculation and report addressing the points above. This is required to demonstrate that the development will achieve the required 10% BNG as required as well as satisfying EN12 of the local plan which requires that *“development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity”*

Transport Development Control

The application site is located within the Zone 2, the primary core area but on the periphery of the Zone 3, Secondary Core Area, of the Council's adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD at the back of nos. 24-26 Wantage Road, on the eastern side of Wilson Road and is for the erection of 2 x 2 bedroom. semi-detached dwellings.

The proposed development will be accessed from Wilson Road, which is subject to “No Entry” from the south. The carriageway is narrow and is effectively reduced to single lane by on street parking. A shared user bay, whereby parking is permitted for non-permit holders for a maximum of 2 hours between 8 am – 8pm and all other times for residents permit holders only, begins just past the proposed parking area for one of the dwellings. Double yellow lanes are present outside and adjacent to the site preventing on street parking.

In accordance with the adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD, the development would be required to provide parking provision of 1.5 spaces per 2 bedroom dwellings. Given the operation of the Councils residential permit parking scheme which operates on Wilson Road and the surrounding streets and the sites accessibility to good public transport links and local shops, one parking space for each new dwelling can be accepted in this instance. Parking conditions and informatives will be applied to prevent any future occupants of the new dwellings from obtaining resident or visitor parking permits to protect the amenities of the existing residents.

Water run-off from private property onto the public highway is not permitted. An appropriate method of drainage needs to be provided within the property curtilage including the use of suitable permeable surfacing materials.

The proposed development will displace the parking provision for the existing dwellings; however, our records indicate that both properties are entitled to Residents Parking permits which will allow them to park in the CPZ.

There is currently no vehicle crossing servicing the Rear of No24 Wantage Rd. Any new vehicle access will require a license from the Highways Department. Reinstatement of a full faced kerb between the two access points will also be required. Plans will be required illustrating the access points and reinstatement of the kerb will be required. This can be dealt with by way of condition.

Given the one-way nature of the street, I am happy that the required visibility splays can be achieved.

The Council's Local Transport Plan 3 Strategy 2011 – 2026 includes policies for investing in new infrastructure to improve connections throughout and beyond Reading which include a network of publicly available Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points to encourage and enable low carbon or low energy travel choices for private and public transport. The Councils Local Plan was adopted in November 2019 and this includes a requirement at Policy TR5 for each new house to be provided with an electric charging point. This will need to be illustrated on revised plans, this can be dealt with by way of condition.

In accordance with the adopted Parking SPD, the development is required to provide a minimum of 2 cycle parking spaces for each dwelling which should be in a conveniently located, lockable, covered store; this can be in the form of a garden shed. Plans illustrate storage in the rear of each private amenity area which is deemed acceptable.

Bin storage has been illustrated on the plans located at the front of the development adjacent to the parking area. Bin storage should comply with Manual for Streets and British Standard 5906: 2005 for Waste Management in Buildings and should be located no further than 15m from the access point of the site to avoid the stationing of service vehicles on the carriageway for excessive periods. The Council's Waste and Recycling Team should be contacted to ensure the correct capacity and type of bins are provided. It should be noted that bins are not permitted to be stored on any part of the Highway.

A CMS and supporting site plan will be required for this development.

Environmental Protection

I have considered whether a contaminated land assessment should be required for this one, due to the use as garages. However, on balance I think a contaminated land informative should be sufficient, because the proposed gardens are located on the section of the site already in use as rear gardens and the houses will be on top of where the garages were, from what I can judge from the plans.

Public Consultation



Several site notices were displayed around the application site and one letter of objection was received this can be summarised as:

- Inadequate separation distance
- Impact on neighbouring amenities
- Out of keeping design
- The use is inappropriate requiring larger land space than commercial buildings
- Loss of biodiversity at the site
- Parking issues the parking space proposed comes at the expense of off-street parking

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'. However, the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making (NPPF paragraph 12).

In this regard, the NPPF states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the Local Plan 2019 according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).

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 consultation version of the draft update 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. Officer advice in respect of the Local Plan policies pertinent to these applications 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 determination of this planning application and are not considered to be ‘out of date’

The Local Plan Partial Update was submitted to the Secretary of State on 9th May 2025. Officer advice in respect of the Local Plan policies pertinent to this application is that they remain in accordance with national policy (aside from Policy H1, which is acknowledged to be out-of-date) and that the objectives of those policies remains very similar in the submission draft updated Local Plan. Therefore, they can continue to be afforded weight in the determination of this planning application and are not considered to be ‘out of date’ (aside from Policy H1).

Relevant Policies:

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework 2024

National Planning Practice Guidance

Reading Borough Local Plan (Nov 2019)

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)

EN12 (Biodiversity and the Green Network)

EN14 (Trees, Hedges and Woodland)

EN16 (Pollution and Water Resources)

H1 (Provision of Housing)

H2 (Location, Accessibility, Density and Housing 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)

Supplementary planning documents/guidance

Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)
Sustainable Design and Construction (2019)
Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (2021)
Planning Obligations Under Section 106 (2015)
Tree Strategy (March 2021)
Local Transport Strategy 2040 (2024)

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. APPRAISAL

Principle of the development

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”.

Previously developed land is defined within the NPPF 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”. Based on the above, it is clear that the site would not be classified as previously developed land, and therefore not the priority for development.

Notwithstanding, policy H11 (which is read in conjunction with Policy CC7) of the Reading Borough Local Plan (Development of Private Residential Gardens) includes policies relating to appropriate development of residential gardens (detailed below).

Policy H2 of the Reading Borough Local Plans states that the appropriate density of residential development will be informed by:

- The character and mix of uses of the area in which it is located;
- Its current and future level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport;
- The need to achieve high quality design;
- The need to maximise the efficiency of land use; and
- The need to minimise environmental impacts, including detrimental impacts on the amenities of adjoining occupiers.

There is no in-principle objection to residential use in itself within this residential area, however, a proposal would need to comply with the policies set out within the Reading Borough Local Plan, which will be discussed further within this report.

Design and Character

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.

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- The need to achieve high quality design;
- The need to maximise the efficiency of land use; and
- The need to minimise environmental impacts, including detrimental impacts on the amenities of adjoining occupiers.

The Council's adopted Policy H11 requires that new residential development that involves land within the curtilage or the former curtilage of private residential gardens will be acceptable where:

1. *"The proposal makes a positive contribution to the character of the area in terms of:*
 - a. *The relationship of the existing built form and spaces around buildings within the surrounding area;*
 - b. *A layout which integrates with the surrounding area with regard to the built up coverage of each plot, building line(s), rhythm of plot frontages, parking areas, and existing pattern of openings and boundary treatments on the site frontage;*
 - c. *Providing appropriate hard and soft landscaping, particularly at site boundaries. This includes features such as the variety of trees, hardstanding/lawns and hedges, etc;*
 - d. *Compatibility with the general building height within the surrounding area;*
 - e. *The materials and elevational detail. These should be high quality, and where appropriate distinctive and/ or complementary;*
 - f. *The arrangement of doors, windows and other principal architectural features and their rhythm between buildings.*
2. *The application site provides a site of adequate size and dimensions to accommodate the development proposed in terms of the setting and spacing around buildings, amenity space, landscaping and space for access roads and parking;*
3. *The proposal includes access, which meets appropriate highway standards;*
4. *The proposal does not lead to tandem development;*
5. *The design and layout minimises exposure of existing private boundaries to public areas, and avoids the need for additional physical security measures;*
6. *The proposal does not cause a significant detrimental impact to the amenity of adjacent and nearby occupants;*
7. *The emphasis is on the provision of family-sized housing;*
8. *The development provides biodiversity net gain wherever possible, and would not have an adverse impact on biodiversity in terms of the fragmentation of blocks of gardens, which as a unit or in association with adjacent green space are deemed to make an important contribution to biodiversity and contribute to the green network; and*
9. *The proposal does not prejudice the satisfactory development of a wider area."*

The previous appeal decision for this site describes the local character as follows: "Dwellings on Wilson Road are a mix of two storey semi-detached and terraced dwellings of varying design, set back behind a small front garden, with long rear private gardens and finished in red brick. However, on the same side as the application site, there is a mix of rear gardens and outbuildings interspersed with terraced and semi-detached properties of varying sizes, plot layouts and designs formed to the back of Wantage Road. Some of the plot layouts and sizes are smaller than opposite, but the backland properties largely retain a simple

form and face Wilson Road, which together with coherent materials and finishes provides a distinct character and appearance to the area.” Para 29, Appeal ref APP/E0345/W/22/3299930.

The proposed development is for a pair of two-storey semi-detached dwellings with a two storey front projection, single storey rear projection and dormer rear addition. The proposed dwelling would front the road the dwellings stepped in by approx. 0.7m from the shared boundaries. The proposal has a layout which occupies the entire width of the plot and abuts the highway creating a cramped form of development this is unaided by the two storey nature of the proposal with dormer additions creating a bulky and dominant appearance.

The properties along Wilson Road the semi-detached properties generally have ground floor bay windows and hipped roofs on wider plots. The proposed dwelling with its front projection and first floor over-hang creates an alien appearance to the street scene. Due to the extremely limited space within the site refuse would be adjacent pavement with parking adjacent to the house together with no meaningful soft landscaping creates a cluttered and incongruous appearance to the street scene.

The proposed development, due to its excessive scale, site coverage, layout and insufficient landscaped areas would represent a cramped overdevelopment of the site which fails to accommodate built form and landscaping in a manner that enhances the character and appearance of the area. The proposed development is, therefore, contrary to Policies CC7, H2 and H11 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

Residential Amenity

Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan requires that “Development will not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties, in terms of:

- Privacy and overlooking;
- Access to sunlight and daylight;
- Visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development;
- Harm to outlook ...”

Additionally, policy EN16 states that “development will only be permitted where it would not be damaging to the environment and sensitive receptors through land, noise or light pollution.”

Policy H10 states that “Dwellings will be provided with functional private or communal open space, including green space wherever possible, 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.....The design of outdoor areas will respect the size and character of other similar spaces in the vicinity”. The supporting text (H10) states that dwellings should be provided with the same amount of outdoor space as the internal floor area.

Amenity of future occupiers

The proposed houses would meet minimum space standards with each habitable room served by a window. As discussed previously the proposed dwellings are three bedrooms with the habitable room within the attic capable of being a bedroom. Based on the plans and elevations, the is due to it meeting the space standards for a bedroom, though no information on internal head heights has been provided to confirm this. Based on the plans and elevations, the loft space appears to contain sufficient area, and headroom to meet the space standards for a bedroom, though no information on internal head heights has been provided to confirm this (i.e. internal section). The communal areas are considered to be limited for a three bedroom dwelling with only an open plan kitchen/dinning room. The ground floor would have limited

daylight with no outlook, in addition while the kitchen isn't considered a habitable room, given the dwelling only has an open plan dining/kitchen and no separate living room at ground floor it is necessary to provide this space with sufficient daylight/sunlight. The arrangement of parking at the site restricts the front facing ground floor window size, which is below the building line above, and would also generally be expected to have a car parked in front of that small window. As such, the outlook and light levels from the front would be limited.

In terms of outdoor amenity space, the proposal has been provided with outdoor amenity. Policy H10 goes on (4.4.87) to state that *"Useable private outdoor space should be no less than the gross floor area of the dwelling to which it relates"*. The proposed garden sizes are ~45m², whereas the dwellings are ~100m² each, as such less than the policy guidance. The size of the garden proposed is also significantly smaller than that of neighbouring properties. In addition the properties would have no functional front garden amenity space is provided owing to the footprint of the buildings and the provision of car parking.

Cumulatively these matters result in future occupiers having a poor level of amenity and the proposal does not accord with policy CC8 of the Reading Local Plan.

Amenity of neighbour properties

The proposed development is similar in footprint, mass, scale and bulk as to the previously refused scheme (and dismissed at appeal).

Regarding 1 Wilson Road (The Old Dairy) which lies to east of the application site. The proposed development would be sited approx. 0.7m from the shared boundary and would extend approx. 7m from the rear elevation of No.1 Wilson Road. As such by reason of the depth and height of the proposed development, exacerbated by the rear dormer windows, officers consider this would be harmful to outlook from the closest rear facing windows, visually dominant and overbearing on the residents of 1 Wilson Road.

Regarding No.22 Wantage Road which lies to the west, the proposed development would also be 0.7m from the side boundary with 22 Wantage Road whose rear garden extends up to Wilson Road. It is acknowledged that there is a parking area to the rear of this garden however a large majority of the rear is residential garden land. By reason of its depth, dormer window and set back from Wilson Road, the proposal would form a large blank façade across a large section of this neighbouring residential garden and the orientation of the proposed dwellings will overshadow a large section of the garden. Officers consider this will cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of this neighbouring property in terms of overshadowing, harm to outlook, overbearing effects of the development and visual dominance.

Regarding No.24-26 Wantage Road. No. 24 and 26 Wantage Road are two storey mid terrace properties with two storey rear gables with single storey side and rear extensions. Policy CC8 states that 'the position of habitable rooms, windows and outdoor living spaces will be particularly important. A back-to-back distance of 20 metres between dwellings is usually appropriate. The proposal would result in a back to back distance of 17m at ground floor level as such does not comply with the requirement and while at first floor level there would be a back to back distance of 20m the building would still extend meaningful forward beyond existing properties along Wilson Road, this is further unaided by the rear dormer window at roof level creating an additional view point onto the rear gardens of neighbouring properties. Irrespective of the above the proposal would result in a significant reduction in the garden land of the existing properties. The garden would have a length of only 7m, which does not compare favourably with the predominant character of those in the area the majority of properties along both Wilson and Wantage Road are at least double in size and larger or relate to smaller terrace properties.

The proposal is therefore considered detrimental to the living environment of existing residential properties in terms of loss of privacy and overlooking, access to daylight and sunlight, overshadowing, visual

dominance and overbearing effects of the development and harmful to outlook which is contrary to policies CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) and H11 (Development of Private Residential Gardens) of the Reading Borough Local Plan. In addition, the current proposal is considered overdevelopment of the plot and reduces the useable private amenity space for existing residents to an amount insufficient for the size of those dwellings, and fails to provide a satisfactorily sized private amenity for each new dwelling.

Ecology and biodiversity

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 implemented in 2024 also apply to the proposed development.

The applicant has submitted a Small Sites BNG metric calculation along with a report (Reach Planning Solutions 5/1/2026), that shows the development will lead to a net gain in biodiversity of 0.08 Area Habitat Units equivalent to a net gain of 26%. However, the information provided has not substantiated this claim, with several errors within the metric including non-matching habitat areas pre and post development and no photos or map provided. Notwithstanding, the current calculation does not comply with the Small Sites Metric guidance as the calculation includes two trees to be planted in the gardens. All habitat within private gardens must be classed as "Vegetated Garden". The report also includes a 3D view of the proposed scheme which shows habitats to the rear of the plot but the two trees are not on this along with the native hedgerow despite claims within the report and metric calculation. It is also important to note that trees are not shown on the submitted proposed plans.

Policy EN12 stated that only in 'exception circumstances' would off-site credits be appropriate, the applicant has not demonstrate any exceptional circumstances exists for the site. It is acknowledge that in line with the biodiversity net gain hierarchy, off-site biodiversity net gain may be can be used this does not override the requirements of EN12. Irrespective of the above the details of the existing baseline, and proposed biodiversity gain provided are not considered to be accurate, nor are they able to be secured in accordance with the requirement for a 30 year biodiversity net gain. As such, the applicant has failed to demonstrate compliance with Policy EN12, and has failed to demonstrate the pre-development value accurately in accordance with published biodiversity net gain guidance by the Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs Schedule 7 of the Town and Country Planning Act.

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.

The Council's affordable housing policies are clear in explaining the severe and persistent need to deliver affordable housing in the Borough and to assist the Council in meeting the requirements of the NPPF which states at para 63 that: "Within this context of establishing need, the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies. These groups should include (but are not limited to) those who require affordable housing; families with children; older people (including those who require retirement housing, housing-with-care and care homes); students; people with disabilities; service families; travellers; people who rent their homes and people wishing to commission or build their own homes".

The provision of affordable housing is a major issue in the Borough. The Borough experiences high levels of affordable housing need as evidenced by paragraphs 11-14 of the Reading Local Housing Needs Assessment (Appendix G) indicating around 113 households in need annually. Reading residents face

major issues relating to affordability as a result of high and increasing house prices compared to average local incomes and significant issues in the future supply of affordable housing to meet identified needs. These matters are detailed below to demonstrate that local circumstances justify significant weight being given to the delivery of affordable housing and conversely, substantial harm arises from the failure to secure its provision on the provision of mixed and balanced communities.

The Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 is now more than five years old. 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 affordable housing 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 determination of this planning application and are not considered to be ‘out of date’. Whilst it is acknowledged that Policy H1 is out of date, Policy H3 is not considered to be out of date.

A revised version of the NPPF was published in December 2024. Paragraph 65 suggests that Affordable Housing should not be sought on sites of fewer than ten dwellings. This is consistent with government policy since the Ministerial Statement of November in 2014 which set out this policy approach more or less in the same form. The Council’s Local Plan includes Policy H3 which was adopted in 2019, after this government policy change and was adopted based on robust justification provided at examination in respect of the particular housing needs of Reading Borough. It is the Council’s opinion that the current NPPF does not alter the weight that should be given to the NPPF policy and that the Local Plan should be the primary basis for determination in accordance with s.38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

The approach taken by the Local Plan 2019 is that the need for affordable housing in Reading is so significant that there is a justification for seeking contributions to affordable housing from all sizes of residential development, from one dwelling upwards, and therefore forms part of adopted Policy H3. The only exceptions offered by Policy H3 are for one-for-one replacement dwellings and for residential conversions from houses to flats where there is no additional floor space created as part of the proposal (and therefore no additional planning harm/strain on affordability).

The NPPF (2024, para 35) requires Development Plans to set out the level and type of affordable housing provision required. National planning policy therefore requires local planning authorities to plan for the identified need for affordable housing in their areas.

There remains to be a dire need for affordable housing within the Borough, as evidenced by the Council’s most recent Annual Monitoring Report (2024-2025 (January 2026), page 28 – (see Appendix H), the delivery of affordable housing within 2024-25 is extremely low (11 completions). This is set against the backdrop of high housing delivery, with 890 new dwelling delivered within 2024-25 (higher than the annual target of 689 homes per annum as per Policy H1).

Policy H1 was adopted, following significant justification and interrogation through the local plan making process. The housing figures contained within it, were adopted in conjunction with policy H3 (affordable housing). There is an inherent link between the provision of housing, and the provision of identified needed affordable housing, and creating mixed and balanced communities. The supporting text of policy H3 states:

(4.4.23) “The target set in the policy has been determined as the result of an assessment of the viability of development of sites of various sizes in the Borough in accordance with the requirements of the NPPF. This will be the expected level of affordable housing provision.”

An up-to-date assessment of the need for Affordable Housing that exists in the Borough is within the supporting text for Policy H3 (para 4.4.21) of the Reading Borough Local Plan Submission Draft Partial Update May 2025 which states the following:

“The Reading Housing Needs Assessment (HNA, 2024) has once again emphasised the critical need for affordable housing within Reading as well as the remainder of Berkshire. The HNA identified a need for 406 additional affordable homes per year in Reading, which represents the majority of the overall housing required. The consequences of not providing much-needed affordable homes would be severe, and would include homelessness, households in temporary or unsuitable accommodation, overcrowding and younger people having to remain living with parents for increasing periods. Insufficient affordable housing will also act as an impediment to economic growth, as firms will face increasing problems with accommodation for their workforce. Meeting even a substantial proportion of the identified housing need presents significant challenges, and it is therefore critical that new residential development of all sizes makes whatever contribution it can”.

Whilst the principle of an affordable housing contribution has been agreed by the applicant, the applicant did not submitted any site valuations in as such affordable housing contribution did not advanced to a stage where affordable housing was secured. Given the identified need as discussed above this will from a reason for refusal. An informative will be included to state that this reason for refusal may be able to be overcome. The LPA will worked pro-activley with the applicant to secure affordble housing provision if these wished to resolved this prior to any appeal.

Highways Consideration

The development proposes one car parking space for each dwelling and although this does not meet the standards required which is two spaces per dwelling, this could have been mitigated by way of a parking permit condition had the application been supported. That would prevent future occupants of the proposed dwellings obtaining a residents parking permit, due to the surrounding roads having a significant demand for on-street parking.

Bin and cycle storage and the provision of EV charging points could have been addressed by way of planning conditions had the application been supported.

The proposed development displaces parking for 24 and 26 Wantage Road however both properties are entitled to residents parking permits which allows them to park on the surrounding streets.

Had the application been acceptable in all other regards bin and cycle storage and the provision of EV charging point conditions would have been applied and there are therefore no objections to the proposal in terms of transport issues.

However it is important to note that the lack of parking is a symptom of the overdevelopment nature of the site further confirming the site has a poor and incongruous layout.

Trees

Policy EN14 (Trees, Hedges and Woodland) seeks to protect trees, groups of trees, hedges and

woodland from damage or removal, extend the borough vegetation cover and that development should make provision for tree planting. Tree strategy says increase canopy cover in each ward to 30% by 2030, Battle is currently at 6.7% as per the 2021 tree strategy Appendix 2.

Despite the BNG metric stating trees will be provided on site, the proposed plans make no provision for tree planting. While not a reason for refusal within itself the lack of adequate soft landscaping and trees provision is a consequence of the cramped layout and the overdevelopment of the site.

Sustainability Considerations

In accordance with Policies CC2, and H5 of the Reading Local Plan (2019) all development would be required to demonstrate how it is proposing to be constructed to address climate change. In this instance, the proposal is sought to be built to acceptable standards. As such, should the recommendation had been to approve, a condition would have been attached to secure post construction certification that an appropriate standard had been met in line with the appropriate acceptable standard.

Waste Considerations

The proposal includes bin storage allocated within the application site as shown on the floor plans, it is considered this is adequate.

CIL

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.

Matters Raised in Representations

Regarding the letter of representation the concerns raised have been discussed above.

Planning Balance

The NPPF is a material consideration in planning decisions. Planning policies and decisions must also reflect relevant international obligations and statutory requirements.

Paragraph 11 of the NPPF deals with the presumption in favour of sustainable development, setting out that, for decision taking this means:

d) Where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

- i. The application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or*
- ii. Any adverse impact of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.*

Footnote 8 of the NPPF provides further clarification on decision-taking for applications involving the provision of housing and assessing when policies which are most important for determining the application

are out-of-date. Footnote 8 states that this includes situations where the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites (with the appropriate buffer), or where the Housing Delivery Test indicates that the delivery of housing was substantially below (less than 75% of) the housing requirement over the previous three years.

In relation to five-year supply of deliverable housing sites the Council accepts that we are currently not in a position to demonstrate a five year housing land supply (plus the appropriate buffer) as such the 'tilted balance' is engaged.

When the tilted balance is engaged, it is necessary to conduct a planning balance in determining applications and the balance is whether the harms 'significantly and demonstrably' outweigh the benefits of granting permission when assessed against the policies in the NPPF.

In assessing the benefits of the proposal in general, weight is afforded to the proposal providing a home with an existing settlement. The development would also deliver both short and long term economic benefits in terms of construction and local spends. However the application fails to demonstrate that the Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy has been complied or demonstrated that the amount of development proposed can be accommodated. It is considered the proposal would unduly impact the amenity of existing residents and has a design which is considered to harmful to the street scene these are considered to result in significantly and demonstrably reasons which outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole

6. CONCLUSION

On the basis of the above and in light of any other material planning applications, the proposal is considered not to be in accordance with the development plan. Accordingly, recommendation is made to refuse planning permission.

7. RECOMMENDATION

The planning permission is refused for the following reasons:

1. The proposed development, due to its excessive scale, site coverage, layout and insufficient landscaped areas would represent a cramped overdevelopment of the site which fails to accommodate built form and landscaping in a manner that enhances the character and appearance of the area. The proposed development is, therefore, contrary to Policies CC7, H2 EN14, H10 and H11 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and paragraphs 96, 129, 131, 135 and 136 of the NPPF 2024.
2. The proposed development, through the provision of uncharacteristically and unacceptably small gardens, in comparison to the prevailing size in the surrounding area due to the significant reduction in size of the existing gardens at 24 and 26 Wantage Road would fail to provide an acceptable level of external amenity space for the existing residents. This would detract from their living conditions, contrary to Policies CC7, CC8, H10 and H11 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).
3. The proposed development, by reason of its inadequate separation distance, close proximity to neighbouring boundaries, overall scale and massing is considered detrimental to the living environment of existing residential properties in terms of loss of privacy and overlooking, access to daylight and sunlight, overshadowing, visual dominance, overbearing effects of the development

and harmful to outlook contrary to policies CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) and H11 (Development of Private Residential Gardens) of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

4. The proposed dwelling would fail to provide adequate internal amenity space for the number of bedrooms proposed together with the small gardens, in comparison to the prevailing size in the surrounding area and the proposed development fails to demonstrate the proposed ground floors would receive adequate natural light and a good level of outlook on the front ground floor elevation which would create unacceptable living conditions, The proposed development is, therefore, contrary to Policies CC8 and H5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and paragraphs 96, 135 and 198 of the NPPF 2024.
5. The proposed development has failed to demonstrate the impact on the ecological value of the site, and that there would be no net loss in biodiversity. The application has failed to demonstrate the baseline ecological value of the site prior to unauthorised development at the site and has failed to demonstrate that there would be detrimental impact to the ecological value of the site. The proposed development is, therefore, contrary to Policies EN12 and H11 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and paragraphs 162, 187, 192 and 193 of the NPPF 2024
6. In the absence of a completed legal agreement to secure an acceptable contribution towards the provision of Affordable Housing, the proposal fails to contribute adequately to the housing needs of Reading Borough, contrary to Policy CC9 and H3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019), and the Council's Adopted Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document 2021.