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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 August 2025

by **Martin Allen BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28 October 2025

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**Appeal Ref: APP/E0345/W/25/3364774**

**Land adjacent to 24 George Street, Caversham, Reading RG4 8DG**

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
  - The appeal is made by Mr Alan Craddock of Danala Services Ltd against the decision of Reading Borough Council.
  - The application Ref is PL/24/0900.
  - The development proposed is the construction of 5no. 3 bedroom town houses.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Preliminary Matters

2. One of the reasons for refusal related to a contribution towards affordable housing. Since the application was refused, the appellant has submitted a Unilateral Undertaking which the Council confirms is acceptable in terms of that reason for refusal. I have therefore not included this as a main issue below.

### Main Issues

3. The main issues are:
  - The effect on the character and appearance of the area,
  - Whether the location of the development is acceptable with particular regard to flood risk considerations,
  - Whether future occupiers would experience satisfactory living conditions, with particular regards to internal layout, outlook, and outdoor space, and
  - The effect on biodiversity and whether the scheme would deliver the required Biodiversity Net Gain.

### Reasons

#### *Character and appearance*

4. The appeal site comprises an area of land at the junction of two roads, George Street and Gosbrook Road. It is a roughly triangular area with a frontage to George Street. Currently, the appeal site has a distinctly unkempt appearance, with waste materials within and being overgrown as well as partially enclosed by some timber hoarding. However, I am particularly conscious from the information that is before me, that the site previously contained a grassed area which, despite the previous presence of large advertisements within, contributed beneficially to

the townscape and added an attractive visual relief within the built form of the area. It was therefore a positive feature of the locale. It was open to the footway, devoid of any enclosing feature and as such I agree that it can be considered to be an undesignated area of open space.

5. While the area is currently unkempt, the proposed development would result in the introduction of a substantial amount of built development at this prominent location, positioned close to the footway. In this respect, it would be distinctly at odds with the previously open nature of the site and would permanently remove the open aspect and its greening contribution. I note that the appellant contends that the site is currently making a negative contribution to the area, however this appears to be due at least in part due to the lack of maintenance of the site as an open space.
6. There is reference to there being an area of landscaping to be incorporated to one part of the site, which would include a number of trees, and there would be landscaping also to the front garden areas. However, there seems little opportunity to provide any meaningful level of planting to the frontages and the area of land retained for planting would not adequately compensate for the extent of the loss of green space that would occur, as well as additional planting that would be required.
7. I note that the tree planting plan within the arboricultural report shows the inclusion of four tree specimens, however this would appear to only comprise the trees that are required to be replaced subject to a Tree Replacement Notice (which is the subject of a separate appeal). There is some additional tree planting shown (on the ground floor plans) but this lacks detail and thus there is a deficiency in this respect.
8. It has been contended that the site has been enclosed in order to prevent crime and dumping of materials, yet there is nothing to suggest that this was a significant problem when the site was previously grassed and open. I am particularly conscious that the site is located at a busy road junction where there is a high degree of visual surveillance and thus, I am not convinced that it was necessary to enclose the site to secure it.
9. The proposed scheme would result in a new terrace of properties positioned to follow the curve that is present in the road and footway at this corner location. To the front elevation in isolation, the dwellings would appear as traditionally proportioned buildings, reflecting the scale of the surrounding development. However, the side elevations of the building would appear unusually deep in their form, and while screened to one side by buildings along George Street, from Gosbrook Road the side of the buildings would be visible and would appear as a discordant feature that fails to integrate acceptably with the existing townscape features.
10. I therefore find that the proposed development would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area. Thus, it would conflict with policies CC7, EN8 and EN14 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (adopted 2019) (the Local Plan). Together, and amongst other things, these policies seek to ensure that development is of a high quality with particular regard to scale and massing, that the inappropriate loss of undesignated open space is protected against and that the level of tree planting is improved.

### *Flood Risk*

11. The proposed development comprises residential dwellings and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) sets out that such development is classified as “more vulnerable.” The appellant’s Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) identifies that the site lies within Flood Zone 3, and that models show that part lies within Flood Zone 3b, which the Planning Practice Guidance (the PPG) identifies as functional floodplain, and the remainder lies within Flood Zone 3a. The FRA states that the development will predominantly be constructed in Flood Zone 3a where more vulnerable development can be permitted, subject to fulfilling the Sequential Test and then the Exception Test.
12. However, this ignores the fact that a large part of the proposed development would be located within Flood Zone 3b, which is the highest category of flood risk. The appellant’s own information shows that the majority of the garden areas, as well as almost the entirety of one of the dwellings together with its points of access and egress, as well as part of other proposed dwellings would be positioned within the functional flood plain and thus be categorised as Flood Zone 3b. In light of this, it is necessary to assess the scheme having regard to the highest categorisation of flood risk that would be experienced by the development i.e., its presence in Flood Zone 3b.
13. The PPG at Table 2 sets out the acceptability of development in light of its flood risk vulnerability and flood zone ‘incompatibility’ and clearly states that more vulnerable development should not be permitted in Flood Zone 3b.
14. The appellant has sought to justify the development by undertaking a Sequential Test, which as the PPG sets out is expected to ensure that areas at little or no risk of flooding are developed in preference to areas at higher risk. However, given that Table 2 excludes the proposed development from being permitted in Flood Zone 3b, it matters not what the results of any sequential test are. Similarly, in respect of the Council’s concern over whether the occupiers would be kept safe during a flood event, given the in-principle objection to the location of development within Flood Zone 3b, this is not a matter which I need to explore further.
15. Accordingly, the development would be at an unacceptable risk of flooding. Thus, it conflicts with policy EN18 of the Local Plan, insofar as it seeks to direct development away from areas at the highest risk of flooding, in line with the requirements of the Framework. The scheme also conflicts with the flooding protection aims of the Framework.

### *Living Conditions*

16. The first-floor accommodation layout shows bedroom number two of each dwelling located to the rear. The single window serving these bedrooms would be positioned between two rear projecting wings (other than for one of the properties), which extend for 2.5 metres from the rear elevation containing the windows. Despite the shallow pitch of the roofs over these wings, the view to a narrow and enclosed space between them, would result in a severely hemmed in outlook from these windows for the residents. As a result, there would be an oppressive and unacceptable sense of enclosure when in these bedrooms.
17. Each of the properties is provided with an outdoor garden area, all of which are of differing sizes. Policy H10 of the Local Plan sets out that new dwellings will require

functional private space, including suitable sitting-out areas, children's play areas, home food production, green waste composting, refuse storage, general outdoor storage, and drying space. The areas provided for are not as generous, in terms of depth, as those that serve the properties directly adjacent, and in some cases are very limited. While they may provide for the most basic of needs, they do not provide for adequate space to encompass all of the uses that are envisaged by the policy.

18. While the attractiveness of these areas would be enhanced by the outlook that is available of the public open space adjacent, this would not compensate for the restricted dimensions of the private garden areas that would be provided. While no party has drawn my attention to any adopted standard for the provision of garden space, in my judgement, based on the submitted details, the provided gardens would be inadequate. While I do not consider that the positioning of any trees would affect the usability of the garden areas to such a degree to make them unusable or unpleasant, this does not compensate for the lack of adequate space provision.
19. The first-floor layout of the proposed dwellings includes a third bedroom to the rear of the properties, which is positioned within the rear projecting wing. The Council contend that the layout of this room would be cramped. However, whilst it is L-shaped the Council raise no objection in terms of the floorspace provided, being a single bedroom and I consider that the layout and space of these third bedrooms would be satisfactory.
20. While I find no harm in terms of the layout of the third bedrooms, future occupiers would not experience satisfactory living conditions, in regard to outlook and outdoor space provision. Thus, the proposal conflicts with policies CC8 and H10 of the Local Plan, insofar as they seek to ensure that development does not result in unacceptable living conditions in new residential properties, and that dwellings are provided with functional private space.

### *Biodiversity*

21. The development is subject to the requirement to deliver a 10% biodiversity net gain. While the application was accompanied by a biodiversity metric, the Council highlight that this has not accurately assessed the pre-development biodiversity value of the development site. Particularly, this is due to the lack of consideration of a number of trees. The site previously accommodated a number of trees that were the subject of the Tree Preservation Order. While agreement was given to fell four of these trees within the site, there is also a requirement to replace them. These replacement trees have not been considered when assessing the baseline pre-development biodiversity value. As such, there is a deficiency in the information that has been submitted with the appeal, which creates sufficient uncertainty as to whether or not the biodiversity gain objective could be met.
22. Therefore, while I am conscious that the Planning Practice guidance states that "*it would generally be inappropriate for decision makers, when determining a planning application for a development subject to biodiversity net gain, to refuse an application on the grounds that the biodiversity gain objective will not be met*", in this case there is a lack of information such that there is insufficient confidence that the biodiversity gain objective would be met. It would therefore not be appropriate to allow this information to be delivered at any later stage, through the imposition of

a planning condition. The development does therefore not comply with Schedules 7A and 14 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) and the Environment Act 2021, respectively. The development would also conflict with policy EN12 of the Local Plan, insofar as it seeks to ensure that development does not result in a new loss of biodiversity.

### **Planning Balance and Conclusion**

23. The development would conflict with the above-mentioned policies. There would be benefits arising from the development, most notably the policy compliant contribution towards the provision of affordable housing. There would also be some economic benefits as a result of the development, together with social benefits from the provision of new housing. However, given the scale of the development I find that the benefits that would arise are not sufficient to outweigh the totality of the harm.
24. Therefore, I find that the proposal conflicts with the development plan as a whole and there are no material considerations which carry sufficient weight to warrant a decision otherwise than in accordance with it. For the reasons given above the appeal should therefore be dismissed.

*Martin Allen*

INSPECTOR