

APPLICATION FOR FULL-PLANNING PERMISSION CASE OFFICER REPORT

APPLICATION REFERENCE:	PL/2025/09571
APPLICATION TYPE:	Full planning permission
SITE ADDRESS:	29 Huntingdon Rise, Bradford on Avon, BA15 1RJ
DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION:	Erection of an Evacuation Ramp on front elevation (retrospective)
RECOMMENDATION:	Approve with Conditions

SITE CONTEXT



Figure 1. Photograph of the application site, showing No.29 and the recently installed compliant ramp which provides access from the front bedroom to the public footpath and highway.

29 Huntingdon Rise (the 'site') is a residential property which presently provides supported living accommodation and is situated within the town limits of Bradford on Avon (a designated a Market Town in the Core Strategy).

The site is occupied by a modern bungalow and its associated amenity space.

The submitted Planning Statement describes the site as follows:

"The application site is approximately 360m² and comprises a modern, 3-bedroom bungalow which has been adapted for use as a supported living property. The accommodation consists of a lounge, with attached kitchen, 2x residents' bedrooms, a staff office/sleep room, wet room and toilet, all of which are accessed via a central corridor that leads to the front exit door. A further exit door is provided from the kitchen which opens to the side of the property, with a path leading past the garage to the front driveway.

A driveway can be found to the north of the site, providing access to the garage. The front door is reached via a flight of 4 No. concrete formed steps or via a ramp which is access via the driveway. To the immediate front of the gable is the recently constructed, compliant access ramp, of which retrospective planning permission is sought."

The site is surrounded by the following uses:

- North: 31 Huntingdon Rise (a modern bungalow).
- East: Huntingdon Rise (an unmarked two-way road with footways) with 14 Huntingdon Rise opposite (a modern bungalow).
- South: 27 Huntingdon Rise (a modern bungalow).
- West: St Laurence School playing fields.

The application site is subject to the following planning policy designations/constraints:

- Within Bath & Bradford on Avon Bat Special Area of Conservation GHS 4km Core Roost Buffer: Combined Winsley Sites
- Within Bath & Bradford on Avon Bat Special Area of Conservation GHS 4km Core Roost Buffer: Winsley/Murhill Rift
- Within Bath & Bradford on Avon Bat Special Area of Conservation GHS 4km Core Roost Buffer: Combined Gripwood Sites
- Within Bath & Bradford on Avon Bat Special Area of Conservation GHS 4km Core Roost Buffer: Iford Manor
- Within LHS 2km Core Roost Buffer: Belcombe Court
- Within LHS 2km Core Roost Buffer: Carpenter's Shop, Kingston Mills, BoA
- Within Bath & Bradford on Avon Bat Special Area of Conservation GHS 4km Core Roost Buffer: Bath & Bradford on Avon Bats

PROPOSAL

The proposal seeks retrospective planning permission for the newly constructed evacuation ramp (as shown on the first page of this report) and associated replacement of the front bedroom windows with French doors.

It has been submitted that the proposal is required in order to improve the means of escape from the front bedroom in the event of a fire. The width and gradient of the ramp have been designed to comply with the requirements of Building Regulation and the Equality Act 2010. The ramp comprises a platform with three consecutive bends between the French doors and public footpath. It is formed of a concrete base, covered with concrete paving slabs and accompanied by metal safety rails.

PLANNING HISTORY

No relevant record.

RELEVANT LEGISLATION, POLICIES AND GUIDANCE

Planning Legislation:

- Town and Country Planning Act 1990
- Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

Development Plan:

- Wiltshire Core Strategy (Adopted January 2015):
 - Core Policy 41: Sustainable construction and low-carbon energy
 - Core Policy 46: Meeting the needs of Wiltshire's vulnerable and older people
 - Core Policy 57: Ensuring high quality design and place shaping
- The Bradford on Avon Neighbourhood Plan 2013-2026 (Made October 2017):
 - Policy BE1 (relates to local distinctiveness and sense of place)
 - Policy BE2 (relates to land use efficiency and character of the area)

Material Considerations (Policy):

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) December 2024
 - Section 2. Achieving sustainable development
 - Section 12. Achieving well-designed places
- Wiltshire Local Plan Submission Draft 2020-2038 (Regulation 24):
 - Policy 4: Addressing climate change
 - Policy 78: Meeting Wiltshire's housing needs
 - Policy 85: Sustainable construction and low carbon energy
 - Policy 98: Ensuring high quality design and place shaping

Material Considerations (Guidance):

- National Planning Practice Guidance
- National Design Guide (January 2021)
- Wiltshire Design Guide (March 2024)

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Bradford on Avon Town Council: No objection.

REPRESENTATIONS

Bradford on Avon Preservation Trust: No objection.

One third-party objection was received raising concerns over the unlawful introduction of the access, the lack of neighbour consultation and the design of the ramp. In broad terms, the objector described the ramp as having an adverse and negative impact on the host property and wider street scene. They suggested replacing the existing railings with higher quality railings.

ASSESSMENT

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that planning decisions must be made in accordance with the development plan unless material

considerations indicate otherwise. In accordance with this requirement, this application has been assessed against the relevant policies of the development plan and the material considerations listed above.

Having regard to the planning context and nature of the proposal, the following key matters are considered pertinent to the assessment of the proposal and are addressed in turn:

- Principle
- Design
- Residential amenity
- Other matters

Principle

There is limited local and national planning policy which specifically relates to the adaption and/or improvement of existing small-scale supported living accommodation in order to meet the needs of individuals with significant mobility issues. Rather, policies primarily refer to the provision of new homes and specialist accommodation.

Notwithstanding the policy silence in relation to the adaption and/or improvement of existing accommodation, Core Policy 46 states that wherever practicable, accommodation should seek to deliver and promote independent living and that such accommodation should be provided in sustainable locations, normally in the Principal Settlements and Market Towns where there is good access to services and facilities.

In this regard, the submitted Planning Statement (notably sections 1.0, 3.0(i) and 5.0(i)) demonstrates that the new evacuation ramp is necessary in order to comply with the recommendations of a Fire Safety Report and advice from the Dorset and Wiltshire Fire Service to enable the provision of safe evacuation for both staff and residents in the event of a fire, particularly at nighttime. Having reviewed the FSR and advice, officers accept this justification. In addition, the existing accommodation is located within Bradford on Avon, a Market Town, which aligns with the locational preference of Core Policy 46.

It is also necessary to have regard to paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF which states that where there are no relevant in principle development plan policies, permission should be granted 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 impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations... securing well-designed places... individually or in combination.*

The application site is not subject to, nor within notable proximity of any protected areas or assets of particular importance and therefore clause (i) is satisfied.

As set out in the design section below, the proposal is considered to generate a minor adverse impact in terms of achieving well-designed places. Officers consider it necessary to enhance the landscaping and boundary treatment of the existing ramp in order to mitigate this impact and a planning condition is recommended to secure the necessary enhancements. Otherwise, the proposal is not considered to generate any other adverse impacts.

The proposal delivers a public benefit in the form of upgrading existing supporting living accommodation in a sustainable market town location by providing a safe evacuation route which fully complies with the necessary Building Regulations and the Equality Act 2010.

Subject to the compliance with the recommended condition requiring the submission, approval and implementation of landscaping and boundary treatment enhancements, officers consider that the minor adverse impact of the proposal on the site and its surroundings would be mitigated to an acceptable degree and outweighed by its clear public benefit. The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in principle.

Design

Core Policy 57 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy requires that all development be of high design quality, create a strong sense of place and complement its context, including through enhancing local distinctiveness and responding positively to local characteristics. This requirement is carried forward in draft Policy 98 of the emerging Wiltshire Local Plan.

Appendix D of the Wiltshire Design Guide states that extensions should be subservient to and respect the scale, form, appearance and character of the host dwelling and should harmonise with its context.

Policy BE1 of the Bradford on Avon Neighbourhood Plan states that development should reinforce local distinctiveness, help create a sense of place and respond positively to its immediate and wider context, including in respect of materials palette.

Policy BE2 states that development should make efficient use of land and respect the character of the area.

The submitted Planning Statement states that *"The application site is located within a modern estate, characterised by open frontages to enable the off-street parking of multiple cars. The inclusion of the ramp, with its open format, continues this aesthetic, therefore having minimal impact on the street scene"*.

Officers broadly agree with this area description though would add that there is a notable presence of soft landscaping and, resultantly, the area has a greener local character (albeit this is being significantly eroded over time through the prolific replacement of front gardens with hard-surfaced driveways). It is also acknowledged that raised platforms as well as short runs of steps and ramps with safety railings are present on several properties in the vicinity

(notably nos.38 and 40), though admittedly the materials palette of these features is of better quality than those accompanying the new evacuation ramp at no.29 (especially the railings).

Having regard to this context and the appearance of the evacuation ramp, notably its form, elevation, concrete walling, concrete slab surfacing and basic-quality safety rails, it reads as an over-engineered and visually hard feature which does not satisfy the requirement of Core Policy 57 that development should promote local distinction, harmonise with its context and represent high-quality design.

However, Building Regulations (Access to and use of buildings: Approved Document M) and the Equality Act 2010 sets clear standards for disabled access ramps (0.9m path width and 1:12 gradient at minimum). The proposal complies with these minimum dimensions and provides safety rails. Given this, there is limited opportunity to modify the form of the ramp without compromising its compliance with the aforementioned standards.

As such, officers have agreed with the applicant's appointed agent that landscaping and boundary treatment enhancements would be secured by planning condition in order to soften the development and better integrate it to its context. In broad terms, these enhancements include additional planting and the addition of timber panelling around the ramp with the details to be provided within 3 months of the decision to grant conditional approval.

Subject to compliance with the aforementioned condition, it is considered that the evacuation ramp would more closely comply with the design principles set out in Core Policy 57 of the Core Strategy, draft Policy 98 of the emerging Local Plan, Neighbourhood Plan Policies BE1 and BE2 and the Design Guide.

Residential Amenity

Core Policy 57(vii) requires that development be compatible with the adjoining uses and protect the residential amenity of existing and future users of the site and its surroundings, including in respect of natural lighting, privacy, outlook and pollution sources. This requirement is carried forward in draft Policy 98.

By virtue of its forward siting and low scale, the proposal would have no significant additional impact on the residential amenity of users of the neighbouring properties. The proposal therefore achieves an acceptable standard of residential amenity in accordance with Core Policy 57(vii) and the Wiltshire Design Guide.

Other Matters

With regard to the public objection, the key concern raised related to the design of the ramp which has been addressed above. For reference, it is considered that the subsequent submission, approval and delivery of landscaping and boundary treatment enhancements would mitigate the impact of the ramp to an acceptable degree in relation to the public benefit the scheme delivers.

Officers fully appreciate the concerns raised in relation to the unlawful introduction of the access and the lack of neighbour consultation. The ramp was constructed without permission

as a result of a miscommunication. Nonetheless, planning permission should always be sought for qualifying development and, in this case, the developer has sought to regularise the development. With regard to neighbour consultation, developers are generally not required to notify neighbours of development as this duty falls to the local planning authority. Nonetheless, consulting neighbours on prospective development is considered best practice and is encouraged by the Council.

CONCLUSION

Having regard to the above, it is considered that the minor adverse impact of the proposal on the character and visual amenity of the site and its surroundings would be mitigated to an acceptable degree by the soft landscaping and boundary treatment enhancements (to be secured by condition) and outweighed by the clear public benefit of providing a necessary and regulations-compliant evacuation ramp for an existing supported living property.

The proposal therefore complies with the aforementioned sections and policies of the Wiltshire Core Strategy, emerging Wiltshire Local Plan, Bradford on Avon Neighbourhood Development Plan, NPPF and the Wiltshire Design Guide. As such, the application is recommended for approval, subject to the conditions set out below.

RECOMMENDATION: That Planning Permission be GRANTED subject to the following conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out and/or maintained in accordance with the following approved plans and documents:
 - Location Plan, ref: PP-14543904v1
 - Existing & Retrospective Drawings, ref: 2525-BiBO-XX-XX-DR-A-1100-02

REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

2. Within 3 months of this decision, a scheme of hard and soft landscaping (including boundary treatment) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Within 12 months of this decision, the hard and soft landscaping shall be carried out in accordance with the approved scheme, the details of which shall include: -
 - a. location and current canopy spread of all existing trees and hedgerows on the land;
 - b. full details of any to be retained;
 - c. a detailed planting specification showing all plant species, supply and planting sizes and planting densities;
 - d. means of enclosure/boundary treatment (including product details);
 - e. all hard and soft surfacing materials;
 - f. minor artefacts and structures (e.g. furniture, play equipment, refuse and other storage units, signs, lighting etc);
 - g. retained historic landscape features and proposed restoration, where relevant.

All planting shall be maintained free from weeds and shall be protected from damage by vermin and stock. Any new trees or plants which, die, are removed, or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of a similar size and species, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

REASON: In the interests of visual amenity and the character and appearance of the area.