

Delegated Report
59 Lechmere Avenue, Chigwell, IG7 5HA
EPF/0881/25

Site and Surroundings

The site comprises a two-storey detached dwellinghouse located within a built-up area of Chigwell. It is sited on a prominent corner position on the east side of the road. Area topography is hilly with ground levels differing in all directions. It is not listed nor in a conservation area or a flood zone. There are no protected trees on site. The site lies within the inner zone of influence of the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (EFSAC).

Proposal

Proposed erection of 2 no. 4-bedroom houses. Demolition of existing house.

Relevant Planning History

EPF/0881/25 - Proposed erection of 2 no. semi-detached houses and Demolition of existing dwellinghouse. 22/04/2025. Under Consideration.

EPF/2280/24 - Proposed erection of 2 no. 4-bedroom houses. Demolition of existing house. 11/11/2024. Refuse.

EPF/1728/24 - Proposed erection of 2 no. 4-bedroom houses. Demolition of existing house. 23/08/2024. Refuse.

PRE/0191/24 - Erection of 2 no. semi-detached houses in place of existing dwellinghouse. 26/06/2024. Advice Given.

EPF/1129/20 - Demolition of existing dwelling and replace with two 3 bedroom dwellings, (Revised application to EPF/0458/20). 29/05/2020. Disposed.

EPF/0458/20 - Construction of a pair of semi-detached dwellings following demolition of existing dwelling. 27/02/2020. Withdrawn.

Development Plan Context

Epping Forest Local Plan 2011-2033 (2023)

National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (Framework)

The Framework is a material consideration in determining planning applications. The following paragraphs are considered to be of relevance to this application:

Paragraphs 131 & 135

Summary of Representations

Number of neighbours 20 Consulted: 1 response(s) received.

Site notice posted: N/a

Neighbour Objections - from 55 Lechmere Avenue summarised as:

- Overdevelopment of the site and visual impact due to corner position
- Overbearing due to their mass, scale and height.
- Sense of enclosure for neighbours at no.57
- Inadequate parking formation.

- Adverse impact on recreational pressure and air pollution to the EFSAC due to increase in residents.

CHIGWELL PARISH COUNCIL – ‘*The Parish Council **STRONGLY OBJECTS** on the following grounds;*

The proposal continues to result in excessive height which has a negative impact to the street scene and is detrimental to the character and appearance of the wider area.

The proposal is contrary to policy T1 of the Local Plan (2023) which states that development will be permitted where it provides appropriate parking provision, in terms of amount, design and layout and cycle storage arrangements

*The Parish **NOTED** that while the Highways Authority previously commented, the assessment of parking standards lies with EFDC as the Parking Authority. We respectfully disagree with previous officer comments, as the application does not comply with the Essex Parking Guidance 2024 (EPG 24), which supersedes the pre-application advice.*

The site, located in an area of moderate connectivity (as defined in EPG 24 Appendix A), requires two parking spaces per dwelling plus an allocation for visitor parking (Table 8.2). This standard is not met.

The proposed bay sizes are substandard. EPG 24 (Section 7.4) requires a 0.5m allowance for bays adjacent to solid structures, which has not been provided. Tandem spaces and those in front of garages are also inadequate, lacking the depth to accommodate door clearance as per guidance.

Given the location’s classification and the policy requirements, the proposal fails to meet the standards of EPG 24 and is not compliant with Policy T1.’

EFDC AIR QUALITY – No objection subject to recommended conditions.

EFDC CONTAMINATED LAND: No objection subject to conditions.

ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL – ECOLOGY - No objection subject to securing biodiversity mitigation and enhancement measures, including mandatory biodiversity net gains.

ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL – HIGHWAYS: No objection subject to informative.

EFDC LAND DRAINAGE - No objection subject to foul drainage and surface water drainage conditions. The site is within three metres of a public sewer and will require build over consent from the Water Authority.

EFDC TREES AND LANDSCAPING – No observations to make on this application.

NATURAL ENGLAND - OBJECTION - FURTHER INFORMATION REQUIRED TO DETERMINE IMPACTS ON DESIGNATED SITES

‘As submitted, the application could have potential significant effects on the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC) / Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Natural England requires further information to determine the significance of these impacts and the scope for mitigation.

The following information is required: an Appropriate Assessment of the Likely Significant Effects of recreational pressure.’

Planning Considerations

The main issues for consideration in this case are:

- a) The impact on the character and appearance of the locality
- b) Highway safety and parking provision
- c) Standard of accommodation
- d) The impact to the living conditions of neighbours
- e) HRA and the impact on the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (EFSAC).
- f) Ecological impact
- g) Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)
- h) Housing Need

Character and appearance

This resubmission follows the refusal of similar schemes ref EPF/1728/24 and EPF/2280/24. Grounds for refusal concerned the height and inconsistency with the existing roof hierarchy; insufficient information to enable a HRA assessment and the lack of a section 106 agreement for EFSAC mitigation measures by virtue of the refusal decision.

The main issue in this third application is whether the proposal has overcome its height discrepancies from previous applications and whether the height of the dwelling is acceptable within the context. The proposal extends its height by approximately 1m from the existing on a descending roof hierarchy. Plots widths are divided relatively equally to approximately 6.4m for the proposed pair of semi-detached dwellings. What the dwellings lack in width is increased in height resulting in a tall narrow appearance. Rear dormers are removed therefore the ridge increase is unexplained. The narrowest of plot widths on the road average around 8m even for the more modest dwellings situated to the north. The proposed dwellings are considered to depart from the established character of the street in terms of proportionality for the plot size which would have a negative visual impact on a prominent corner location.

The proposal continues to result in excessive height which has a negative impact to the street scene and is detrimental to the character and appearance of the wider area.

Highway Safety and Parking

2 car parking spaces plus 0.25 unallocated visitor parking are required for a 4 bed+ dwelling in line with the Councils adopted parking standards (Essex Parking Guidance 2024). The proposal site is located in an updated connectivity classification and is considered to have 'moderate' connectivity.

New development is expected to demonstrate EV charging facilities and safe and secure cycle storage. Additional space for cycle storage is not required where there is already a garage within the curtilage of the site. It is noted that no objection has been received from the highways officer, so it is considered that there would be no detrimental impact to the safety operation of the highway network.

The proposal comprises two EV charging points to the rear of the site with an existing dropped kerb extended and accessible from Broadhurst Gardens both components are acceptable. The existing garage is extended to form one secure car parking space with one space immediately in front of the garage. Two further adjacent parallel parking bays are provided allowing cars to face Broadhurst Gardens. EPG 7.4 states that bays bound by solid structures or obstructions (e.g. fences, wall or planters) should add a 0.5m allowance for improved manoeuvrability into and out of the bay as well as easier entry and exit of people to and from the vehicle. The proposed configuration would not meet this additional space requirement therefore falls short of the updated minimum standards as defined in Essex Parking Guidance 2024.

Standard of Accommodation

The proposal would exceed the National Described Space Standards for two 4 bed-6-person dwellings where occupants would enjoy a good level of amenity.

Living Conditions

Sufficient separation is retained between the neighbouring building at no.57 to avoid the terracing effect. As such, it is not considered that there would be any material harm to their living conditions, in terms of loss of light, overshadowing, loss of privacy or loss of outlook.

Habitats Regulations Assessment and Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (EFSAC)

In accordance with Policy DM2 of the Local Plan, the Council will expect all relevant development proposals to assist in the conservation and enhancement of the biodiversity, character, appearance and landscape setting of Epping Forest and the Lee Valley. The Council will expect all relevant development proposals to ensure that there is no adverse effect on the site integrity of the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation and the Lee Valley Special Protection Area.

The proposal provides a TRICS analysis to ascertain AADT levels associated with the proposed development however the rationale of the report concerns highway safety rather than impact of air pollution on the EFSAC. It does however confirm an increase of vehicle trips overall. As will all previous applications for this development, the submission contains inadequate identification of the impact from recreational pressure from the proposed development on the likely impact on the integrity of the EFSAC.

With the site increasing from a 3-bedroom 5-person capacity to two x 4-bedroom 6-person capacity, results in a net increase of 7 people located within 3 kilometres of the Zone of Influence of the EFSAC, this net increase in people is considered highly likely to result in additional recreational pressure on the EFSAC.

The application contains insufficient first stage screening information to assess whether the proposal meets the requirements of the Habitat Regulations 2017 for the competent authority to carry out an assessment. Natural England object to the application on the same basis.

Ecological impact

The site is not a roosting site for bats but further surveys may be required. The proposed ecological measures are proportionate to the size, scale and location of the proposed development.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Unless exempt, the UK Environment Act 2021 introduced mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) for developments, requiring a 10% increase in biodiversity after development compared to the pre-development baseline. BNG became a legal requirement in England under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021).

The proposal suggests a net gain in habitat biodiversity of 26.36% and a net change in hedgerow biodiversity of 1334.56%. The Ecology Officer was satisfied that baseline habitat data was calculated appropriately and that there is sufficient ecological information available for determination of this application subject to conditions/legal agreement.

Housing Need

The Epping Forest District Local Plan 2011–2033 was adopted on the 06 March 2023. As agreed by the Local Plan Inspector, when considered against the stepped trajectory the latest 5-year housing land supply, including a 20% buffer, stands at 6+years. Therefore, the plan makes sufficient provision for housing over the plan period and takes a practical and sound approach towards housing delivery and the housing trajectory. There is adequate evidence to indicate that a 5-year supply of housing will be maintained. The plan delivers an appropriate provision for affordable housing, older people, specialist housing, Gypsy and Traveller accommodation and accessible homes to meet the identified needs of different groups.

As such, the Council can demonstrate a five-year supply of land for housing and therefore the 'tilted balance' as set out in paragraph 11 of the NPPF is not engaged.

Conclusion

For the reasons set out above, having regard to the matters raised, it is recommended that planning permission be refused.