

## COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

ITEM NO. 13

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 30 May 2018

**Ward:** Minster

**App No.:** 171740/FUL

**Site Address:** 62-79 Armadale Court, Reading

**Proposal:** Extension of existing flat block with two additional storeys to accommodate 12 new apartments and provision of lift.

**Applicant:** Ulterra Limited

**Date valid:** 17 November 2017

**13 Week Date:** 1 June 2018 (agreed extension)

**26 Week Date:** 18 May 2018

### RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE Full Planning Permission for the following reasons:

1. The proposed development by reason of its excessive scale and incongruous proportions would appear as an inappropriate and unsympathetic development that would detract from the appearance of the street scene, and the spacious character of the area. The proposal would therefore be contrary to Policies CS7 and CS15 of the Reading Borough LDF Core Strategy 2008 (altered 2015), and guidance in the NPPF and PPG.

2. The development as proposed would result in harm to trees of amenity value and subject to a Tree Preservation Order, for the following reasons:

i) It has not been demonstrated that the encroachment of parking spaces into the Root Protection Areas of the adjacent trees can be achieved without harm to the rooting environment and future health of the trees.

ii) Parking and associated pedestrian movements would result in soil compaction within the rooting environment of the trees, harmful to their future health.

iii) Parking spaces to be introduced beneath the canopy of the trees would result in a likely pressure to prune or fell in the future, due to nuisance arising from natural tree debris including falling twigs, leaves, bird droppings and aphid honeydew.

As such the proposal would result in harm to the visual amenity and environmental quality of the site and surrounding area, contrary to Policies CS38 and CS7 of the Reading Borough LDF Core Strategy 2008 (altered 2015).

3. The car park layout does not comply with the Local Planning Authority's standards in respect of vehicle parking. This could result in on-street parking on Armadale Court, adversely affecting road safety and the flow of traffic, and in conflict with Policy CS24 of the Reading Borough LDF Core Strategy 2008 (altered 2015) and Policy DM12 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012 (altered 2015).

4. In the absence of a completed legal agreement to secure an acceptable financial contribution to go towards providing Affordable Housing elsewhere in the Borough, the proposal fails to contribute adequately to the housing needs of Reading Borough and the need to provide sustainable and inclusive mixed and balanced communities. As such the proposal is contrary to Policy CS16 of the Reading Borough LDF Core Strategy 2008 (altered 2015) and Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document 2013.

5. In the absence of a completed legal agreement to secure a suitable Employment, Skills and Training Plan, or appropriate alternative financial contribution to allow for employment, skills and training provision, the proposal fails to contribute adequately to the employment skills and training needs of Reading Borough. As such the proposal is contrary Policy CS3 and CS9 of the Reading Borough LDF Core Strategy 2008 (altered 2015), Policy DM3 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012 (altered 2015) and the Employment Skills and Training Supplementary Planning Document 2013.

#### Informatives

1. Positive and Proactive Approach
2. Refused drawings

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The application site (0.4ha approximately) is a three storey block of 18 flats and dates from the early 1980's. The building is set in spacious grounds with its own private parking area, including a garage court. The site has pedestrian and vehicular access from Armadale Court, which leads on to Westcote Road to the north and pedestrian access from Bath Road to the south.
- 1.2 A large grassed area lies between the building and Bath Road, providing amenity space for occupants of the development. A spacious landscaped area also exists to the north with the parking area, garage court and vehicular access from Armadale Court beyond. The site is screened from the adjoining developments to the east and west and the Bath Road to the south by mature trees and landscaping including trees protected by a Tree Preservation Order (36/03).
- 1.3 The wider area is largely residential, including a number of large flatted developments, including the 6 storey Prior Court to the south side of Bath Road. The character is generally spacious with blocks set within generous landscaped plots.
- 1.4 The site has been the subject of a number of planning applications and appeals relating to additional development, including the erection of additional floors onto the existing flat block. In 2004, planning permission was granted for 4 flats on one additional storey. In 2004 and again in 2005 applications for development on the garages were refused and dismissed at appeal, and a further application was withdrawn in 2008. In 2009 an application for 8 flats in two additional storeys was withdrawn, and then resubmitted in 2010 (10/00033/FUL), where it was refused planning permission, but was subsequently allowed on appeal. A scheme based on the appeal decision was subsequently approved under reference



## 2. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 04/00283/FUL. Erection of four 2-bedroom penthouses on roof of existing building and extension of staircase tower to provide a lift. Approved subject to a S106 agreement 06.08.2004.
- 04/01483/FUL. Erection of 10 town houses over 24 parking spaces; 8 further spaces; new landscaping of whole site. Refused 22.03.2005 and Appeal Dismissed 06.03.2006.
- 05/00698/FUL. Erection of 4 no. 2-bed flats over existing garages; demolition of 1 garage. Refused 18.08.2005 and Appeal Dismissed 06.03.2006.
- 08/00784/FUL. Erection of 4 flats over 26 parking spaces. Withdrawn. 11.09.2008.
- 09/00491/FUL. Erection of 6 x 2 bedroom flats and 2 x 3 bedroom flats above the existing building. Withdrawn. 28.05.2009.
- 09/01357/PREAPP. Pre-application advice for proposed roof design for new development. Observations sent. 14.09.2009.
- 09/01747/PREAPP. Pre-application advice for 8 new flats on the existing building. Observations sent. 04.11.2009.
- 10/00033/FUL. Erection of 6 x 2 bedroom flats and 2 x 3 bedroom flats above the existing building (Resubmission of application 09/00491/FUL). Refused 01/04/2010. Appeal allowed 21/10/2013.
- 131528/FUL - Erection of 6 x 2 bedroom flats and 2 x 3 bedroom flats above the existing building (Resubmission of application 09/00491/FUL) - Approved Planning Applications Committee 15/1/2014
- 161483/PRE - erection of 24 new apartments - Observations sent 10/10/2016
- 170745/PRE - Erection of 6 new apartments. Additional floor above the 12 shown under pre-app 161483 (18 total). Observations sent 25/5/2017

## 3. PROPOSALS

- 3.1 Full planning permission is sought for an additional two full storeys of accommodation with pitched roof above, to provide eight 2-bed and four 1-bed flats.
- 3.2 The proposal involves 803.4 square metres of new floorspace (GIA). This would result in a basic Community Infrastructure Levy charge of £118,332.80 [one hundred and eighteen thousand, three hundred and thirty two pounds and eighty pence], based on the current 2018 rate of £147.29 per square metre. This is subject to the usual exceptions and reliefs that exist in the CIL Regulations. This gives an indication of the likely CIL outcomes but is provided without prejudice to further examination of the CIL application by the Council.

### *Drawings*

E1 Rev. D Existing Site Plan

E2 Rev. D Existing Elevations North and South

E3 Rev. D Existing Cross Sections

R1 Rev.D Proposed South Elevation (received 24 April 2018)

R2 Rev.D Proposed North Elevation (received 24 April 2018)

R3 Rev.D Proposed West Elevation (received 17 January 2018)

R4 Rev.D Proposed East Elevation (received 17 January 2018)

R5 Rev.D Proposed Site Plan (received 27 March 2018)

R6 Rev.D Proposed Third and Fourth Floor (received 17 January 2018)

R7 Rev.D Proposed Roof Plan (received 17 January 2018)

R8 Rev.D Proposed Cross Sections (received 17 January 2018)

## Documents

Planning, Design and Access Statement received 6 October 2017  
Bat Survey  
3D Image

### 4. CONSULTATIONS

#### RBC Transport

- 4.1 "The comments relate to the Proposed Site Plan (Drawing R5 Rev D).
- 4.2 The proposed development consists of the extension of the existing flat block with two additional storeys to accommodate 12 new apartments and provision of lift. This site has been subject to a number of planning applications and considered at appeal (Appeal references APP/05/00056/REF and APP/E0345/A/10/2128400).
- 4.3 The site currently comprises of 18 two-bedroom apartments with 18 garages and a parking area comprising of 12 parking spaces including the 2 spaces available at the western end of the garage blocks. The principle of a residential development of additional storeys on top of the existing building was established at appeal APP/E0345/A/10/2128400. The Inspector stated the following points in respect of the Highway matters;
- 4.4 *"In my experience garages are often used for storage rather than parking. I can therefore understand the Council's reasoning on this point. However, it is a key objective of Government policy to reduce reliance on the private car in the interest of addressing climate change. It is recognised that the availability of car parking can influence travel choices and, accordingly, the Council's parking standards are expressed in terms of maximum provision. In this regard, the site is in a sustainable location within reasonable walking and cycling distance of a range of facilities and I saw that it is on a bus route. Further, Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 Transport states that local authorities should not require developers to provide more spaces than they themselves wish, other than in exceptional circumstances. I am not aware of any exceptional circumstances which could not be resolved through the introduction or enforcement of on-street parking controls and I have not been provided with any evidence to suggest that the level of traffic generation or parking provision would result in significant implications for highway safety. I note that the Council's Transport Strategy Department has raised no objection to the proposal. In that there would be overprovision for car parking to the extent of three spaces the proposal would conflict with local and national sustainability objectives. However, I do not consider that this matter is significant in the context of the wider availability of car parking in the area. Overall, I conclude on the issue of highway safety that no material harm would result from the development."*
- 4.5 The Inspector noted that garages are often used for storage rather than parking. He also noted that the site is in a sustainable location within reasonable walking and cycling distance of a range of facilities and that he was not provided with any evidence to suggest that the level of traffic generation or parking provision would result in significant implications for highway safety. My comments below go on to address these points in respect of this application.

- 4.6 The site is situated within Zone 2 of the Council's adopted Parking Standards and Design Supplementary Planning Document. This area is well served by public transport and is within 2 kilometres walking distance of Reading Town Centre and Reading Railway Station. In accordance with the Council's adopted parking standards, the 1 and 2-bedroom flats would both require a provision of 1 space per flat plus 1 space per 10 flats for visitor parking. Therefore, the existing 18 two-bedroom apartments would require 20 spaces (including 2 visitor parking), and the proposed development would require 13 parking spaces (including 1 visitor parking).
- 4.7 The provision of 1 space per unit is also required when assessed against the car ownership levels for the area which equates to 1.07 cars per unit, which in its own right would require a provision of 13 spaces without any visitor parking being sought. An extract of the Car Ownership can be found below:

<b>KS404EW - Car or van availability</b>		
ONS Crown Copyright Reserved [from Nomis on 4 January 2018]		
population	All households; All cars or vans	
units	Households	
date	2011	
rural urban	Total	
<b>Cars</b>	<b>E00082792</b>	
All categories: Car or van availability	158	
No cars or vans in household	40	
1 car or van in household	75	
2 cars or vans in household	39	
3 cars or vans in household	2	
4 or more cars or vans in household	2	
sum of all cars or vans in the area	169	
<b>Car Ownership Level</b>	<b>1.07</b>	

- 4.8 The garage dimensions do not comply with the Council's adopted Parking standards and are unlikely to be used for vehicle parking as previously noted by the Inspector at appeal. The Council's adopted standards recommend that the internal dimensions are 7000mm long x 3000mm wide to allow easy access to/from the vehicle. As the existing garages are significantly below the acceptable dimensions, the applicant was requested (at pre-application stage) to undertake a survey to establish the current use of the garages for vehicle parking and to establish the current take up of parking spaces within the development which the applicant has not undertaken.
- 4.9 In the absence of any parking surveys, site visits have been undertaken on 20th December 2017 at 7pm to establish the current take up of spaces within the site and the availability of on-street parking on Armadale Court. At the time of the site visit, only 1 parking space was available within the site within the marked bays, 2 vehicles were parked within the site outside of marked bays (within vegetation) and only 2 on-street parking spaces were available along the entire length of Armadale Court. Additional vehicles were observed parking on junctions and within the turning head. A selection of the photographic evidence can be found below.







- 4.10 It is noted that the merits of the case were fully considered at both previous appeals against current government policy at the time. However, it should be noted that local and national planning policy has changed since the last appeal. Therefore, this application has been assessed against the current government policies.
- 4.11 The National Planning Practice Guidance , March 2014 (NPPG) has shifted the requirements away from parking restraint and states *“Maximum parking standards can lead to poor quality development and congested streets, local planning authorities should seek to ensure parking provision is appropriate to the needs of the development and not reduced below a level that could be considered reasonable.”*
- 4.12 The Ministerial Statement from March 2015 updated paragraph 39 of the National Planning Policy Framework to state that *“Local planning authorities should only impose local parking standards for residential and non-residential development where there is clear and compelling justification that it is necessary to manage their local road network”*. As has been highlighted from the surveys, the existing Highway Network is already heavily congested with on street parking. Therefore, there is a clear requirement for the Highway Authority to manage the local road network to ensure that the existing parking situation is not worsened.
- 4.13 It is also important to note the reasoning for updating paragraph 39 of the NPPF which is clarified within the ministerial statement itself which states:
- “The imposition of maximum parking standards under the last administration lead to blocked and congested streets and pavement parking. Arbitrarily restricting new off-street parking spaces does not reduce car use, it just leads to parking misery. It is for this reason that the government abolished national maximum parking standards in 2011”*.
- 4.14 It is therefore apparent that the changes to national policy were implemented to reduce on street parking which could ‘lead to blocked and congested streets and



pavement parking'. Developments are therefore required to provide a parking provision that does not result in an overspill onto the surrounding Highway Network and the proposed development cannot achieve this.

- 4.15 The car ownership levels for the area demonstrate that the provision of 1 space per unit plus 1 visitor parking space is appropriate to the needs of the development. The agent has stated that *"We are not proposing to redevelop the existing flats or affect their existing arrangements. We therefore do not agree with the approach of applying new standards retrospectively to an existing development, such an approach is unreasonable."* However, it is clear that the existing flats currently utilize the whole area of parking and the demand for parking spaces exceeds the existing provision. As previously stated, vehicles were observed parking on access points, junctions and within the turning head during site visits. Therefore, the development reduces the parking provision below a level that is considered reasonable which is likely to lead to an unacceptable increase in competition for on-street parking spaces in an area that is already heavily congestion with parking.
- 4.16 It is evident that there are existing parking problems and highway safety concerns in Armadale Court given that 'No Waiting' restrictions (Double Yellow Lines) were introduced in Summer 2015. The introduction of 'No Waiting' restrictions on Armadale Court formed part of the 2014B Waiting Restriction Review Programme and was put forward in response to resident concerns of double parking on Armadale Court, which often caused obstruction to the footway and was a health and safety risk to pedestrians. There were no objections to this proposal and Officers had approval to implement the restriction as advertised.
- 4.17 Given that local and national planning policy has changed since the last appeal, the Highway Authority contend that the existing parking provision within the site cannot meet the required level of on-site parking for the development, which would lead to an unacceptable increase in competition for on-street parking spaces in an area that is already heavily congestion with parking. Therefore, in my opinion the development does not comply with current local and national planning policies.
- 4.18 On matters of detail, the amended site plan (Drawing R5 Rev D) illustrates 2 parking spaces on either side of the end garages (west) (spaces 26-27 & 28-29). Space no. 26 does not comply with the Council's standard dimensions and abuts established landscaping. Therefore, this space is likely to be unusable for standard sized vehicles.
- 4.19 A bin storage area has also been relocated in the middle of the parking and turning area which is unacceptable. The development must be able to accommodate turning movements of small delivery vehicles such as supermarket/internet shopping delivery vans. The location of the bin storage should be addressed as this may result in a further reduction of parking spaces within the site if a suitable alternative location cannot be achieved.
- 4.20 In view of the above, it is recommended that this application is refused.

Recommended refusal reason:

*"The layout does not comply with the Local Planning Authority's standards in respect of vehicle parking. This could result in on-street parking on Armadale Court, adversely affecting road safety and the flow of traffic, and in conflict*

*with Core Strategy Policy CS24 and Sites and Detailed Policies document Policy DM12."*

#### **RBC Waste Operations**

- 4.21 Raise concerns that if the parking situation worsens, access to the bin stores will become troublesome.
- 4.22 A site visit on 9 May 2018 revealed that cars were parked 'everywhere', making the turning circle for the waste collection vehicle very tight, If any more vehicles are parked waste collection vehicles would not be able to turn.
- 4.23 If the 12 flats are added bin storage would be required to accommodate 3 no. 1100 litre general waste and 6 no. 1100 litre recycling bins, the current bin store only holds an estimated 6 bins, so they would not have sufficient capacity for the recycling waste. [officer note: the revised plans show stores accommodating 15 no. 1100 litre bins]

#### **Lead Flood Authority (RBC Highways)**

- 4.24 No objection received.

#### **RBC Natural Environment (Trees) (NE)**

- 4.25 With regard to the additional 2 spaces on the west end of the garages the default position should be 'no work' within an RPA; only if absolutely necessary do we then look at how it could be done.
- 4.26 The submitted tree report sets out the principles of the no-dig system to provide the parking space extension (into the soft landscaping) but does not provide the specific detail. For example a section detail through of the final double spaces so it can be seen how the proposal will marry with the existing, re-graded spaces. This requirement should also show the distance between the edge of the extended hard surfacing and adjacent trees
- 4.27 In addition to the physical works to extend the car park westwards, we must account for the possibility that the drivers will seek to access their vehicles from the west side, potentially walking in the soft landscape zone. This will result in compaction within the RPA of the trees and the need to prune lower vegetation. This has not been addressed.
- 4.28 If the extension of the hard surfacing is shown to be feasible and the above points are addressed, concerns remain over the future impacts on the health of the trees. Parking spaces will be introduced directly under mature TPO trees with the nuisance factors associated with this, e.g. branch/twig/leaf fall & bird droppings and given that two of the trees are Limes, sticky honeydew will also be an issue. This is highly likely to lead to pressure to prune the trees - hence Natural Environment do not agree with the suggestion in paragraph 1.7 of the submitted tree report which concludes that there are no foreseen future pressures on the trees.
- 4.29 The removal of T24 Ash has long been agreed, subject to a replacement (which needs to be secured). NE note that the hedges are to be removed which you previously expressed concern about and no replacement planting for these has been suggested.

#### **RBC Environmental Protection**

- 4.30 A noise assessment has not been submitted and the proposed development is near a busy road, a condition is recommended requiring a noise assessment to be submitted prior to commencement of development and any approved mitigation measures implemented prior to occupation to show that recommended noise levels.
- 4.31 The noise assessment will need to identify the external noise levels impacting on the proposed site.
- 4.32 An informative is recommended advising that in order to minimise disturbance to residents of other flats in the building, the residential accommodation must be designed and constructed so as to achieve the insulation requirements set out in Building Regulations Approved Document E.
- 4.33 The proposed development is located within an air quality management area and introduces new exposure / receptors. An assessment and/or mitigation measures should be provided as part of the application.
- 4.34 The applicant will need to demonstrate sufficient mitigation measures are implemented to protect the residents from the effects of poor air quality. A condition is recommended to secure suitable ventilation measures for the new flats.

#### **RBC Ecologist**

- 4.35 The bat survey report (Arbtech, September 2017) has been undertaken to an appropriate standard and concludes that the risk of bats being affected by the proposals is minimal.
- 4.36 As such, it is unlikely that bats or other protected species will be adversely affected by the proposals and there are no ecology related objections to this application.

#### **RBC Valuation Department**

- 4.37 Advise that despite a detailed assessment there remains some ambiguity regarding the costs and values of the proposed development. Based on current reasonable assumptions the proposal would return a surplus profit, part of which should be secured as a contribution towards Affordable Housing.

#### **Southern Gas Networks**

- 4.38 No comment received. Any comments received prior to Committee will be reported in an Update report.

#### **SSE Power Distribution**

- 4.39 No comment received. Any comments received prior to Committee will be reported in an Update report.

#### **Thames Water Utilities**

- 4.40 No comment received. Any comments received prior to Committee will be reported in an Update report.

#### **Public Consultation**

- 4.41 Neighbours adjoining the site were initially consulted by letter and again in February in response to revised plans being received.

4.42 A site notice was displayed.

4.43 26 Representations have been received as follows:

- Double yellow lines put in place by Reading Borough Council are continually ignored leading to congestion
- Parking and access for emergency vehicles is already a major problem. Residents already have to park at the top of the road when they live at the bottom end.
- Access for waste collection vehicles is obstructed by parked cars.
- The building works would be disruptive and inhumane to elderly occupiers and families with young children. Noise, dirt, traffic movements.
- Access for heavy lorries and cranes into Armadale Court will be very difficult on such a narrow road.
- Increased height will affect TV signal.
- Existing drains are inadequate.
- The proposal would destroy the light, attractive, campus-like ethos of the present site, which currently makes it one of the more sought-after developments in West Reading.
- It is not in keeping with the height of surrounding properties and is aesthetically incorrect for the area.
- The proposed flats will have a detrimental effect on the light and privacy of flats facing the structure.
- There is one garage for each current owner

## 5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

5.1 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'.

5.2 **National**  
National Planning Policy Framework  
National Planning Practice Guidance

5.3 **Reading Borough Local Development Framework:  
Core Strategy (2008) (Altered 2015)**  
CS1 Sustainable Construction and Design  
CS2 Waste Minimisation  
CS3 Social Inclusion and Diversity  
CS4 Accessibility and Intensity of Development  
CS5 Inclusive Access  
CS7 Design and the Public Realm

- CS9 Infrastructure, Services, Resources and Amenities
- CS14 Provision of Housing
- CS15 Location, Accessibility, Density and Housing Mix
- CS20 Implementation of Reading Transport Strategy
- CS22 Transport Assessments
- CS23 Sustainable Travel and Travel Plans
- CS24 Car/Cycle Parking
- CS29 Provision of Open Space
- CS30 Access to Open Space
- CS34 Pollution and Water Resources
- CS35 Flooding
- CS36 Biodiversity and Geology
- CS38 Trees, Hedges and Woodlands

#### 5.4 Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012) (Altered 2015)

- SD1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- DM1 Adaption to Climate Change
- DM2 Decentralised Energy
- DM3 Infrastructure Planning
- DM4 Safeguarding Amenity
- DM5 Housing Mix
- DM6 Affordable Housing
- DM10 Private and Communal Outdoor Space
- DM12 Access, Traffic and Highway-related Matters
- DM18 Tree Planting
- DM19 Air Quality

#### 5.5 Supplementary Planning Documents

- Sustainable Design and Construction (2011)
- Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)
- Employment Skills and Training (2013)
- Affordable Housing (2013)

## 6. APPRAISAL

### i) Character

- 6.1 The building is closely related to the wider group of blocks of flats that make up Armadale Court. The building is heavily screened from Bath Road by vegetation, resulting in the main views of the building being from the north within the Armadale Court streetscene. A small pedestrian access exists from Bath Road otherwise all other approaches to the site are via Armadale Court. It is therefore considered that the block is more strongly associated in both visual and functional terms with Armadale Court than Bath Road.
- 6.2 The Inspector, in allowing appeal reference APP/E0345/A/10/2128400 in September 2010, noted that the wider context included flats, care homes, a hospital and a public house and allowed that particular design as it was found to be "*respectful of the modest and somewhat restrained design of the existing building*". The appeal scheme would have resulted in a 13.5 metre tall building with a visually recessive Mansard Roof. A similar scheme was subsequently approved at 14 metres tall under 131528/FUL. This approach served to minimise the scale of the extensions and their apparent bulk within the streetscene.



- 6.3 By comparison, the current proposal measures 16.75 metres in height, which is significantly taller than previously approved. The apparent massing would also increase markedly with the Mansard roof detail replaced by a substantial two full storeys of accommodation, with a pitched roof above. The proportions and detailing of the proposal would further add to the apparent bulk of the proposal and it is considered that the disproportionately tall top storey, large patio doors, balcony railings and heavy cornice detailing would result in a 'top-heavy' appearance which would accentuate the mass of the new extensions. The proposal is no longer considered to respect the 'restrained' design of the existing building' and would result in the building displaying an overdeveloped character overall.
- 6.4 The Appeal Inspector for appeal 2128400 found that the "*Lawns to the north and south provide a spacious foil to the mass of the building.*" Within this context it is considered that the proposed removal of part of the existing hedging between the car park and the northern lawned amenity area and the encroachment of bin and bicycle store buildings into this space would harm the visual qualities of this space and add to the overdeveloped character identified above.
- 6.5 On the basis of the above assessment, the proposal is considered to be contrary to Policy CS7 which requires all development to be of "*high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located*". This includes the "*height and massing*" of the development and its "*architectural detail and materials*". The policy seeks to ensure that developments "*respond positively to their local context and create or reinforce local character and distinctiveness*".

**ii) Trees and Landscaping**

- 6.6 The detailed comments of the Council's Natural Environment Officer are set out in Section 4 above. It is considered that proposed extensions to the hard paved parking area would harm the future health of the adjacent protected trees. It has not been demonstrated that it is feasible to provide the proposed 'no-dig' surface and there are concerns that persons using the car parking spaces would compact the soil around the trees as they enter and exit their vehicles. In addition it is considered that there would be a future pressure to prune or fell the trees due to natural debris from the trees falling on cars below and causing a nuisance. As such the proposals would be harmful to protected trees and are considered to be contrary to Policies CS7, CS38 and DM18 and recommended for refusal on that basis.

**iii) Transport and Access**

- 6.7 The comments of the Council's Transport section are set out in detail in section 4 above. It is considered that these form an appropriate assessment of the parking and access aspects of the proposals and that the proposal would make inadequate provision for parking within the site and would add to the already significant pressure on on-street parking in Armadale Court. The concerns raised by Waste Operations in respect of excess parking blocking access for refuse collection add further weight to these concerns. On this basis it is considered that the proposals are contrary to Policies CS20, CS24, DM12 and the Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011).

**iv) Affordable Housing**

- 6.8 Policy DM6 requires all developments of 10-14 dwellings to provide 30% of the total number of dwellings in the form of Affordable Housing to meet the needs of the area, as defined in a housing needs assessment.

6.9 In accordance national policy, the financial viability of the scheme is a consideration when assessing the appropriate amount of Affordable Housing within a scheme. Policy DM6 reflects this by stating:

*"In all cases where proposals fall short of the policy targets as a result of viability considerations, an open-book approach will be taken and the onus will be on the developer/landowner to clearly demonstrate the circumstances justifying a lower affordable housing contribution."*

6.10 The applicant has submitted a viability assessment suggesting that the scheme is not capable of providing any Affordable Housing. This clearly falls far short of policy requirements. The extent to which this is justified by financial viability considerations has been subject of detailed consideration by the Council's viability consultants and the Council's Valuer.

6.11 Valuer advice received is that despite a detailed assessment there remains some ambiguity regarding the costs and values of the proposed development. Based on current reasonable assumptions the proposal would be expected to return a surplus profit, part of which should be secured as a contribution towards Affordable Housing. The applicant has failed to demonstrate otherwise.

6.12 The proposals therefore fail to demonstrate that the proposal would make an adequate contribution towards meeting the housing needs of the Borough and the policy aims of achieving sustainable and inclusive mixed and balanced communities and is contrary to Policy DM6 on this basis.

**v) Residential Amenity**

6.13 The proposed flats would be of a reasonable size and would all have a reasonable outlook and receive adequate daylight.

6.14 The construction of the flats would be likely to result in disruption to existing occupiers below. Whilst it would not be appropriate to refuse planning permission on these grounds, it would be reasonable to control hours of construction and to some extent the management of the construction process by condition.

6.15 A reasonable amount of garden area would remain to serve the existing and proposed flats.

6.16 The proposals are therefore considered to be in accordance with Policies DM4, DM10 and CS34 in respect of the amenity of existing and future occupiers.

**vi) Ecology**

6.17 The comments of the Council's Ecologist are set out in section 4 above. It is considered that the proposal would be acceptable in respect of protected species on this basis.

6.18 The proposals are therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy CS36.

**vii) Drainage**

6.19 The applicant has confirmed that the proposal does not result in an increase in hard surfacing, either in the form of additional parking areas or roofscape, and therefore no additional surface water mitigation is proposed.

6.20 The Lead Flood Authority has not objected to the proposals and on balance it is considered that the scheme is acceptable in respect of surface water and

groundwater flooding and water quality impacts on the basis that the existing situation would not be worsened. As such it is considered that the proposals comply with national policy and policies CS1 and CS35 of the Core Strategy and Policy DM1 of the Sites and Detailed Policy Document.

**viii) Employment Skills and Training**

- 6.21 The proposal is classified as a Major development and as such the requirements of the Employment Skills and Training SPD (2013) apply.
- 6.22 A detailed plan, or any appropriate financial contribution in lieu of a plan, are required for the Construction Phase based on the SPD requirements and would need to be secured by S106 agreement. The proposals are for Class C3 dwellings and therefore an 'End User Phase' plan is not appropriate.
- 6.23 The financial contribution sought would be £2,009 [two thousand and nine pounds] based on the proposed floorspace of approximately 803.4 sqm, in accordance with the SPD formula  $\text{£2,500} \times \text{Gross internal floor area of scheme (m}^2\text{)} / 1000\text{m}^2$
- 6.24 Whilst it is accepted that the applicant is likely to agree to this being secured by S106 agreement, this should form a reason for refusal as a S106 agreement has not been completed at this stage.

**ix) Equality**

- 6.25 In determining this application the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, or sexual orientation. It is considered that there is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the current application) that the protected groups would have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application.

**7. CONCLUSION**

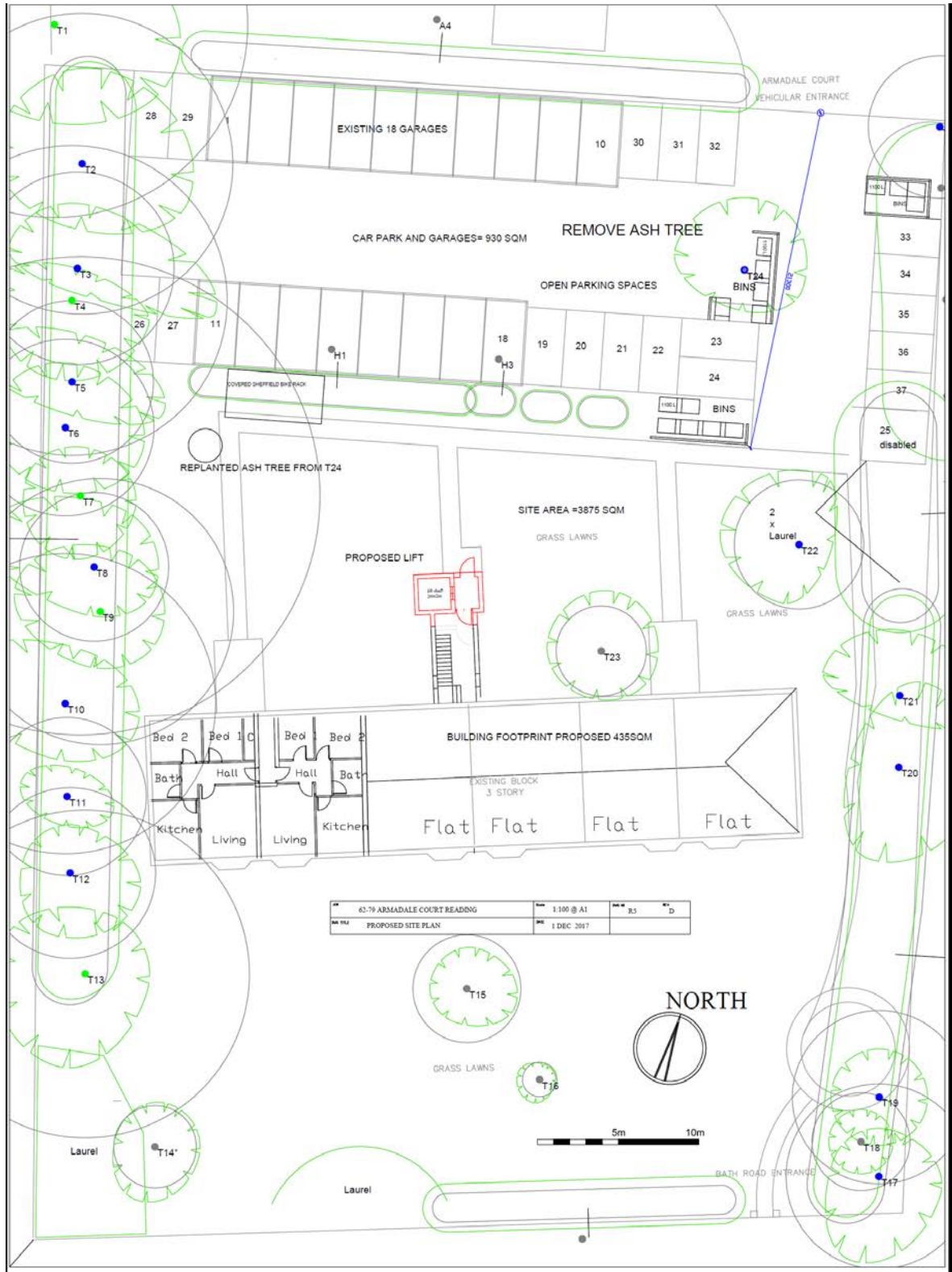
- 7.1 The proposals are considered to be harmful to the character of the area and the future health of trees of amenity value. The proposals make inadequate provision for the parking of vehicles within the site. The proposals fail to secure adequate contributions towards Affordable Housing and Employment, Skills and Training provision within the Borough. The application is recommended for refusal on this basis as set out in the above report.

Case Officer: Steve Vigar

# DRAWINGS

Selection only. Full details available to view at:

[http://planning.reading.gov.uk/fastweb\\_PL/welcome.asp](http://planning.reading.gov.uk/fastweb_PL/welcome.asp) (using ref. 171740)

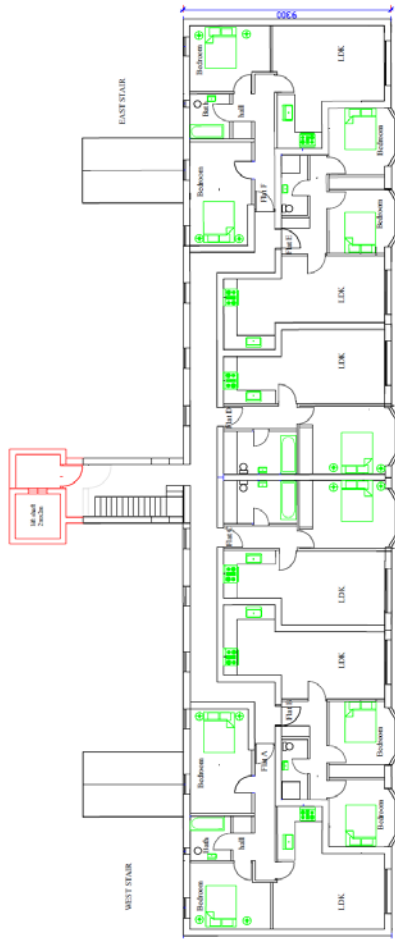


Proposed Site Layout Plan

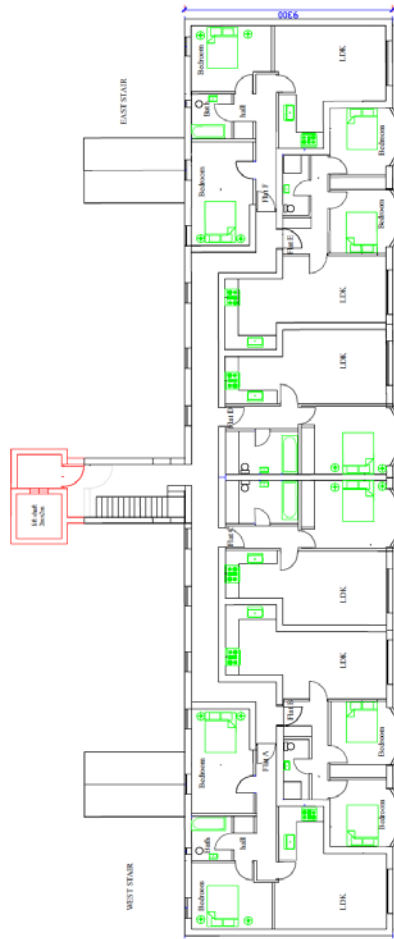




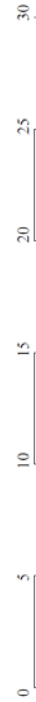
# Proposed Floorplans



PROPOSED THIRD FLOOR



PROPOSED FOURTH FLOOR



CD	62-79 ARMADALE COURT READING	Scale	1:100	DWG NO	R6	REV	- D
DWG TITLE	PROPOSED THIRD AND FOURTH FLOOR	DATE	1 DEC 2017				

## Site Photographs



View southwards towards site.



Garage Court/Car Park



Lawn to north of flats (parking area to left side of picture)