

To: Councillor Lovelock (Chair)
Councillors Leng, Carnell, Emberson, Ennis,
Gavin, Hornsby-Smith, Moore, Page,
Robinson, Rowland, Williams and Yeo

Direct ☎ : 0118 9372112

21 February 2023

Your contact is: **Nicky Simpson - Committee Services (nicky.simpson@reading.gov.uk)**

NOTICE OF MEETING - PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE 1 MARCH 2023

A meeting of the Planning Applications Committee will be held on Wednesday, 1 March 2023 at 6.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Bridge Street, Reading RG1 2LU. The Agenda for the meeting is set out below.

AGENDA	ACTION	WARDS AFFECTED	PAGE NO
1. MINUTES	-		9 - 14
2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	-		
3. QUESTIONS	-		
4. POTENTIAL SITE VISITS FOR COMMITTEE ITEMS	Decision	BOROUGHWIDE	15 - 18
5. PLANNING APPEALS	Information	BOROUGHWIDE	19 - 30
6. APPLICATIONS FOR PRIOR APPROVAL	Information	BOROUGHWIDE	31 - 36
7. STREET NAME ASSIGNMENT AT STATION HILL DEVELOPMENT	Decision	ABBHEY	37 - 40

PLANNING APPLICATIONS TO BE CONSIDERED

8. 221405/REG3 - LAND AT BATTLE STREET	Decision	ABBHEY	41 - 96
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	Proposal	Clearance and taking up of existing hardstanding and structures from the site, erection of seven buildings, up to four storeys in height, containing 49 affordable dwellings (Class C3 use), supported living accommodation (Class C2 residential institution use), and older persons day centre (Class E(f)), and associated roadways, car parking, open space and other infrastructure.		
	Recommendation	Permitted subject to Legal Agreement		
9.	221576/HOU - 4 DOWNSHIRE SQUARE	Decision	COLEY	97 - 108
	Proposal	The demolition of the single storey side extension, relocation of the dwelling rear door, creation of a new vehicular access and parking area to the north part of the site, with vehicular turntable, existing vehicular access blocked up, replacement low brick wall and piers with metal railings and central front gate to house, including external and landscaping works.		
	Recommendation	Application Permitted		
10.	221693/FUL - 63 ROWE COURT	Decision	NORCOT	109 - 144
	Proposal	Demolition of any remaining fire damaged structure and re-instatement of 63-86 Rowe Court to provide a four storey building, comprising of 24 studios/ one-bed, one person homes, associated car parking, cycle parking, refuse, amenity space and landscaping		
	Recommendation	Application Permitted		
11.	220922/FUL - 71-73 CAVERSHAM ROAD	Decision	THAMES	145 - 224
	Proposal	Partial demolition of former retail warehouse and erection of a mixed-use building comprising 29 residential units, retail floorspace (Use Class E(a)) at ground floor and associated car parking, cycle parking and landscaping (amended description).		
	Recommendation	Permitted subject to Legal Agreement		

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GUIDE TO PLANNING APPLICATIONS Agenda Annex

1. There are many different types of applications processed by the Planning Service and the following codes are used to abbreviate the more common types of permission sought:
 - FUL - Full detailed planning permission for development or change of use
 - OUT - Principal of developing a site or changing a use
 - REM - Detailed matters “reserved matters” - for permission following approval of an outline planning application.
 - HOU - Applications for works to domestic houses
 - ADV - Advertisement consent
 - APC - Approval of details required by planning conditions
 - VAR - Significant change to a planning permission previously granted
 - NMA - Insignificant change to a planning permission previously granted
 - ADJ - Consultation from neighbouring authority on application in their area
 - LBC - Works to or around a Listed Building
 - CLE - A certificate to confirm what the existing use of a property is
 - CLP - A certificate to confirm that a proposed use or development does not require planning permission to be applied for.
 - REG3 - Indicates that the application has been submitted by the Local Authority.

2. Officer reports often refer to a matter or situation as being “a material consideration”. The following list tries to explain what these might include:

Material planning considerations can include (but are not limited to):

- Overlooking/loss of privacy
- Loss of daylight/sunlight or overshadowing
- Scale and dominance
- Layout and density of buildings
- Appearance and design of development and materials proposed
- Disabled persons' access
- Highway safety
- Traffic and parking issues
- Drainage and flood risk
- Noise, dust, fumes etc
- Impact on character or appearance of area
- Effect on listed buildings and conservation areas
- Effect on trees and wildlife/nature conservation
- Impact on the community and other services
- Economic impact and sustainability
- Government policy
- Proposals in the Local Plan
- Previous planning decisions (including appeal decisions)
- Archaeology

There are also concerns that regulations or case law has established cannot be taken into account. These include:

- Who the applicant is/the applicant's background
- Loss of views
- Loss of property value
- Loss of trade or increased competition
- Strength or volume of local opposition
- Construction noise/disturbance during development
- Fears of damage to property
- Maintenance of property
- Boundary disputes, covenants or other property rights
- Rights of way and ownerships disputes over rights of way
- Personal circumstances

Glossary of usual terms

Affordable housing - Housing provided below market price to meet identified needs.

Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) - Area where air quality levels need to be managed.

Apartment-hotel - A use providing basic facilities for self-sufficient living with the amenities of a hotel. Generally classed as C1 (hotels) for planning purposes.

Article 4 Direction - A direction which can be made by the Council to remove normal permitted development rights.

BREEAM - A widely used means of reviewing and improving the environmental performance of generally commercial developments (industrial, retail etc).

Brownfield Land - previously developed land.

Brown roof - A roof surfaced with a broken substrate, e.g. broken bricks.

Building line - The general line along a street beyond which no buildings project.

Bulky goods - Large products requiring shopping trips to be made by car: e.g. DIY or furniture.

CIL - Community Infrastructure Levy. Local authorities in England and Wales levy a charge on new development to be spent on infrastructure to support the development of the area.

Classified Highway Network - The network of main roads, consisting of A, B and C roads.

Conservation Area - areas of special architectural or historic interest designated by the local authority. As designated heritage assets the preservation and enhancement of the area carries great weight in planning permission decisions.

Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) Competent Authority - The Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1999 (COMAH) and their amendments 2005, are the enforcing regulations within the United Kingdom. They are applicable to any establishment storing or otherwise handling large quantities of industrial chemicals of a hazardous nature. Types of establishments include chemical warehousing, chemical production facilities and some distributors.

Dormer Window - Located in the roof of a building, it projects or extends out through the roof, often providing space internally.

Dwelling - A single housing unit - a house, flat, maisonette etc.

Evening Economy A term for the business activities, particularly those used by the public, which take place in the evening such as pubs, clubs, restaurants and arts/cultural uses.

Flood Risk Assessment - A requirement at planning application stage to demonstrate how flood risk will be managed.

Flood Zones - The Environment Agency designates flood zones to reflect the differing risks of flooding. Flood Zone 1 is low probability, Flood Zone 2 is medium probability, Flood Zone 3a is high probability and Flood Zone 3b is functional floodplain.

Granny annexe - A self-contained area within a dwelling house/ the curtilage of a dwelling house but without all the facilities to be self contained and is therefore dependent on the main house for some functions. It will usually be occupied by a relative.

Green roof - A roof with vegetation on top of an impermeable membrane.

Gross floor area - Total floor area of the house, including all floors and garage, measured externally.

Hazardous Substances Consent - Consent required for the presence on, over, or under land of any hazardous substance in excess of controlled quantity.

Historic Parks and Gardens - Parks and gardens of special historic interest, designated by English Heritage.

Housing Association - An independent not-for-profit body that provides low-cost "affordable housing" to meet specific housing needs.

Infrastructure - The basic services and facilities needed for the smooth running of a community.

Lifetime Home - A home which is sufficiently adaptable to allow people to remain in the home despite changing circumstances such as age or disability.

Listed building - Buildings of special architectural or historic interest. Consent is required before works that might affect their character or appearance can be undertaken. They are divided into Grades I, II and II*, with I being of exceptional interest.

Local Plan - The main planning document for a District or Borough.

Luminance - A measure of the luminous intensity of light, usually measured in candelas per square metre.

Major Landscape Feature - these are identified and protected in the Local Plan for being of local significance for their visual and amenity value

Public realm - the space between and within buildings that is publicly accessible, including streets, squares, forecourts, parks and open spaces whether publicly or privately owned.

Scheduled Ancient Monument - Specified nationally important archaeological sites.

Section 106 agreement - A legally binding agreement or obligation entered into by the local authority and a land developer over an issue related to a planning application, under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Sequential approach A method of considering and ranking the suitability of sites for development, so that one type of site is considered before another. Different sequential approaches are applied to different uses.

Sui Generis - A use not specifically defined in the use classes order (2004) - planning permission is always needed to change from a sui generis use.

Sustainable development - Development to improve quality of life and protect the environment in balance with the local economy, for now and future generations.

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS) - This term is taken to cover the whole range of sustainable approaches to surface water drainage management.

Tree Preservation Order (TPO) - An order made by a local planning authority in respect of trees and woodlands. The principal effect of a TPO is to prohibit the cutting down, uprooting, topping, lopping, wilful damage or wilful destruction of trees without the LPA's consent.

Guide to changes to the Use Classes Order in England.

Changes of use within the same class are not development.

Use	Use Class up to 31 August 2020	Use Class from 1 September 2020
Shop - not more than 280sqm mostly selling essential goods, including food and at least 1km from another similar shop	A1	F.2
Shop	A1	E
Financial & professional services (not medical)	A2	E
Café or restaurant	A3	E
Pub, wine bar or drinking establishment	A4	Sui generis
Takeaway	A5	Sui generis
Office other than a use within Class A2	B1a	E
Research & development of products or processes	B1b	E
For any industrial process (which can be carried out in any residential area without causing detriment to the amenity of the area)	B1c	E
Industrial	B2	B2
Storage or distribution	B8	B8
Hotels, boarding & guest houses	C1	C1
Residential institutions	C2	C2
Secure residential institutions	C2a	C2a
Dwelling houses	C3	C3
Small house in multiple occupation 3-6 residents	C4	C4
Clinics, health centres, creches, day nurseries, day centre	D1	E
Schools, non-residential education & training centres, museums, public libraries, public halls, exhibition halls, places of worship, law courts	D1	F.1
Cinemas, theatres, concert halls, bingo halls and dance halls	D2	Sui generis
Gymnasiums, indoor recreations not involving motorised vehicles or firearms	D2	E
Hall or meeting place for the principal use of the local community	D2	F.2
Indoor or outdoor swimming baths, skating rinks, and outdoor sports or recreations not involving motorised vehicles or firearms	D2	F.2

- Present:** Councillor Lovelock (Chair);
Councillors Leng (Vice-Chair), Carnell, Ennis, Gavin, Hornsby-Smith, Moore, Page, Robinson, Rowland, Williams and Yeo
- Apologies:** Councillor Emberson

RESOLVED ITEMS

82. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2023 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

83. POTENTIAL SITE VISITS FOR COMMITTEE ITEMS

The Executive Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a schedule of applications to be considered at future meetings of the Committee to enable Councillors to decide which sites, if any, they wished to visit prior to determining the relevant applications.

Resolved -

- (1) That any additional applications which the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services might consider appropriate, be the subject of accompanied site visits;
- (2) That the accompanied site visits previously agreed for Land at Battle Street and 205 Henley Road be held on 23 February and 23 March 2023 respectively.

84. PLANNING APPEALS

(i) New Appeals

The Executive Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a schedule showing that no notifications had been received from the Planning Inspectorate regarding planning appeals.

(ii) Appeals Recently Determined

The Executive Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted details of one decision that had been made by the Secretary of State, or by an Inspector appointed for the purpose, which were attached as Appendix 2 to the report.

(iii) Reports on Appeal Decisions

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 1 FEBRUARY 2023

The Executive Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report on the following appeal decision in Appendix 3:

220032 - "REAR OF", 24-26 WANTAGE ROAD

Construction of 2 semi detached houses at the rear of 24-26 Wantage Road with access from Wilson Road.

Written representations.

Appeal dismissed.

It was requested at the meeting that a report be submitted to the next meeting on the appeal decision relating to 111a Watlington Street (application 201650). Planning permission had been refused by the Committee at its meeting on 8 September 2021 (Minute 44 refers) and the appeal against this decision had been dismissed on 1 February 2023.

Resolved -

- (1) That it be noted that there were no new appeals;
- (2) That the outcome of the recently determined appeal, as set out in Appendix 2, be noted;
- (3) That the report on the appeal decision in Appendix 3 be noted;
- (4) That a report be submitted to the next meeting on the appeal decision relating to application 201650 for 111a Watlington Street.

85. APPLICATIONS FOR PRIOR APPROVAL

The Executive Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report giving details in Table 1 of nine prior approval applications received, and in Table 2 of six applications for prior approval decided, between 21 December 2022 and 20 January 2023.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

86. PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT - DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT SERVICE - APRIL - DECEMBER 2022 (Q1, Q2 & Q3)

The Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report providing information on how the Planning and Building Control Service had performed between April and December 2022 in terms of meeting government-set targets for dealing with planning applications, success at planning appeals and other measures. The report also included information on other types of applications handled and other services provided, including by Building Control.

Resolved -

That the report be noted.

87. 220028/FUL - 62 GOLDSMID ROAD

Proposed erection of a part single part two storey rear extension to dwelling, following demolition of the existing outbuilding and conversion to HMO.

Further to Minute 67 of the meeting held on 7 December 2022, the Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report on the above application. Attached to the report as an Appendix was the report on the application which had been submitted to the 7 December 2022 meeting, at which consideration of the application had been deferred for further information on the kitchen layout.

Comments and objections were received and considered.

Resolved -

That planning permission be granted for application 220028/FUL subject to the conditions and informatives set out in the report.

88. 221446/FUL - SOANE POINT, 6-8 MARKET PLACE

External works to existing building, including partial replacement of the existing facades fronting Market Place and Abbey Square alongside other external works to the building, set back single-storey extension above part of block fronting Market Place, part two part three storey extensions above other blocks, and conversion and alterations to ground floor reception and car parking area, together the works will deliver 38 new homes and (internal and external) residential amenity areas with associated car parking.

Further to Minute 79 of the meeting held on 11 January 2023, the Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report on the above application. Attached to the report at Appendices 1 and 2 were the report and update report considered at the meeting on 11 January 2023, where consideration of the application had been deferred for more information on materials, refuse collection arrangements, electric vehicle charging, photovoltaic panels, fire safety and cycle storage. An update report was tabled at the meeting which set out information on plans received, the proposed conditions relating to materials, and rooftop terraces. The update report recommended an additional materials condition to secure submission and approval of details of the materials for the Market Place elevation separately to the rest of the proposed development, and removal of condition no. 33 relating to hours of use for Roof Terraces.

Comments were received and considered.

Resolved -

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 1 FEBRUARY 2023

- (1) That the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services be authorised to grant full planning permission for application 221446/FUL, subject to incorporating the revised materials option for the treatment of the Market Place façade of the proposed development shown/referred to as 'Option 3', and to completion of a S106 legal agreement by 10 February 2023 (unless a later date be agreed by the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services) to secure the Heads of Terms set out in the report submitted to the meeting held on 11 January 2023;
- (2) That, in the event of the requirements set out not being met, the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Regulatory Services be authorised to refuse permission;
- (3) That planning permission be subject to the conditions and informatives recommended in the original report submitted to the meeting held on 11 January 2023, as amended by the update report submitted to the meeting held on 11 January 2023 and the update report to this meeting;
- (4) That the pre-commencement condition regarding materials for the Market Place elevation specify the requirement to provide an on-site viewing of large display panels for the proposed façade materials.

89. 221649/REG3 - 56 BAMBURGH CLOSE

Various external and internal refurbishments include the complete replacement of non-load bearing elevations including wall insulation/ cladding, windows, communal doors, gutters, fascias and soffits altering the external appearance of the building, and internally, the removal of internal walls within communal halls.

The Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report on the above application. An update report was tabled at the meeting which set out additional photos and revised plans. The update report also confirmed that no objections had been received during the consultation on the application.

Resolved -

That, pursuant to Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992, the carrying out of the development 221649/REG3 be authorised, subject to the conditions as recommended in the original report.

90. 221324/FUL - 97A-117 CAVERSHAM ROAD

Redevelopment of 97a-117 Caversham Road, and associated land to the rear, to provide 60 dwellings, including affordable housing, together with associated access, parking and landscaping.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 1 FEBRUARY 2023

The Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report on the above application.

Comments and objections were received and considered.

Resolved -

- (1) That the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services be authorised to grant full planning permission for application 221324/FUL, subject to completion of a S106 legal agreement by 1 April 2023 (unless a later date be agreed by the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services) to secure the Heads of Terms set out in the report, with the provision relating to a Traffic Regulation Order amended to make reference to potential changes to the access road junction treatment including a left turn only restriction;
- (2) That, in the event of the requirements set out not being met, the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services be authorised to refuse permission;
- (3) That planning permission be subject to the conditions and informatives recommended;
- (4) That the condition regarding retention/replacement of the northern boundary wall with the rear of properties on Swansea Road require a pre-commencement scheme to be submitted for approval in consultation with Ward Councillors.

(The meeting started at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.46 pm)

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**READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD
SERVICES**

TO:	PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE		
Date:	1st March 2023		
TITLE:	POTENTIAL SITE VISITS FOR COMMITTEE ITEMS		
SERVICE:	PLANNING	WARDS:	BOROUGH WIDE
AUTHOR:	Julie Williams	TEL:	0118 9372461
JOB TITLE:	Development Manager (Planning & Building Control)	E-MAIL:	Julie.williams@reading.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE AND SUMMARY OF REPORT

- 1.1 To identify those sites where, due to the sensitive or important nature of the proposals, Councillors are advised that a Site Visit would be appropriate before the matter is presented at Committee and to confirm how the visit will be arranged. A list of potential sites is appended to this report with an officer note added to say if recommended for a site visit or not.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That you note this report and confirm if the site(s) indicated on the appended list are to be visited by Councillors.
- 2.2 Confirm if there are any other sites Councillors consider necessary to visit before reaching a decision on an application.
- 2.3 Confirm if the site(s) agreed to be visited will be accompanied by officers or unaccompanied.

3. THE PROPOSAL

- 3.1 Appended to this report (appendix 1) is a list of applications received that may be presented to Committee for a decision in due course. Officers will normally indicate if a site would benefit from being visited to inform your decision making or Councillors may request that a site is visited.
- 3.2 A site visit will help if the impact of the proposed development is difficult to visualise from the plans and supporting material or where concerns raised by objectors need to be seen to be better understood.
- 3.3 While officers try to make site visit recommendations before a report comes to Committee sometimes, during consideration of an application, Councillors may request a deferral to allow a visit to be carried out to assist in reaching the correct decision.
- 3.4 Accompanied site visits are appropriate when access to private land is necessary to view the site and to appreciate matters raised. These visits will be arranged and attended by officers on the designated date and time. Applicants and objectors may observe the process and answer questions when asked but lobbying is discouraged. A site visit is an information gathering opportunity to inform decision making

3.5 Unaccompanied site visits are appropriate when the site can be easily seen from public areas and allow Councillors to visit when convenient to them. In these instances, the case officer will provide a briefing note on the application and the main issues to assist when visiting the site.

3.6 It is also possible for officers to suggest, or Councillors to request, a visit to a completed development to assess its quality.

3.7 Appendix 2 sets out a list of application sites that have been agreed to be visited at previous committee meetings but are still to be arranged.

4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

4.1 The processing of planning applications contributes to creating a sustainable environment with active communities and helping the economy within the Borough as identified as the themes of the Council's Corporate Plan:

1. Healthy Environments
2. Thriving Communities
3. Inclusive Economy

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

5.1 Statutory neighbour consultation takes place on planning applications.

6. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

6.1 Officers when assessing an application and when making a recommendation to the Committee, will have regard to its duties Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, to have due regard to the need to—

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 None arising from this report.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers). The Planning Service uses policies to encourage developers to build and use properties responsibly by making efficient use of land and using sustainable materials and building methods.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The cost of site visits is met through the normal planning service budget and Councillor costs.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Reading Borough Council Planning Code of Conduct.

APPENDIX 1

Potential Site Visit List:

Ward: Whitley

Application reference: 221936

Application type: Full Planning Approval

Site address: Bennet Court, Bennet Road, Reading, RG2 0QX

Proposal: Demolition of existing buildings and erection of one industrial building for flexible industrial processes (Use Class E (g)(iii)), general industrial (Class B2) or storage or distribution (Class B8) uses with ancillary offices, and all other ancillary and enabling works including altered access, on-site parking, landscaping, drainage, engineering and boundary treatment works.

Reason for Committee item: Major Application

APPENDIX 2

Previously Agreed Site Visits with date requested:

- 220189 - 205-213 Henley Road - agreed by PAC 1.6.22 to be accompanied - arranged for 23.03.23
- 220409 - Caversham Park - date pending
- 221405 - Land At, Battle Street - agreed by PAC 2.11.22 to be Accompanied - arranged for 23.02.23
- 221345 - Curzon Club, 362 Oxford Road - agreed by PAC 7.12.22 to be Unaccompanied

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READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE		
DATE:	1 st March 2023		
TITLE:	PLANNING APPEALS		
AUTHOR:	Julie Williams	TEL:	0118 9372461
JOB TITLE:	Planning Manager	E-MAIL:	Julie.Williams@reading.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE AND SUMMARY OF REPORT

- 1.1 To report notifications received from the Planning Inspectorate on the status of various planning appeals.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That you note the appeals received and the method of determination as listed in Appendix 1 of this report.
- 2.2 That you note the appeals decided as listed in Appendix 2 of this report.
- 2.3 That you note the Planning Officers reports on appeal decisions provided in Appendix 3 of this report.

3. INFORMATION PROVIDED

- 3.1 Please see Appendix 1 of this report for new appeals lodged since the last committee.
- 3.2 Please see Appendix 2 of this report for new appeals decided since the last committee.
- 3.3 Please see Appendix 3 of this report for new Planning Officers reports on appeal decisions since the last committee.

4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 4.1 Defending planning appeals made against planning decisions contributes to creating a sustainable environment with active communities and helping the economy within the Borough as identified as the themes of the Council's Corporate Plan:

1. Healthy Environments
2. Thriving Communities
3. Inclusive Economy

5. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).
- 5.2 The Planning Service uses policies to encourage developers to build and use properties responsibly by making efficient use of land and using sustainable materials and building methods. As a team we have also reduced the amount of resources (paper and printing) we use to carry out our work.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 6.1 Planning decisions are made in accordance with adopted local development plan policies, which have been adopted by the Council following public consultation. Statutory consultation also takes place on planning applications and appeals, and this can have bearing on the decision reached by the Secretary of State and his Inspectors. Copies of appeal decisions are held on the public Planning Register.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 Where appropriate the Council will refer in its appeal case to matters connected to its duties under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, to have due regard to the need to—
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Public Inquiries are normally the only types of appeal that involve the use of legal representation. Only applicants have the right to appeal against refusal or non-determination and there is no right for a third party to appeal a planning decision.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Public Inquiries and Informal Hearings are more expensive in terms of officer and appellant time than the Written Representations method. Either party can be liable to awards of costs. Guidance is provided in Circular 03/2009 “Cost Awards in Appeals and other Planning Proceedings”.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 Planning Appeal Forms and letters from the Planning Inspectorate.

APPENDIX 1

Appeals Lodged:

WARD: KATESGROVE
APPEAL NO: APP/E0345/W/22/3313234
CASE NO: 211614
ADDRESS: 9 Upper Crown Street, Reading
PROPOSAL: Demolition of existing buildings and structures, associated reuse of frame with basement level used for car parking & servicing, erection of 4 no. residential blocks containing 46 no. dwellings above, associated parking (including replacement), access works and landscaping, relocation of substations & associated works to rear of indigo apartments to facilitate pedestrian access.
CASE OFFICER: Tom Bradfield
METHOD: Hearing
APPEAL TYPE: REFUSAL OF PLANNING PERMISSION
APPEAL LODGED: 12.01.2023

WARD: ABBEY
APPEAL NO: APP/E0345/W/22/3303428
CASE NO: 211424
ADDRESS: 1a Eaton Place, Reading
PROPOSAL: Demolition of existing commercial building (Class E) and erection of a residential block comprising of 2 x 1 bed flats (Class C3)
CASE OFFICER: David Brett
METHOD: Written Representation
APPEAL TYPE: REFUSAL OF PLANNING PERMISSION
APPEAL LODGED: 30.01.2023

WARD: THAMES
APPEAL NO: APP/E0345/X/22/3312747
CASE NO: 220591
ADDRESS: The Moorings, Mill Green
PROPOSAL: Certificate of Lawfulness for Existing use as commercial boatyard
CASE OFFICER: Alison Amoah
METHOD: Written Representation
APPEAL TYPE: REFUSAL OF PLANNING PERMISSION
APPEAL LODGED: 06.02.2023

WARD: TILEHURST
APPEAL NO: APP/E0345/X/23/3315074
CASE NO: 221325
ADDRESS: 30 Westwood Glen
PROPOSAL: Application for a Lawful Development Certificate for a Proposed Caravan (movable) to be used as ancillary accommodation
CASE OFFICER: David Brett
METHOD: Written Representation
APPEAL TYPE: REFUSAL OF PLANNING PERMISSION
APPEAL LODGED: 13.02.2023

WARD: THAMES
APPEAL NO: APP/E0345/X/22/3312747
CASE NO: 220591
ADDRESS: The Moorings, Mill Green
PROPOSAL: Certificate of Lawfulness for Existing use as commercial boatyard
CASE OFFICER: Alison Amoah
METHOD: Written Representation
APPEAL TYPE: REFUSAL OF PLANNING PERMISSION
APPEAL LODGED: 06.02.2023

WARD: NORCOT
APPEAL NO: APP/E0345/W/22/3309850
CASE NO: 211182
ADDRESS: 60 Beecham Road, Reading
PROPOSAL: Conversion of existing garage to change the existing flat roof to a pitch roof, relocate windows and add a bay window on the front building.
CASE OFFICER: Beatrice Malama
METHOD: Written Representation
APPEAL TYPE: REFUSAL OF PLANNING PERMISSION
APPEAL LODGED: 15.02.2023

APPENDIX 2

Appeals Decided:

WARD: THAMES
APPEAL NO: APP/E0345/L/2/3308747
CASE NO: 180086
ADDRESS: Land at 2A Randolph Road
PROPOSAL: Change of use of ground and first floor to 3 no. C3 use residential flats (1 x 2 bed, 1 X 1 bed and 1 x studio flat) including a part two/part single storey side extension. The alleged breaches are: the failure to submit a Commencement Notice before starting works on the chargeable development and the late payment of 30 days, 6 months and 12 months of CIL
CASE OFFICER: Neal Gascoine
METHOD: Written Representation
DECISION: DISMISSED
DATE DETERMINED: 26.01.2023

WARD: REDLANDS
APPEAL NO: APP/E0345/W/22/3295119
CASE NO: 201650
ADDRESS: 111a Watlington Street, Reading
PROPOSAL: Part demolition of existing industrial building and erection of a three storey end of terrace building of 6 flats (C3 use) (amended description)
CASE OFFICER: David Brett
METHOD: Written Representation
DECISION: DISMISSED
DATE DETERMINED: 01.02.2023

APPENDIX 3

Address Index of Planning Officers reports on appeal decisions.

- 111a Watlington Street

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Ward: Redlands

Appeal No: APP/E0345/W/22/3295119

Planning Ref: 201650/FUL

Site: 111a Watlington Street, Reading, RG1 4RQ

Proposal: Part demolition of existing industrial building and erection of a three storey end of terrace building of 6 flats (C3 use) (amended description)

Decision level: Appeal

Method: Written representations

Decision: Appeal dismissed

Date Determined: 01/02/2023

Inspector: Peter Mark Sturgess BSc (Hons), MBA, MRTPI

BACKGROUND

The appeal site is a vacant part brick/part timber clad, two storey light industrial building which is attached to an end of terrace property, which consists of a Class E use (retail) at ground floor level, and residential to the first floor, located on the east side of Watlington Street. Records indicate that historically the building was occupied as a builder's merchants (from mid-1800's to early 1900's). The most recent known use of the building to Officers is as a glass merchants in the 1970's.

The appeal was lodged against the refusal of a planning application sought for full planning permission for the part demolition of the existing part timber part brick industrial building and erection of a three-storey end of terrace building of 6 flats (C3 use).

The Officer Report for application 201650 was presented to the Planning Applications Committee (PAC) on 8th September 2021. This report recommended the proposal for approval. Members of the PAC, having read the report and discussed the application, came to a different conclusion on the proposed development and voted to overturn the recommendation and refused planning permission for the following three reasons:

1. The proposed development, by virtue of its bulk, mass, scale and detailed design is considered to result in a building which would fail to integrate with the character and appearance of the terrace of buildings to which it would adjoin and that of the surrounding area and would harm the setting of the neighbouring Listed Building. The proposed development is not considered to be of sufficient design quality to justify the loss of the existing light industrial building, which is a non-designated heritage asset building of townscape merit, and fails to respond positively to the local context though failure to demonstrate that the building could not be adapted to provide live/work units. Therefore, the proposed development is considered to fail to preserve the character of the surrounding conservation area, to harm the setting of the adjacent grade II listed building at no. 71-73 London Road and fails to respond positively to its context. The proposed development is contrary to Policies EN1, EN3, EN4, EM4 and CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

2. The proposed development, by virtue of seeking to provide 6no. dwellings on the site, includes the provision of basement level bedrooms to serve the two duplex flats laid out across the ground and basement floors. This will result in the occupiers of these flats having a poor quality of outlook and daylighting creating a poor standard of residential

amenity for them. The proposed development is contrary to Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

3. In the absence of a completed S106 Legal Agreement the proposal fails to secure an acceptable Affordable Housing contribution towards meeting housing needs in the Borough and fails to provide for suitable refuse collection arrangements for the development to prevent excessive stationing of waste collection vehicles causing obstruction on the public highway and to prevent proliferation of bins being left on the Princes Street for collection, which would be harmful to and fail to preserve the character of the surrounding conservation area. The proposed development is contrary to policies EN1, EN3, EN4, CC7, CC9, H3 and TR3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

The decision notice was issued on 22/09/2021.

SUMMARY OF DECISION

Within the Preliminary Matters section of the decision, the Inspector discusses the amended plans submitted by the appellant at appeal stage. In accordance with the Procedural Guide - Planning Appeals - England (the Guide) and the Wheatcroft principles:

1. If an appellant is submitting revisions at appeal stage, these should normally be submitted within a fresh planning application.
2. The appeal process should not be used to evolve a scheme.
3. It is important for the Inspector to consider the scheme that was considered by the Local Planning Authority and the public during consultation.

The Inspector confirms that the amended plans were not considered at appeal stage, as they have not been subject to consultation and therefore might disadvantage people which should have been consulted on the amended proposals.

In respect of the first reason for refusal the Inspector identified the main issues to be:

- The effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the Eldon Square Conservation Area.
- The effect of the proposed development on the setting of a Grade II listed building.
- Whether the loss of a non-designated heritage asset is justified.

The “loss of existing light industrial building” and “failure to demonstrate that the building could not be adapted to provided live/work units” is not listed as one of the main issues but is instead discussed in paragraph 34 of the appeal decision under “Other Matters”, “Loss of employment floorspace”.

Character and appearance of the Eldon Square Conservation Area

The Inspector assessed the development against the latest Conservation Area Appraisal document for Eldon Square (2007).

In paragraphs 14 and 15, the Inspector weighs the benefits of the proposal against the harm to heritage assets in accordance with paragraph 202 of the NPPF and concludes that the benefits in providing an affordable housing contribution and employment during

construction, does not outweigh the substantial harm to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area that the development would cause. The Council's 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites is also acknowledged. The benefit of removing the existing building is also discarded, as this would occur under any scheme to redevelop the site.

In paragraph 18, the Inspector succinctly summarises the harm of the development. The proposed development is stated as appearing bulky and having a heavy presence on the Watlington Street elevation. In terms of detailing and materials, the amount of brickwork used around the openings contributes to the bulky and heavy appearance of the building, whilst the detailing does not match that of the prevailing terraced rows along Watlington Street. The development also fails to incorporate features that have been identified within the Eldon Square Conservation Area Appraisal as having a positive contribution, this is with regards to brick arches, pitched roofs and chimney stacks.

The development was therefore found to not be in accordance with Policies CC7, EN1 and EN3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan and harmful to the character and appearance of the Eldon Square Conservation Area.

The setting of a Grade II listed building - 71 and 73 London Road

Paragraph 20 of the appeal statement opens with "The appeal proposal would largely create this backdrop, with the existing boundary wall retained and part of the flank wall of the existing building incorporated into the proposed development". The Inspector found that the development would avoid harm to the setting of the Listed Building or have an adverse impact on the elements of the heritage asset that contribute to its setting.

Loss of a non-designated heritage asset

The Inspector considers the importance of retaining the existing building at 111a Watlington Street. Whilst the Inspector concludes that the benefits of the scheme do not outweigh the loss of the heritage asset, the Inspector also highlights that features of the existing building do not reflect the character of the area, with the building being substantially altered over the years. These features include uPVC windows, a gable parallel with the street, and timber cladding.

Living conditions for future occupants

Reason for refusal 2 refers to substandard living conditions for future occupants with regards to poor quality outlook and daylight. The Inspector identified the main issue to be the living conditions of potential residents especially for those with the basement bedrooms and the arrangement of the duplex flat.

In terms of the basement rooms (paragraph 29) the Inspector notes that the east facing windows to habitable rooms would result in unacceptable outlook and daylight in relation to the lower ground bedrooms. The Inspector does, however, consider that the kitchen/living room/dining room to the ground floor front flat would have an outlook over the street and that despite the overhang, the presence of a floor to ceiling window would allow for maximum penetration of daylight and sunlight.

So while the living conditions to the ground floor front flat were found to be acceptable the Inspector concludes that the living conditions to the ground floor rear bedrooms would be unacceptable due to the lack of outlook and sunlight experienced to the two rear bedrooms. The development was therefore found not to be in accordance with Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

Affordable Housing and Refuse Disposal Management Plan

Reason for refusal 3 was attached as a legal agreement securing a Policy compliant affordable housing contribution and details of suitable refuse collection management plan had not been completed. At appeal stage, a legal agreement was completed on 2nd September 2022 for the affordable housing contribution and details of suitable refuse collection arrangements. The Inspector considered that the legal agreement met the tests set out in paragraph 57 of the Framework and the provisions of s122 of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010. Therefore, the third reason for refusal was found to be suitably addressed.

Other Matters - Loss of Employment Floorspace

The Inspector assessed the loss of employment floorspace against Policy EM3, rather than Policy EM4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan, as the Policy directly relates to the loss of employment land. The Inspector credits the building's lack of occupancy and inactive use for employment for a considerable period to the unsuitability of the building for modern employment.

The Inspector also considered that the use of the site for employment may have repercussions to the predominantly residential surrounding area in terms of harm to living conditions. It is assumed that the Inspector is referring to noise and disturbance issues to residents along Watlington Street from any use of the site as employment land. Therefore, this aspect of reason for refusal 1 fell away.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

In conclusion, the Inspector concluded that the proposal would:

- Harm the character and appearance of the Eldon Square Conservation Area. With the visual harm of the development not outweighing the benefits of the scheme. (Reason for Refusal 1)
- The ground floor rear flat of the development would provide harmful living conditions to future occupants in terms of poor outlook and access to sunlight due to its position and orientation. (Reason for Refusal 2)

The appeal was therefore dismissed.

Assistant Director, Planning, Transport & Public Protection Comment

The appeal decision accepts the principle of the loss of the site for employment purposes. However, the decision clearly explains why in respect of reason for refusal one the proposed development fails to meet relevant Local Plan policies in respect of appearance by not making a positive contribution to the local character and distinctiveness of the

conservation area. It also finds that for reason for refusal two while not all occupants would be disadvantaged, concerns for the poor outlook for residents of the ground floor rear flat were sufficient to uphold the Council's concerns.

SITE LOCATION



Case Officer: David Brett

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**READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD
SERVICES**

TO:	PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE		
DATE:	1st March 2023		
TITLE:	APPLICATIONS FOR PRIOR APPROVAL		
AUTHOR:	Julie Williams		
JOB TITLE:	Development Manager (Planning & Building Control)	E-MAIL:	Julie.williams@reading.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE AND SUMMARY OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise Committee of the types of development that can be submitted for Prior Approval and to provide a summary of the applications received and decisions taken in accordance with the prior-approval process as set out in the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (GPDO 2015) as amended.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That you note the report.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 There are a range of development types and changes of use that can be carried out as permitted development but are subject to the developer first notifying the planning authority of the proposal, for it to confirm that “prior approval” is not needed before exercising the permitted development rights. The matters for prior approval vary depending on the type of development and these are set out in full in the relevant Parts in Schedule 2 to the General Permitted Development Order. A local planning authority cannot consider any other matters when determining a prior approval application.
- 3.2 If the decision is that approval is required, further information may be requested by the planning authority in order for it to determine whether approval should be given. The granting of prior approval can result in conditions being attached to the approval. Prior approval can also be refused, in which case an appeal can be made.
- 3.3 The statutory requirements relating to prior approval are much less prescriptive than those relating to planning applications. This is because seeking prior approval is designed to be a light-touch process given that the principle of the development has already been established in the General Permitted Development Order. The government is clear that a local planning authority should not impose unnecessarily onerous requirements on developers should not seek to replicate the planning application system.
- 3.4 However, this means that large development schemes, often involving changes of use to residential, can proceed without meeting many of the adopted planning policies; such as making no contribution towards affordable housing, and the application fees for these “light touch” applications are significantly less than the equivalent planning application fee.
- 3.5 For this reason, at the Planning Applications Committee meeting on 29 May 2013, it was agreed that a report be brought to future meetings to include details of applications received for prior approval, those pending a decision and those

applications which have been decided since the last Committee date. It was also requested that an estimate be provided for the “loss” in potential planning fee income.

4 TYPES OF PRIOR APPROVAL APPLICATIONS

4.1 The categories of development requiring prior approval appear in different parts of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development)(England) Order 2015, or amended by the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development)(England)(Amendment) Order. Those that are of most relevance to Reading Borough are summarised as follows:

SCHEDULE 2 - Permitted development rights

PART 1 - Development within the curtilage of a dwelling house

- **Householder development - larger home extensions.** Part 2 Class A1.
- **Householder development - upwards extensions.** Part 2 Class AA.

PART 3 – Changes of use

- **Change of use from A1 shops or A2 financial & professional, betting office, pay day loan shop or casino to A3 restaurants and cafes.** Class C.
- **Change of use from A1 shops or A2 financial & professional, betting office or pay day loan shop to Class D2 assembly & leisure.** Class J.
- **Change of use from A1 shops or A2 financial and professional or a mixed use of A1 or A2 with dwellinghouse to Class C3 dwellinghouse.** Class M
- **Change of use from an amusement arcade or a casino to C3 dwellinghouse & necessary works.** Class N
- **Change of use from B1 office to C3 dwellinghouse** Class O*.
- **Change of use from B8 storage or distribution to C3 dwellinghouse** Class P
- **Change of use from B1(c) light industrial use to C3 dwellinghouse** Class PA*
- **Change of use from agricultural buildings and land to Class C3 dwellinghouses and building operations reasonably necessary to convert the building to the C3 use.** Class Q.
- **Change of use of 150 sq m or more of an agricultural building (and any land within its curtilage) to flexible use within classes A1, A2, A3, B1, B8, C1 and D2.** Class R.
- **Change of use from Agricultural buildings and land to state funded school or registered nursery D1.** Class S.
- **Change of use from B1 (business), C1 (hotels), C2 (residential institutions), C2A (secure residential institutions and D2 (assembly and leisure) to state funded school D1.** Class T.

PART 4 - Temporary buildings and uses

- **Temporary use of buildings for film making for up to 9 months in any 27 month period.** Class E

PART 11 - Heritage & Demolition

- **Demolition of buildings.** Class B.

PART 16 - Communications

- **Development by telecommunications code system operators.** Class A
- GPDO Part 11.

PART 20 - Construction of New Dwellinghouses

- **New dwellinghouses on detached blocks of flats** Class A
- **Demolition of buildings and construction of new dwellinghouses in their place.** Class ZA

4.2 Those applications for Prior Approval received and yet to be decided are set out in the appended Table 1 and those applications which have been decided are set out in the appended Table 2. The applications are grouped by type of prior approval

application. Information on what the estimated equivalent planning application fees would be is provided.

4.3 It should be borne in mind that the planning considerations to be taken into account in deciding each of these types of application are specified in more detail in the GDPO. In some cases the LPA will first need to confirm whether or not prior approval is required before going on to decide the application on its planning merits where prior approval is required.

4.4 Details of any appeals on prior-approval decision will be included elsewhere in the agenda.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

5.1 Changes of use brought about through the prior approval process are beyond the control or influence of the Council's adopted policies and Supplementary Planning Documents. Therefore, it is not possible to confirm how or if these schemes will contribute to the strategic aims of the Council.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).

6.2 The Planning Service uses policies to encourage developers to build and use properties responsibly by making efficient use of land and using sustainable materials and building methods. As a team we have also reduced the amount of resources (paper and printing) we use to carry out our work.

7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

7.1 Statutory consultation takes place in connection with applications for prior-approval as specified in the Order discussed above.

8 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

8.1 Where appropriate the Council must have regard to its duties under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, to have due regard to the need to—

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

8.2 There are no direct implications arising from the proposals.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None arising from this Report.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Since the additional prior notifications were introduced in May 2013 in place of applications for full planning permission, the loss in fee income is now estimated to be £1,870,899.

(Class E (formally office) Prior Approvals - £1,689,934:

Householder Prior Approvals - £89,032:

Retail Prior Approvals - £16,840:

Demolition Prior Approval - £5,795:

Storage Prior Approvals - £5716:

Shop to Restaurant/Leisure Prior Approval - £6331;

Light Industrial to Residential - £20,022:

Dwellings on detached block of flats - £2048:

Additional storey on dwellings - £206:

New dwellinghouses on terrace/detached buildings - £17,483.

Demolition of buildings and construction of new dwelling - £128;

Prior approval to mixed use including flats - £2484.

Figures since last report

Householder Prior Approvals - £330;

Class E (formally office) Prior Approvals - £0

- 10.2 However it should be borne in mind that the prior notification application assessment process is simpler than would have been the case for full planning permission and the cost to the Council of determining applications for prior approval is therefore proportionately lower. It should also be noted that the fee for full planning applications varies by type and scale of development and does not necessarily equate to the cost of determining them.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015
- The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) (Amendment) Order 2016.

Table 1 - Applications received since 20th January 2023 to 16th February 2023

Type:	How many received since last report:	Loss in possible fee income:
Householder Prior Approvals	3	£330
Class E Prior Approvals	0	0
Demolition Prior Approval	0	0
Solar Equipment Prior Approval	0	0
Prior Notification	0	n/a
Telecommunications Prior Approval	3	n/a
Dwellings on detached block of flats	0	0
Householder Additional Storey	0	0
New dwellinghouses on terrace/detached buildings	0	0
Demolition of buildings and construction of new dwelling	0	0
Prior approval to mixed use including flats	0	0
TOTAL	6	£330

Table 2 - Applications decided since 20th January 2023 to 16th February 2023

Type:	Approved	Refused	Not Required	Withdrawn	Non Determination
Householder Prior Approvals	0	0	2	1	0
Class E Prior Approvals	0	1	0	1	0
Demolition Prior Approval	1	0	0	0	0
Solar Equipment Prior Approval	0	0	0	0	0
Prior Notification/ Other	0	0	0	0	0
Telecommunications Prior Approval	0	4	0	0	0
Dwellings on detached block of flats	0	0	0	0	0
Householder Additional Storey	0	0	0	0	0
New dwellings on terrace buildings or New dwellings on detached buildings	0	0	0	0	0
Demolition of buildings and construction of new dwelling	0	0	0	0	0
Prior approval to mixed use including flats	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	1	5	2	2	0

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READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

TO:	Planning Applications Committee		
DATE:	1 st March 2023		
TITLE:	Street Name assignment at Station Hill development		
SERVICE:	GI & Business Systems	WARDS:	Abbey
LEAD OFFICER:	Kristina Quinnell	TEL:	Ext 72663 (0118 937 2663)
JOB TITLE:	Interim GIS Manager	E-MAIL:	Kristina.Quinnell@reading.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE AND SUMMARY OF REPORT

- 1.1 To identify proposed names for the development site detailed below and for Committee to select the name to be assigned.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 The Committee select the street name from the table set out at 4.3 of this report.
 - 2.1.1 If Committee consider this name unacceptable, alternative names should be put forward along with building address suggestions and a discussion with the developer will need to take place. It will then need to come back to a future planning committee for a decision.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The development is located in central Reading, off Station Hill. This is a high-profile development for Reading.
- 3.2 A new building is being constructed as part of the above development. The developers chose a name for the building; "One Station Hill", but this is not available for them as that address is already assigned and in use. We have been in discussion with the developers and believe a mutually acceptable solution would be to name the new pedestrian pathway around the development "Station Hill Square", with the new building address being "1, Station Hill Square".
- 3.3 During the consultation, Councillors Lovelock, Page & Rowland expressed that they are happy with the name "Station Hill Square".

3.4 A plan of the site detailing the street layout is attached at Appendix 1.

4. THE PROPOSAL

4.1 That Committee approve the name suggested for the new street.

4.2 If Committee consider this name unacceptable, alternative names should be put forward along with building address suggestions and a discussion with the developer will need to take place. It will then need to come back to a future planning committee for a decision.

4.3

Name	Reason for suggestion	Ward	Site	Source
Station Hill Square	Developers require the development to be number 1, so have suggested “Station Hill Square” as the street name. Number 1 Station Hill is already in use, so not available.	Abbey	Site of former Garrard Street Multi Storey car park (Station Hill Development).	Developer

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None directly from this report.

6 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The creation of street names should follow the guidelines detailed in the “Data Entry Conventions and Best Practice for the National Land and Property Gazetteer”, a reference manual based on Property Addressing Standard BS7666:2006 Parts 1 & 2.

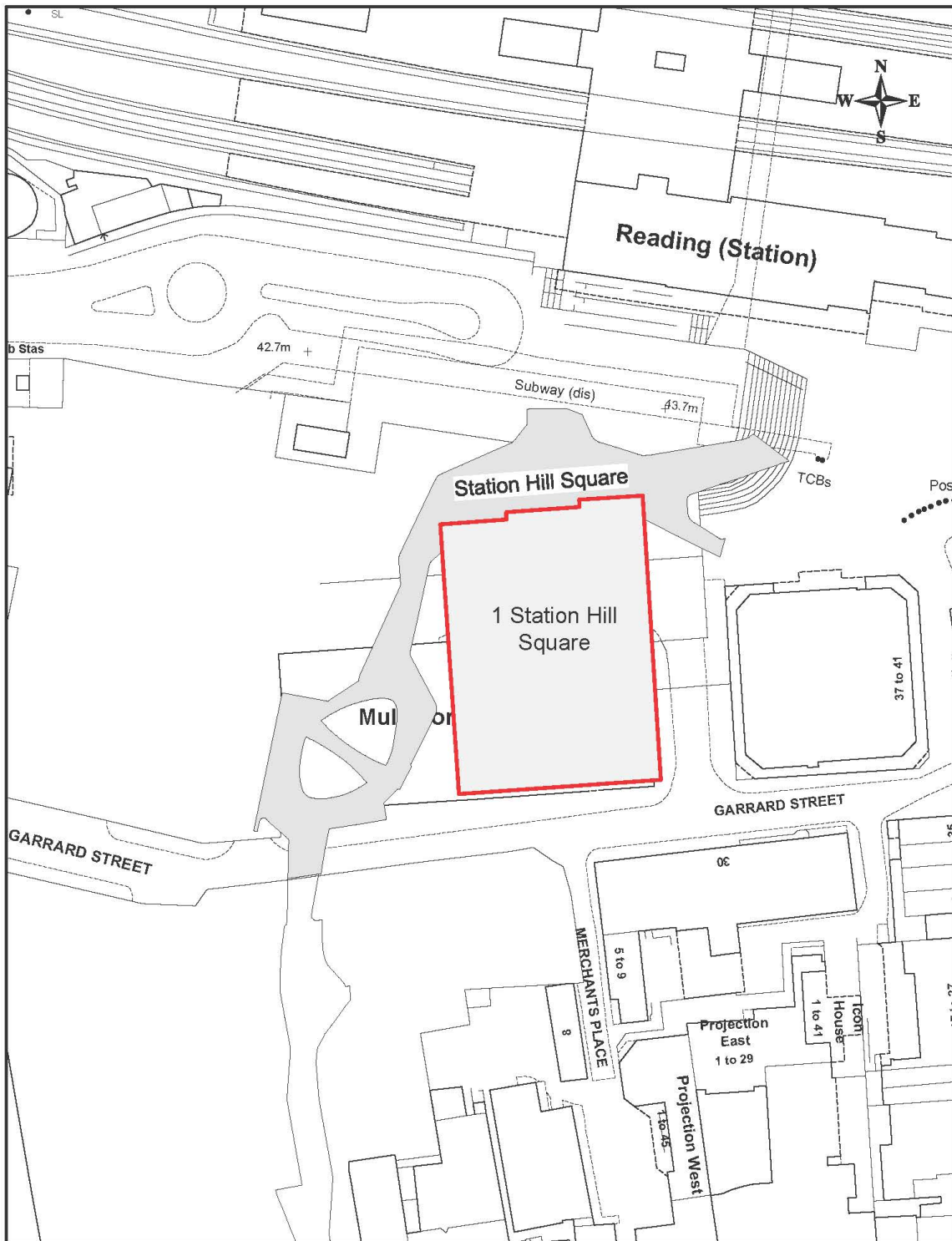
7. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

7.1 Having street names that either commemorate people of local interest or who have contributed to Reading or that reflect local characteristics or provide a sense of place can encourage civic pride and interest for thriving local communities as identified as one of the themes of the Council’s Corporate Plan:

1. Healthy Environments
2. Thriving Communities
3. Inclusive Economy

8. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

8.1 Members of the public can contribute to street naming process.



Title: STREET NAMING & NUMBERING PLAN.
 New Road Name - STATION HILL SQUARE.

SN&N Xref.No.34520220906 Date: 14/12/2022 Scale at A4: 1:1250
 Produced by GIS & Mapping Services Ref: G:\SN&NRBC process\2022\0922 Applications Sept 2022\34520220906



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COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 1st March 2023

Ward: Abbey

App No.: 221405

Address: Land at Battle Street, Reading

Proposal: Clearance and taking up of existing hardstanding and structures from the site, erection of seven buildings, up to four storeys in height, containing 49 affordable dwellings (Class C3 use), 13 supported living accommodation (Class C2 residential institution use), and older persons day centre (Class E(f)), and associated roadways, car parking, open space and other infrastructure.

Applicant: Reading Borough Council

Deadline: 21/12/2022

Extended Deadline: 30th April 2023

Planning Guarantee 26-week target: 22nd March 2023

RECOMMENDATION:

Delegate to the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services to i) **GRANT** full planning permission, subject to conditions and informatives and subject to the satisfactory completion of a Unilateral Undertaking (S.106).

OR ii) **Refuse** full planning permission if the legal agreement is not completed by 30th April 2023 (unless officers on behalf of the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services agree to a later date for completion of the legal agreement).

The Section 106 Legal Agreement to include the following heads of terms:

Affordable Housing

- To secure affordable housing consisting of 19 units (30% provision) on site, operated by Reading Borough Council, comprising 2 x 3 bed houses; 4 x 3 bed, 8 x 2 beds and 5 x 1 bed general needs housing. To be let at Social Rent levels as set out in the Council's Affordable Housing SPD, i.e. A rental level set by central government according to a formula (also known as formula rent).

Employment Skills and Training Plan

- Construction phase skills - preparation and delivery of an ESP or a financial contribution. To comply with Policy CC9 and the Employment, Skills and Training SPD. Contribution to be paid prior to commencement of development.

Zero Carbon Offset - All Dwellings

- Zero Carbon Offset as per SPD 2019 to provide a minimum of 35% improvement in regulated emissions over the Target Emissions Rate in the 2013 Building Regulations, plus a Section 106 contribution of £1,800 per remaining tonne towards carbon offsetting within the Borough (calculated as £60/tonne over a 30-year period).
- As-built SAP calculation for all dwellings to be submitted for approval within 6 months following first occupation.
- Contribution based on SPD formula below towards carbon-saving projects calculated for all dwellings based on approved SAP calculation to be paid to the Council within 9 months following first occupation:

TER CO2 m2/yr less 35% CO2 m2/yr) = 65% of TER
65% of TER x total square metres = total excess CO2 emissions annually
Total excess CO2 emissions annually x £1800 = S106 contribution.

- Payable prior to occupation of 52nd unit.

Transport -

- Applicant to enter into a S278 agreement in relation to the reconfiguration of the vehicular access on to Battle Street, relocation of build out on Battle Street, and new access on to James Street including closures of existing vehicular access points as may be required.
- A contribution of £5,000 towards Traffic Regulation Orders necessary to alter existing parking restrictions surrounding the site.

Open Space

- To secure an off-site Open Space contribution of £72,450, towards the improvement of facilities within Beresford Road Playground and/or public realm improvements on Oxford Road within the conservation area - payable before first occupation.

General

- Contribution towards monitoring costs plus a separate commitment to pay the Council's reasonable legal costs in connection with the proposed S106 Agreement will be payable whether or not the Agreement is completed.
- Any unexpended contributions to be repaid within ten years beginning with the start of the Financial Year after the final (including phased contributions) obligation payment for each obligation is received. In accordance with Policy CC9.
- All financial contributions index-linked from the date of permission.

CONDITIONS TO INCLUDE:

- 1) TL1 - 3 yrs.
- 2) AP1 - Approved Plans
- 3) M2 - Materials to be submitted and approved
- 4) C1 - Hours of Construction
- 5) C2 - Construction Method Statement to be submitted and approved
- 6) C4 - No Bonfires
- 7) CO3 - Contamination assessment to be submitted and approved
- 8) CO4 - Remediation scheme to be submitted and approved
- 9) CO5 - Remediation scheme to be implemented and verified
- 10) CO6 - Unidentified contamination
- 11) DC1 - Vehicle Parking as specified
- 12) DC3 - Vehicle Access as specified prior to occupation
- 13) DC6 - Cycle Parking to be provided as approved
- 14) DC7 - Refuse and Recycling to be approved/provided as approved (to be vermin proof)
- 15) Refuse Management Plan to be submitted and approved.
- 16) Visibility Splay free of obstructions
- 17) Vehicle accesses to be stopped up
- 18) Roads provided
- 19) Visibility Splays
- 20) Parking allocation plan
- 21) Parking permits - notification
- 22) Parking permits - no automatic entitlement
- 23) DE6- Provision of Electric Vehicle Charging Points

- 24) L10 - Habitat enhancement - Submission and approval of mitigation and enhancement to be installed and retained thereafter.
- 25) L2 - Hard and soft landscaping scheme
- 26) Boundary treatments
- 27) L4 - Landscape Management Plan to be submitted and approved
- 28) Landscaping to be implemented in accordance with the approved plan
- 29) Green Roof in accordance with details
- 30) Green Roof maintenance plan - submission and approval
- 31) No removal of vegetation during bird nesting season
- 32) N10 - Noise Mitigation Scheme as specified (ventilation and glazing)
- 33) N2 - Mechanical Plant Noise Assessment to be submitted and approved (ASHP)
- 34) External lighting plan - to be submitted and approved
- 35) SU1 - SAP assessment (design stage)
- 36) SU2 - SAP assessment (as built)
- 37) SU7 - SUDS plan to be approved
- 38) SU8 - SUDS to be implemented
- 39) Accessible and adaptable dwellings to built in accordance with approve plans and remain so
- 40) Obscure glazing to bathrooms
- 41) Removal of permitted development rights for Block C and F
- 42) Designing out crime measures to be approved and implemented

INFORMATIVES TO INCLUDE:

- IF1 - Positive and Proactive
- IF5 - Terms and Conditions
- IF3 - Highways
- IF2 - Pre-Commencement Conditions
- IF4 - S106
- IF6 - Building Regulations
- IF7 - Complaints about Construction
- IF8 - Encroachment
- Contamination
- I10 - Noise between residential properties
- I11 - CIL
- I13 - Parking Permits
- Housing Act
- I29 - Access Construction
- Thames Water

1. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The existing site is approximately 0.55ha and vacant with the former Central Pool buildings having been demolished. The existing car park hard standing remains with 4 or 5 small trees. The substation is in operation and will require access. The surrounding area is primarily residential. To the north and west are two and three storey Victorian and Edwardian terraced houses. To the south are two more modern blocks of flats and there are semi-detached houses, terraces and flats on Oxford Road. There are a range of architectural styles and eras of property.
- 1.2 It is located within the Central Area Boundary (Reading Borough Local Plan (RBLP) Policies CR1-CR10) and is a specifically allocated site under Policy CR14a (Central Swimming Pool, Battle Street - full policy wording in

assessment section below) and within an Air Quality Management area (EN15).



Location Plan

- 1.3 A small southern portion of the site, with its frontage to Oxford Road, is within the Russell Street / Castle Hill / Oxford Road Conservation Area and the High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ). There are a number of listed buildings in the vicinity of the subject site on Oxford Road.



- 1.4 The application is referred to committee as it is a ‘major’ development and the Council’s own scheme. Members of Planning Applications Committee attended a site visit on 23 February 2023.

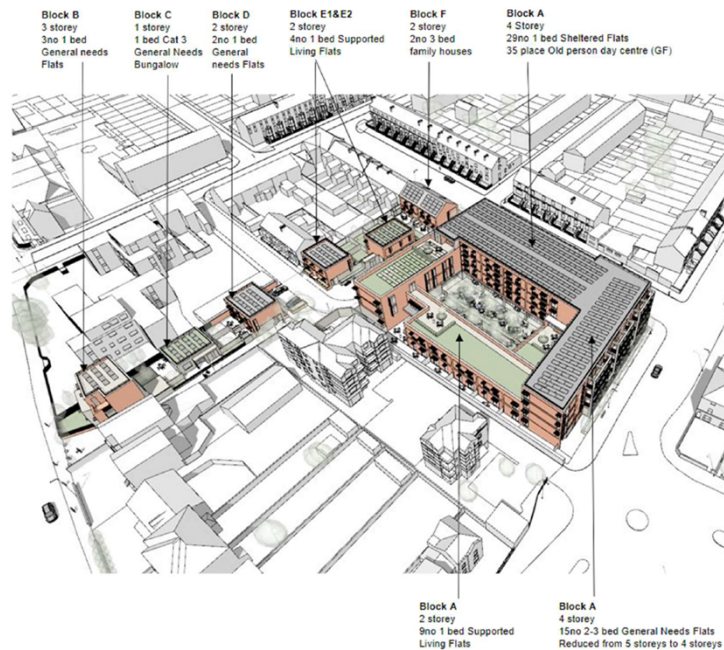
2. PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The proposal is for:

Clearance of the existing hardstanding and the erection of:

- 35 place Older Person’s Day Centre
- 29 Sheltered Housing Flats for the over 55s (Affordable)
- 13 Supported Living Flats with support spaces
- 20 General Needs Housing and Flats (Affordable)

Building	Height	Use	Amount
A	Up to 4 storeys	Class C3 dwellings	29 x 1-bed sheltered apartments
		Class C3 dwellings	12 x 2&3 bed General Needs apartments
		Class E(f) day centre of older persons	-
		Class C2 residential institution	9 x 1-bed units and communal/shared facilities
B	3 storey	Class C3 dwellings	3 x 1-bed
C	1 storey	Class C3 dwellings	1 x 1-bed
D	2 storey	Class C3 dwellings	2 x 1-bed
E1	2 storey	Class C2 residential institution	2 x 1-bed
E2	2 storey	Class C2 residential institution	2 x 1-bed
F	2 storey	Class C3 dwellings	2 x 3-bed



- 9 on-site car parking spaces (3 of which accessible spaces) and 32 cycle spaces;
- Creation of a 'Mews'; and
- Landscaping.

2.2 Submitted plans and documentation are as follows:

Received 21st September 2022, dated September 2022, unless otherwise stated:

- Drawing no: E05077-HCC-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-1000 - Location Plan
- Drawing no: E05077-HCC-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-1500 - Existing Site Plan

- Drawing no: E05077-HCC-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-1501 - Proposed Site Plan
- Drawing no: E05077-HCC-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-1850 Rev P1 - External Building Materials
- Drawing no: E05077-HCC-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-1860 Rev P1 - Brick Bond Types, Distribution and Precedents
- Drawing no: E05077-HCC-ZZ-00-DR-A-2000 - GA Ground Floor Plan
- Drawing no: E05077-HCC-ZZ-01-DR-A-2010 - GA First Floor Plan
- Drawing no: E05077-HCC-ZZ-02-DR-A-2020 - GA Second Floor Plan
- Drawing no: E05077-HCC-ZZ-03-DR-A-2030 - GA Third Floor Plan
- Drawing no: E05077-HCC-ZZ-RL-DR-A-2040 - GA Roof Level Plan
- Drawing no: E05077-HCC-BB-XX-DR-A-2075 - Block B GA Plans, Elevations and 3D View
- Drawing no: E05077-HCC-BC-XX-DR-A-2080 - Block C GA Plans, Elevations and 3D View
- Drawing no: E05077-HCC-BD-XX-DR-A-2085 - Block D GA Plans, Elevations and 3D View
- Drawing no: E05077-HCC-BE-XX-DR-A-2090 - Blocks E1 and E2 GA Plans, Elevations and 3D View
- Drawing no: E05077-HCC-BF-XX-DR-A-2095 - Block F GA Plans, Elevations and 3D View
- Drawing no: E05077-HCC-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-3000 - GA Elevations East + West
- Drawing no: E05077-HCC-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-3001 - GA Elevations North + South
- Drawing no: E05077-HCC-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-3002 - GA Elevations Additional
- Drawing no: E05077-HCC-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-3200 - GA Sections
- Drawing no: E05077-HCC-BA-ZZ-DR-A-3050 - Block A Bay Elevations
- Drawing no: E05077-HCC-ZZ-ZZ-SC-A-5900 - Schedule of Dwelling Room Sizes Block A Sheet 01
- Drawing no: E05077-HCC-ZZ-ZZ-SC-A-5901 - Schedule of Dwelling Room Sizes Block A Sheet 02
- Drawing no: E05077-HCC-ZZ-ZZ-SC-A-5902 - Schedule of Dwelling Room Sizes Block A Sheet 03
- Drawing no: E05077-HCC-ZZ-ZZ-SC-A-5903 - Schedule of Dwelling Room Sizes Block A Sheet 04
- Drawing no: E05077-HCC-ZZ-ZZ-SC-A-5904 - Schedule of Dwelling Room Sizes Block A Sheet 05
- Drawing no: E05077-HCC-ZZ-ZZ-SC-A-5905 - Schedule of Dwelling Room Sizes Block A Sheet 06
- Drawing no: E05077-HCC-ZZ-ZZ-SC-A-5906 - Schedule of Dwelling Room Sizes Blocks B - E1
- Drawing no: E05077-HCC-ZZ-ZZ-SC-A-5907 - Schedule of Dwelling Room Sizes Block E2 - F
- Drawing no: E05077-HCC-ZZ-00-DR-L-7000 - Landscape GA Ground Floor Plan
- Drawing no: P05077-HCC-ZZ-RL-DR-L-7001 - Landscape GA Roof Plan
- Drawing no: P05077-HCC-XX-DR-L-7101 - Hard Surfaces Plan
- Drawing no: P05077-HCC-XX-DR-L-7201 - Means of Enclosure and Furniture Plan
- Drawing no: P05077-HCC-XX-DR-L-7301 - Tree and Specimen Shrub Planting Plan
- Drawing no: P05077-HCC-XX-DR-L-7302 - Planting Plan
- Drawing no: P05077-HCC-XX-DR-L-7401 - Detail Sections [Landscaping]
- Drawing no: P05077-HCC-XX-DR-L-7501 - Landscape Amenity and Private Space

- Drawing no: E05077-HCC-00-00-DR-A-7800 Rev P1 - Parking Strategy and Recycling/Refuse
- Drawing no: E05077-ECH-XX-XX-DR-C-7500 Rev P01 - Below Ground Drainage
- Drawing no: E05077-HCC-ZZ-ZZ-VS-A-1800 Rev P1 - Aerial View From North
- Drawing no: E05077-HCC-ZZ-ZZ-VS-A-1810 Rev P1 - Proposed Visuals 01
- Drawing no: E05077-HCC-ZZ-ZZ-VS-DR-A-1820 Rev P1 - Proposed Visuals 02
- Drawing no: E05077-HCC-ZZ-ZZ-VS-A-1830 Rev P1 - Proposed Visuals 03
- Drawing no: E05077-HCC-00-ZZ-M3-A-1840 Rev P1 - Proposed Axonometrics
- Drawing no: E05077-HCC-ZZ-ZZ-MR-A-1870 Rev P1 - 1:500 Massing Model Development Model
- Drawing no: E05077-HCC-ZZ-ZZ-MR-A-1880 Rev P1 - 1:500 Terracotta Massing Model Development Model
- Drawing no: E05077-HCC-ZZ-ZZ-MR-A-1890 Rev P1 - 1:250 Timber Massing Development Model
- Drawing no: E05077-HCC-ZZ-ZZ-MR-A-1900 Rev P1 - 1:25 Typical Flat Model
- Drawing no: E05077-HCC-00-00-DR-E-8100 - Electrical Engineering Services Existing LV and HV Cable Routes
- Drawing no: E05077-HCC-00-00-DR-E-8102 - Combined M&E External Services
- Drawing no: E05077-ECH-XX-XX-SK-C-7101 Rev P03 - Refuse Tracking Plan, received 10th February 2023
- Drawing no: E05077-ECH-XX-XX-SK-C-7102 Rev P03 - Fire Tracking Plan, received 10th February 2023
- Two Tier Bike Rack Layout, received 10th February 2023
- Two Tier Bike Rack Elevations, received 10th February 2023

Other Documents:

- Access Strategy, prepared by Hampshire CC
- Affordable Housing Statement, dated 15/9/22, prepared by Property Development Team RBC
- Air Quality Assessment, Revision 1.0, dated 19/8/22, Prepared by Entran Ltd
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment dated 12/8/22, Job ref: SS21016 ReBc Btt St AIA SK1.2, prepared by Hampshire CC
- Archaeological Heritage Statement, version 1.0, dated 6/9/21, prepared by Hampshire County Council ETE Archaeological Service
- Phase 1: Contaminated Land & Geotechnical Desk Study Report, Document no: 6999, dated August 2022, Prepared by Terra Firma
- Daylight/Sunlight Report - Neighbours, dated 12/9/22, prepared by Daylight Sunlight Consulting
- Design and Access Statement, dated September 2022, updated 9th February 2023, prepared by Hampshire CC, received 10th February 2023
- Ecological Appraisal Rev 2, dated December 2021 updated August 2022, prepared by Hampshire County Council Ecology Team
- Energy Efficiency Statement dated 15/9/22, prepared by Hampshire CC Property Services
- External Lighting Strategy, prepared by Hampshire CC

- Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy Report, Document ref: E05077-ECH-XX-XX-RP-C-7001 Rev P01, dated 14/7/22, prepared by Hampshire Engineering Services
- Footway Width Note dated 9/2/23 received 10th February 2023
- Green Roof Note, dated 9/2/23, received 10th February 2023
- Heritage Statement, prepared by Hampshire CC Property Services
- Landscape Principles, Document ref: E05077-HCC-XX-RP-L-01 rev A, prepared by Hampshire CC
- Noise Assessment, Document ref: R8986-2 Rev 1, dated 12/9/22, prepared by 24 Acoustics
- Open Space Statement, Document Ref: E05077-HCC-XX-XX-RP-L-03, prepared by Hampshire CC
- Phase 3 Remediation Strategy, dated 2022, Document Ref: 6999/R003, prepared by Terra Firma South, received 13th December 2022
- Planning Statement, dated September 2022, prepared by Hampshire CC
- Preliminary EIA Screening Battle Street and Hexham Road Development, dated 20th July 2022, prepared by Hampshire CC
- Pre-Planning Consultation Comments Tracker
- Refuse Collection Vehicle Access to Bin Store Note, dated 9/2/23, received 10th February 2023
- Refuse Chute Note, dated 9/2/23, received 10th February 2023
- Review of Daylight and Sunlight Report For a Proposed Development at Battle Street, dated 7/2/23, Issue 1, ref: P124972, Prepared by BRE, received 7th February 2023
- Superfast Broadband Statement, dated August 2022
- Sustainability Statement V4.1, dated 14/9/22, prepared by Mace
- Technical Note dated 25th January 2023, prepared by Hampshire County Council [re geo-environmental matters], received 2nd February 2023
- Transport Statement, dated August 2022, prepared by Hampshire CC
- TRICS Vehicle Trip Generation Assessment, received 27th January 2023
- Utilities, dated 15//9/22, prepared by Hampshire CC
- Vent/Flue & Ventilation Details Statement, dated 4/8/22, prepared by Hampshire CC

2.3 *Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)*: the applicant has duly completed a CIL liability form with the submission. The proposed C3 use is CIL liable however as it would be affordable housing it would be subject to Social Housing relief.

3. PLANNING HISTORY

181606/DEM - Application for prior notification of proposed demolition of Central Swimming Pool down to ground level. Prior Approval Notification - Approval 11.10.2018. Demolition completed.

(031246) 03/00826/OUT - Proposed redevelopment to include demolition of existing swimming pool complex and erection of residential development of 89 units comprising 67 private dwellings and 22 affordable dwellings. Permitted subject to Legal Agreement, on 12.10.2004. Not implemented - now lapsed (massing image as below).

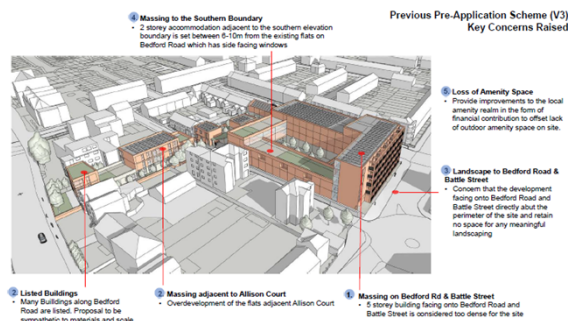


181900/PREAPP - Redevelopment of the Central Pool Site bounded by Battle Street, Bedford Road and Oxford Road (site area 0.55 hectare) for a total of 94 units comprising of 1,2 and 3 bed units (from 2-5 storeys) with access, amenity space and parking (total spaces 86). The proposal consists of a mix of private residential and affordable housing with a mixture of 2, 3, 4 and 5 storey buildings in the form of 4 blocks.

201753/PREAPP - New Day Centre for older persons, adults' mental health accommodation and affordable flats. Observations provided 28th October 2021.

The conclusion of which was that:

“Notwithstanding the lack of suitable and necessary supporting material submitted with the pre-application proposal (i.e. planning statement, heritage statement and DAS required to support/ inform any further design proposals) officers remain concerned regarding the extent of built form proposed on the site in terms of footprint and massing of the proposed block fronting the Bedford Road and Battle Street frontage; and the footprint and massing of the linear flatted block that has a frontage to the Oxford Road. A reduction in the overall building footprint shown is necessary to provide for a more appropriate lay off between built form within the site and to the site boundaries. This reduction will increase separation distances to achieve an acceptable impact on residential amenity and provide additional space for meaningful landscaping. The proposed development is also required to confirm that satisfactory car/cycle parking can be provided on site. Therefore, iteration V3 of the scheme cannot be supported by officers at this time.”



Version 3 pre-application plan

211802/PREAPP - Follow up pre-application for New Day Centre for Older Persons, Adult Mental Health Accommodation, Sheltered Flats and Affordable Dwellings. Final observations were provided on 13th May 2021. This followed initial feedback in December 2021, further amendments, discussions and the presentation of an amended version to the Reading Design Review Panel on

23rd February 2022. A further follow up meeting was held on 16th March 2022 and further amended information submitted on 29/3, which was the version commented as part of this pre-application enquiry.

4. CONSULTATIONS

Statutory

4.1 None.

Non-statutory

Berkshire Archaeology

4.2 Our view is in accord with the conclusions of the Desk Based Assessment submitted with the application, that whilst the wider area does show some limited archaeological potential, earlier negative impacts to the site from the central pool buildings and earlier development are likely to have significantly truncated any remains present, and as such no further archaeological work is merited. This is in line with advice given previously for the site.

TVP - CCTV

4.3 No objection

Conservation and Urban Design Officer, RBC

4.4 No comments received at time of writing.

Conservation Area Advisory Committee

4.5 It is noted where the trough is going to be moved to and that is fine. This looks like a thoughtful development and there is some good documentation in this pack. No comment from CAAC.

Ecology

4.6 The- application is for the clearance and redevelopment of the former Central swimming pool and land to the west. The proposed development will comprise seven buildings of varying heights.

4.7 The Ecology report (Hampshire County Council Ecology Team, August 2022) has been undertaken to the appropriate standard and concludes that once precautions are in place to protect nesting birds, the proposals are unlikely to impact upon protected species and/or priority species. As such, there are no ecological objections to this application.

4.8 The Ecology report states that “*formal Biodiversity Net gain calculation is provided, demonstrating that the development will deliver a 334% net gain in biodiversity*”. The calculation does not seem to have been uploaded to the RBC planning website, however it would seem unlikely that the proposals would not deliver a net gain in biodiversity.

4.9 In accordance with paragraph 180 of the NPPF, which states that “*opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged*”, it is recommended that conditions are set to ensure that the site is enhanced for wildlife post development through the provision of bird nesting and bat roosting features and wildlife friendly landscaping. The ecology report recommends a number of biodiversity enhancements

which include amenity grassland, new tree planting, formal planting and sedum roofs along with two bat, two swift boxes and two bird boxes.

- 4.10 Outline details of the landscaping enhancements are shown on the drawings *GA Roof Level Plan*, E05077-HCC-ZZ-RL-DR-A-2040 which refers to the green/brown roofs and *Landscape GA Ground Floor Plan*, E05077-HCC-ZZ-00-DR-L-7000 which also shows a number of new trees and raised planters. However, the species listed in the 'Tree and specimen shrub planting' plan and the 'planting plan' are entirely non-native (only two species in the list are native) and these should be replaced by native wildlife friendly planting. Furthermore, full details of the green roofs should be submitted with the planning application. The roofs should be designed to maximise its value for wildlife and should be a biodiverse green roof as opposed to a sedum roof. Full details of these enhancements including locations, plant species, numbers, specifications and ongoing management would need to be secured by condition.
- 4.11 The planning statement refers to 'in-wall bird nest bricks, invertebrate 'bee bricks', and integrated bat roost units and swift nest boxes at high level around the roof / top of walls'. However, there do not appear to be any drawings showing the locations of these bat and bird boxes. As such, full specifications and details of these all bird and bat boxes and plans showing the locations and elevations should be provided prior to approval of the application or a condition should be set to ensure that details are provided prior to commencement of development.
- 4.12 No objection on ecology grounds subject to the conditions: green roof details; bird or bat boxes, bricks or tiles; swift bricks; hard and soft landscaping details; external lighting scheme and how this will not adversely affect wildlife; and no removal of vegetation during bird nesting season.

Environmental Health

- 4.13 *Noise impact on development* - The noise assessment submitted shows that the recommended standard for internal noise can be met, if the recommendations from the assessment are incorporated into the design. It is recommended that a condition be attached to consent to ensure that the glazing (and ventilation) recommendations of the noise assessment (and air quality assessment, where relevant) will be followed, or that alternative but equally or more effective glazing and ventilation will be used.
- 4.14 *Noise between residential properties - sound insulation of any building* - informative recommended.
- 4.15 *Noise generating development* - Applications which include noise generating plant (in this case air source heat pumps) when there are nearby noise sensitive receptors should be accompanied by an acoustic assessment carried out in accordance with BS4142:2014+A1:2019 methodology. A condition is recommended.
- 4.16 *Air Quality - Increased exposure* - The assessment concludes that pollutant levels will be well within objective limit values at the new development therefore further assessment and/or mitigation is not required.
- 4.17 *Air Quality - Increased emissions* - The assessment states that there will be no significant traffic associated with the development therefore no further assessment is required regarding the impact on air quality.

- 4.18 *Contaminated Land* - The initial phase I assessment identifies risks from contaminated soils and potential risks from ground gas in made ground and recommends further assessment. Conditions are recommended and these are required to ensure that future occupants are not put at undue risk from contamination: Contaminated Land Assessment to be submitted and approved; Remediation Scheme to be submitted and approved; Remediation Scheme to be implemented and verified; and Unidentified contamination.
- 4.19 *Construction and Demolition Phases* - We have concerns about potential noise, dust and bonfires associated with the construction (and demolition) of the proposed development and possible adverse impact on nearby residents (and businesses).
- 4.20 Fires during construction and demolition can impact on air quality and cause harm to residential amenity. Burning of waste on site could be considered to be harmful to the aims of environmental sustainability.
- 4.21 The developer is recommended to apply for a section 61 Control of Pollution Act 1974 consent for the construction works.
- 4.22 The following conditions are recommended: Construction Method Statement; Hours of Construction/ Demolition; and no bonfires.
- 4.23 *Bin storage - rats* - There is a widespread problem in Reading with rats as the rats are being encouraged by poor waste storage which provides them with a food source. Where developments involve shared bin storage areas e.g. flats and hotels there is a greater risk of rats being able to access the waste due to holes being chewed in the base of the large wheelie bins or due to occupants or passers not putting waste inside bins, or bins being overfilled. It is therefore important for the bin store to be vermin proof to prevent rats accessing the waste. A condition is recommended.
- 4.24 ***Planning Officer Note:*** The agent sought to avoid pre-commencement conditions so submitted a Contamination Remediation Strategy and following review of this Strategy the Environmental Health Officer stated “*I have reviewed the report and in theory it means that only the validation condition would be required (in addition to unforeseen contamination condition). However, I have a couple of queries regarding the report which will need to be addressed first, as follows:*
- *Clean cover system with marker layer is proposed as the remediation scheme. However, it is not totally clear what this will comprise as the reference to the marker layer is not consistent throughout the report. The proposed cover system needs to be made very clear so that there is no confusion at validation stage.*
 - *Will the proposed clean cover system in landscaped areas address risks from PAH vapour (internal and external)?*
 - *Is the removal of contaminated material a necessary part of the remediation, if so, in which areas (landscaped and/or building areas and/or hardstanding as the report is not clear on this point?)”*
- 4.25 This will be reported in an update report.

Natural Environment (Tree Officer)

- 4.26 The comments on the original submission were as follows: The site sits within the lowest canopy cover ward (see further comment below), within the Air

Quality Management Area and partly within a Conservation Area. As such, the incorporation of landscaping / greening to provide a net gain is necessary.

- 4.27 The Design & Access Statement (DAS) provides some landscape principles, including in-ground planting, roof terraces & green roofs - the inclusion of the latter is positive. Section 5.1 sustainability of the DAS does not introduce Landscape led SuDs which should be considered (see further comments below).
- 4.28 With reference to the Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA 0 SS21016 ReBc BttSt AIA SK 1.2 dated 12/08/22): The tree survey includes 6 trees and confirms that all 6 (all on site) are to be removed with 37 to be planted - this provides a net gain of 31. Section 7.4 explains that this provides a 500% more canopy cover within ten years
- 4.29 Paragraphs 3.14 & 3.15 of the AIA refer to a TPO check on-line via Basingstoke & Deane's web info which is obviously not applicable. I can confirm that there is no TPO and although a small part of the site is within the Conservation Area none of the existing trees are within that.
- 4.30 Para. 6.4 discusses canopy cover in the ward. This has now been reassessed as a result of ward changes and the site sits within the lowest canopy cover ward in the borough at 5.5%, meaning that successful long-term tree planting is vital.
- 4.31 Para. 6.7 explains that limited space means that proposed trees will be small or medium in size so as not to negatively impact the properties by casting shade. Within the design proposed, this is mainly true, however I note one Oak (large canopy tree) is proposed which is positive.
- 4.32 Para. 8.3 indicates the need for good trees pits, preferably joined pits, however joined pits have not been proposed. See further comment on tree pits below.
- 4.33 Landscape GA Roof Plan E05077-HCC-ZZ-RL-DR-L-7001 - shows green roofs and the roof terraces, albeit it's slightly confusing showing other landscaping too.
- 4.34 Landscape GA Ground Floor E05077-HCC-ZZ-00-DR-L-7000 - noted and consistent with Tree and specimen shrub planting plan Landscape Principle document Rev A: 2.21 states '*Where feasible, tree pits within the landscape are to be designed to act as attenuation features*'. However, it does not appear this has been actioned hence an explanation is required (further comments given below).
- 4.35 Detailed section plan (including tree pits & planters) P05077-HCC-XX-DR-L-7401 - the soil volumes per tree should be stated to confirm that sufficient can be provided. In line with recommendations in the arboricultural report, joined pits should be considered and, depending on response to the SuDs queries below, combined with drainage.
- 4.36 Planting Plan P05077-HCC-XX-DR-L-7302 - It appears that wherever a dashed square is shown is 112m² but m³ should be stated - I note that 500mm depth of topsoil is indicated but presumably that is on top of subsoil?

- 4.37 Tree and specimen shrub planting plan P05077-HCC-XX-DR-L-7301 - *Betula Jacquemontii* should be replaced with one/both native Birches if birches are desired in line with biodiversity aim of Tree Strategy.
- 4.38 *Ostrya carpinifolia* is proposed on Bedford Road frontage - as discussed during a meeting with the agent, this frontage is important for greening/tree planting but there is very limited in terms of tree planting space, hence there is concern about the choice given its potential size. The spread of 8+m seems unfeasible, particularly given the balconies proposed which, in view of the ultimate height of 12+m will be a conflict. In a pre-application meeting on 6/4/22 it was agreed that a narrow form tree species was required here. It would appear prudent for the location of the *Malus* in the amenity spaces of Blocks E & F to be slightly relocated so they are not in the middle of gardens.
- 4.39 It would be useful for this plan to show the location of any proposed shed etc in gardens to demonstrate that all hard landscaping/structures and soft landscaping can both be achieved.
- 4.40 As advised, a diversity of family, genus and species is required. The species mix appears reasonable but the family, genus, species mix/proportions should be provided for completeness. I note that, aside from Birch, the species most recently planted by Parks in the area (info provided in April) have been avoided. It would be helpful for this plan to note which tree pit type is proposed in which location.
- 4.41 I note that big stock sizes are proposed which will result in greater maintenance requirements and higher costs - the applicant could save money on this aspect by reducing stock size, allowing more to be spent on tree pits.
- 4.42 With reference to the 'Below Ground Drainage Layout' plan (E05077-ECH-XX-XX-DR-C-7500 P01) - the central court attenuation feature potentially conflicts with trees, however I think the soil depth is approx. 0.8m above the tank? This is just about sufficient for tree planting but that whole depth would be required. Confirmation is sought as Tree pit details are shown above the attenuation tank but with no depth confirmed. However, ideally, there should be joined tree pit / SuDs combination. The drainage layout plan confirms separation of drainage from landscaping whereas EN18 hierarchy requires a joined-up system in the first instance, and it appears possible in this case. The likely hotter, drier summers, as a result of climate change, mean that creative ways of saving water must be incorporated. Landscaping will require a significant volume of water hence measures should be incorporated to limit the use of potable water. Direct runoff into/through landscaping before reaching the attenuation features and potential use of collected water for landscape maintenance should be considered.
- 4.43 Combined tree / SuDs features and/or joined tree pits may need further consideration or service routes. As per the Landscape principles document, services will need to avoid tree pits, albeit they can be run through root cells if necessary. Details of service routes will be required.
- 4.44 In conclusion, the principle of the development is acceptable, but a number of things need further consideration and/or clarification, as detailed above. I assume the applicant will seek to address these prior to a decision to avoid pre-commencement conditions.

- 4.45 **Planning Officer Note:** An amended plan/ further details were submitted seeking to respond to the matters raised. This is currently being reviewed by the Natural Environment Officer and will be reported in an update, however, none of the matters originally raised were fundamental to the acceptability of the scheme overall from a landscape/ tree perspective.

NHS Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board

- 4.46 We have noted the potential population numbers for planning purposes and will be informing the GP practices closest to the proposed development. You will be aware that we continue to liaise with yourselves with regard to S106 and CILs contributions for health services to help meet the increased demand associated with the aggregate impact of housing developments in Reading.

SUDS Manager

- 4.47 The proposed drainage design includes the provision of 3 attenuation tanks which will significantly reduce the surface water run off from the site and in principle is acceptable. The rate of discharge is to be set at 2.5 l/s however it is noted that the 1 in 100 year plus 40% climate change rate has been set at 3.9 l/s, it would therefore need to be clarified what the actual discharge rate would be. Should this be limited to 2.5 l/s then further drainage calculations would be required.

- 4.48 The courtyard area includes a large attenuation tank but no surface water from within that space feeds into that drainage system given that there is no gullies, permeable paving, slot drains etc. the drainage is limited to the rain water pipe network only, it would therefore need to be confirmed how this area will drain.

- 4.49 However, regardless of the above at this stage the applicant just needs to confirm that the proposal will reduce the surface water discharge from the site which has been provided, with this in mind I am happy to accept what has been submitted subject to the following conditions: Sustainable drainage to be approved; sustainable drainage to be implemented.

- 4.50 **Planning Officer Note:** Further information will be reported in an update.

RBC - Sustainability

- 4.51 The proposal includes good fabric standards, heat pumps and PV so it would meet policy standards in terms of zero carbon subject to payment for the balance of carbon. The scheme must meet the new building regulations as well as the -35% against part L.

- 4.52 More evidence needs to be provided that ground source heat pumps are not viable due to space requirements (also considering open loop boreholes).

- 4.53 The site is not far away from the District Heating energy Cluster as set out within the Council's commissioned Element Energy Report, and therefore, the site would ideally be connectable to district energy and with a compatible distribution system, albeit the submitted information identifies that as a justification on the basis of overheating.

- 4.54 **Planning Officer Note:** A further response was received from the applicant to address these points as discussed in Section h below

Thames Water

- 4.55 Foul Water - The scale of the proposed development doesn't materially affect the sewer network and as such we have no objection.
- 4.56 There are public sewers crossing or close to your development. If you're planning significant work near our sewers, it's important that you minimise the risk of damage.
- 4.57 Surface Water - if the developer follows the sequential approach to the disposal of surface water we would have no objection. Management of surface water from new developments should follow guidance under sections 167 & 168 in the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 4.58 Water - On the basis of information provided, no objection with regard to the water network and water treatment infrastructure capacity.
- 4.59 An informative is recommended as follows: Thames Water will aim to provide customers with a minimum pressure of 10m head (approx 1 bar) and a flow rate of 9 litres/minute at the point where it leaves Thames Waters pipes. The developer should take account of this minimum pressure in the design of the proposed development.

RBC Transport Strategy

- 4.60 The original comments were as follows: The site is located within Zone 2 primary core area and on 1 and on the periphery of the central core area which lies at the heart of Reading Borough, consisting primarily of retail and commercial office developments with good transport hubs.

Parking

- 4.61 Parking should be provided in accordance with the adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD.
- 4.62 The parking requirement for the accommodation would be a total of 73 spaces 68 spaces plus 5 visitor spaces, however it is proposed that 9 No. car parking spaces are proposed for the site, all spaces to be provided with Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points. Spaces are to be allocated in the following way:
- 2 x 3 bed dwellings = 2 allocated spaces (1 space each)
 - Wheelchair Accessible flat = 1 allocated accessible space
 - Older Person Day Centre = 3 allocated spaces. Open from 7 am to 5pm.
 - Supported Living Mental Health Flats 3 allocated spaces.
- 4.63 With regards to the day centre and supported living element, the submitted Transport Statement states a total of 13 staff has been established based on the number of staff at the current facilities that will be transferring to the proposed facility. This therefore equates to 6, which is what is being proposed and is deemed acceptable for this element of the development.
- 4.64 Dimensions of proposed parking bay conform to the Councils current standards and are deemed acceptable.
- 4.65 It is clear that the provision for the rest of the proposed units on the site falls well below the Councils current adopted standards, however given the extensive parking restrictions in place that include the operation of a residential parking scheme, double yellow lines etc and the frequent bus

service and general proximity of the town centre, a lower provision can be accepted in this instance.

4.66 As this proposal would generate additional pressure for parking in the area, there should be an assumption that any future occupants of the proposed residential units will not be issued with resident or visitor permits which would be covered by condition and an informative applied, this will ensure that the development does not harm the existing amenities of the neighbouring residential properties by adding to the already high level of on street car parking in the area.

4.67 It is likely there will be a net decrease in vehicle trips however the applicant has not provided the full assessment of TRICS data for this to be reviewed. Data is required for review.

4.68 To facilitate the relocated site access, offsite parking alterations are proposed that include:

- 2no existing permit parking spaces on Battle Street to be converted to provide a drop off bay/zone for the day centre minibuses.

4.69 It needs to be clarified that this will also serve as a loading bay as was discussed at the Pre-App stage. This facility is located on the Public Highway and therefore cannot be dedicated to the site and must be available to public as well.

- 2no existing 2-hour parking spaces on Battle Street to be converted to a 'car club' zone.

4.70 Plans would indicate that there will be a loss of approx. 23m of permit bays of which half of this is to be re provided for relocation of the new access and remaining element for the drop off/loading bay, therefore a further loss of permit bays for the proposed car club would require further justification given that it would only appear that 2 standard family homes are to be provided, with rest requiring some assistance/support for residents. Therefore, would a car club be required in line with our current standards where it states:

The following standards for Car Clubs (Residential) will apply in Reading:

- For developments of more than 10 residential units in Zones 1 and 2, developers will be required to:
- Provide or support a car club on the site or demonstrate that the development will have access to and the use of a car club on a nearby site.
- Create dedicated car parking spaces on the site for the car club.
- 4 existing permit parking spaces to be removed to provide a day care drop off point, to mitigate the loss of these spaces, 3 new spaces to be provided on Battle Street and 1 on James Street.

4.71 Having viewed aerial images of where James Street will be connected to the site, there are a number of Transport concerns. Given that there will be one way traffic through the development site exiting on to James Street a no entry sign will be required to ensure traffic travelling up James Street do not enter the site. The proposed bay on James Street cannot be provided as a retained turning area and must be provided for residents.

- 4.81 A Construction Method Statement will be required for this development.
- 4.82 Subject to the above being addressed the suggested Conditions and Informatives are as follows: CMS; Vehicle Parking as specified; Vehicle access to be approved; Cycle parking to be approved; refuse collection to be approved; parking permits, EV charging points.
- S106/Unilateral Undertaking*
- 4.83 Applicant should enter in to a S278 agreement in relation to the reconfiguration of the vehicular access on to Battle Street and new access on to James Street including closures of existing vehicular access points as may be required.
- 4.84 A contribution of £5,000 towards Traffic Regulation Orders necessary to alter existing parking restrictions surrounding the site.
- 4.85 **Planning Officer Note:** Following the submission of some additional/ amended information further comments were provided by Transport summarised as follows:
- the proposed location for a refuse vehicle on Battle Street would be further than 10m from the proposed refuse store. On the basis that there would be a strong possibility that cars would be parked in the resident/ 2-hour bay adjacent to the refuse store it would mean collection would have to be taken from the pavement build out further west and double the distance. Transport suggested that it would be a better option for the build out to be relocated east closer to the refuse store. The Waste Team have also confirmed that the proposed arrangement would be too far from the refuse store and would not be acceptable, and, therefore, bins would have to be presented to the roadside for collection rather than being collected from the refuse store. The applicant has confirmed that they will provide amended drawings to relocate the build out to address this issue and this will be reported in an update report.
 - The footway widths within the Mews remain unacceptable. The applicant has agreed to make amendments to the Mews layout to increase the width of the footway each side, to be achieved through adjustments to the siting of Block F (2 proposed houses) westwards and reduction in the width of parking bays. Transport has confirmed that this approach would be acceptable, and an amended plan is awaited. This will be reported in an update report.
 - TRICs information was submitted, which demonstrates that the proposal would generate fewer trips than the previous use.
 - The applicant has confirmed that 2 of the existing permit parking spaces on Battle Street would be converted to a drop off bay for the Day Centre/ loading bay, which is acceptable.
 - The originally proposed car club spaces have now been removed from Battle Street, which is agreed.
 - The no entry sign has been repositioned for the western end of James Street to the start of the Mews.
 - James Street would remain two way.
 - Revised tracking plans for the Mews, for refuse and fire trucks, will be required. These will be discussed in an update report.
 - A drawing is still required to show how the visibility of the sign on Oxford Road, in its current location, would not be obstructed by the proposed trees. This may also require amended tree information too. This will be reported in an update.

Waste

- 4.86 The waste will need to be deposited into separate receptacles. Will there be 3 different chutes for residents to deposit the waste properly? Also with the lockable bin store will this be coded or accessed with a key.
- 4.87 The maximum pulling distance from the bin store is 10m, so in this case the bins would need to be presented for collection or if it's possible the bin store would need to be relocated to eliminate the potential access issues or remove that parking bay/ place bollards outside the store, to stop others parking in that bay.
- 4.88 **Planning Officer Note:** As set out above an amended plan will be provided which addresses the relationship of the refuse vehicle to the proposed refuse store. Further details regarding the chutes was provided which is deemed acceptable.

Public consultation

- 4.89 As set out in the submitted Planning Statement, the applicant undertook their own public consultation prior to submission of the application. This comprised a public event and engagement in Spring 2022. Comments arising from this process are documented in the Pre-Planning Consultation Comments Tracker.
- 4.90 Following submission of the application, the following addresses were consulted by the Local Planning Authority:
Allison Court 1-22 (all)
Flats 1-6 120A (all), 120-134 (even) Oxford Road
2-8 (even) James Street
1-31 (flats) (all), 32-40 (even), 33-37 (odd) Bedford Road
134-144 (even), 146-148 Chatham Street
23-37 (odd), 6-44 (even) Battle Street
Flats 1, 2a, 2, 3, 4 - 21 George Street
7-19 (odd) George Street
5,6, 9, 11 and 18 Cherwell Crescent
- 4.91 Site notices were displayed on Oxford Road, Battle Street and Bedford Road.
- 4.92 2 no. objections and 1 no. support were received, summarised as follows:

- Impact on natural daylight to ground floor flat of 4. Allison Court as five of the property's six windows would face the development.
- An EIA has not been undertaken.
- The temperature in the building would be negatively impacted.
- Support for the redevelopment of Central swimming pool site as there is a need for affordable housing in Reading.

5. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

- 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) (2019) which states at Paragraph 11 "Plans and decisions should apply a

presumption in favour of sustainable development”. The relevant sections of the NPPF are:

National Policy - National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021

Section 2 - Achieving Sustainable Development

Section 5 - Delivering a Sufficient Supply of Homes

Section 8 - Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities

Section 9 - Promoting Sustainable Transport

Section 11 - Making Effective Use of Land

Section 12 - Achieving Well-Designed Places

Section 14 - Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change

Section 15 - Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment

Section 16 - Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment

- 5.2 The site includes a part within a Conservation Area and close to listed buildings, therefore, the following Sections of the Act are relevant:
- 5.3 Section 16(2) and 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special interest which it possesses.
- 5.4 Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority in the exercise of its functions to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.
- 5.5 The Development Plan is the **Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019) (RBLP)**. The entire site is within a specific allocation under Policy CR14: Other Sites for Development in Central Reading.

*Policy CR14a Central Swimming Pool, Battle Street
Development for residential use once replacement swimming provision has been addressed.*

Development should:

- *Conserve and where possible enhance the setting of the Conservation Area and nearby listed buildings;*
- *Take account of nearby scale of development, including higher density development to the east;*
- *Address noise impacts on residential use;*
- *Address air quality impacts on residential use;*
- *Avoid overlooking of the rear of existing residential properties; and*
- *Take account of the potential impact on water infrastructure in conjunction with Thames Water, and make provision for upgrades where required.*

Site size: 0.55 ha 80-120 dwellings

- 5.6 Other relevant policies within the Local Plan are as follows:

Policy CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

Policy CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction

Policy CC3: Adaptation to Climate Change

Policy CC4: Decentralised Energy

Policy CC5: Waste Minimisation and Storage
 Policy CC6: Accessibility and the Intensity of Development
 Policy CC7: Design and the Public Realm
 Policy CC8: Safeguarding Amenity
 Policy CC9: Securing Infrastructure
 Policy EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
 Policy EN3: Enhancement of Conservation Areas
 Policy EN5: Protection of Significant Views with Heritage Interest
 Policy EN6: New Development in a Historic Context
 Policy EN7: Local Green Space and Public Open Space
 Policy EN9: Provision of Open Space
 Policy EN10: Access to Open Space
 Policy EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network
 Policy EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodland
 Policy EN15: Air Quality
 Policy EN16: Pollution and Water Resources
 Policy EN17: Noise Generating Equipment
 Policy EN18: Flooding and Drainage
 Policy H1: Provision of Housing
 Policy H2: Density and Mix
 Policy H3: Affordable Housing
 Policy H5: Standards for New Housing
 Policy H6: Accommodation for Vulnerable People
 Policy H10: Private and Communal Outdoor Space
 Policy TR1: Achieving the Transport Strategy
 Policy TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
 Policy TR4: Cycle Routes and Facilities
 Policy TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging
 OU1: New and Existing Community Facilities
 CR1: Definition of Central Reading
 CR2: Design in Central Reading
 CR3: Public Realm in Central Reading
 CR4: Leisure, Culture and Tourism in Central Reading
 CR6: Living In Central Reading

5.7 **Relevant Supplementary Planning Documents** are as follows:

- Affordable Housing (March 2021)
- Employment, Skills and Training (April 2013)
- Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)
- Planning Obligations under Section 106 (2015)
- Sustainable Design and Construction (December 2019)

5.8 **Other RBC documents**

- Reading Tree Strategy (2021)
- Reading Borough Biodiversity Action Plan (2021)
- High Street Heritage Action Zone
<https://www.reading.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/heritage-and-conservation/reading-high-streets-heritage-action-zone/>
- Open Spaces Strategy 2007, RBC
- Housing Strategy for Reading 2020 - 2025
- Annual Monitoring Report 2021-2022 December 2022
- BRE Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight - A guide to good practice, (BR 209 2022 edition)
- Russell Street/ Castle Hill /Oxford Road Conservation Area Appraisal (2020) (The CA is within Historic England's At Risk Register)

- The National Design Guide (2019)
- The National Model Design Code (July 2021)
- Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 3 (2nd Edition) The Setting of Heritage Assets (Historic England, 2017)

6. APPRAISAL

6.1 The main matters to be considered are:

- a) Principle of Development
- b) Housing Density & Mix
- c) Design and Effect on Character and Appearance of the Area and Heritage
- d) Residential Amenity
- e) Landscaping & Ecology
- f) Transport/ Parking
- g) Open Space and Public Realm
- h) Sustainability and Energy
- i) SUDS and Water Supply
- j) Environmental Matters - Contamination
- k) Unilateral Undertaking
- l) Equalities impact

6.2 The key concerns Officers raised, as part of the pre-application process, that needed to be addressed as part of a formal submission, were as follows:

- *That the design of the building form to Battle Street and Bedford Road was further developed to address massing issues;*
- *That the design of the building fronting Oxford Road would be appropriate within the context of the Conservation area, near to Listed Buildings and being within the Highstreet Heritage Action Zone;*
- *That the public route through from Oxford Road to Battle Street would create an attractive street in its own right;*
- *Justification that the central east facing mews building would be acceptable with specific reference to residential amenity concerns;*
- *Clear demonstration that the proposed scheme overall, both in terms of internal and external spaces and adjoining developments, would meet relevant daylight/ sunlight requirements;*
- *Greening of the site and specifically the road frontages, especially that of Bedford Road, would be satisfactorily addressed to create a high-quality scheme, which meets the relevant policy framework.*

a) Principle of Development

6.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (2021) encourages the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land) and seeks that all applications for housing should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

6.4 Paragraph 8 of the NPPF identifies three overarching objectives of sustainable development - economic, social and environmental. It is considered that the proposal would meet the economic role through construction and direct local employment. In terms of social it would provide for affordable housing, the provision of social care accommodation for which

there is a substantial need, provision of day care for older persons and an accessible location with good connectivity to the local and wider area. For environmental it would use fabric efficient and low carbon technologies to reduce carbon emissions, create a net gain in biodiversity and provide public realm and amenity open space provision. This would accord with RBLP Policy CC1 'Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development'.

- 6.5 Policy CR14a allocates the site for residential use subject to replacement swimming provision being provided. The Central Pool was closed in 2018 as it was deemed that it had reached the end of its design life. A demountable, temporary replacement pool was constructed at Rivermead and opened in January 2018 and remains in use. The new Rivermead Leisure Centre is due to open in 2023 and will include enhanced swimming facilities including a diving pool.
- 6.6 The Policy identifies an indicative number of 80-120 dwellings for the site. The proposal is for a residential-led mixed use development, which would achieve up to 62 dwellings along with a 35-person older persons' day centre. This would secure fewer dwellings than the allocation seeks, and in terms of the supported living units proposed and the old persons' day centre, would include units, which would not contribute to meeting the overall housing targets need. However, the supported living units would meet the priorities as defined in the Housing Strategy for Reading 2020-2025 and in meeting a specific housing need would in turn accord with the requirements of Policy H6 that *"where development would result in a loss of general housing, it must meet identified needs in the most up-to-date Housing Strategy and be able to accommodate at least an equivalent number of people"*.
- 6.7 Assessment of how the proposal meets the other criteria within Policy CR14a are addressed under the relevant sections below.
- 6.8 The provision of an older persons' day centre is supported by Policy OU1 'New and existing community facilities', where there is a choice of means of travel, and in existing centres where possible. The site's location is considered to sufficiently meet these criteria. The Policy also encourages the co-location of community uses where the provision of a mix of compatible services on one site is encouraged.
- 6.9 Para 5.4.36 of the Local Plan states: *"On some sites identified for housing, there may be potential for community uses, such as meeting spaces, healthcare or education to be provided which have not been anticipated by this plan. There may also be potential for specialist housing provision for other groups, outside the C3 dwellinghouse use class. This could potentially reduce the amount of housing which could be provided on specific sites. Depending on other policies in the plan, this can be appropriate, provided that it does not harm the chances of delivering sufficient housing to meet the targets set out in local policy - this decision will be informed by the most up-to-date housing trajectory."* The latest version of the housing trajectory in the 2021-22 Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) shows that delivery over and above the targets in the plan period are expected.
- 6.10 It should be noted that Policy H6: Accommodation for Vulnerable People supports development for specialist accommodation as proposed subject to detailed criteria including: adequate provision of (non-emergency) ambulance access; incorporation of green spaces; and design to respect the

residential character of the surroundings. It is considered that the proposed scheme meets these criteria.

- 6.11 This policy also states that affordable housing for vulnerable people that meets the needs of the most up to date housing strategy may count towards affordable housing provision in line with Policy H3.
- 6.12 In accordance with Policy H3 (Affordable Housing) the LPA would look to secure 30% of the units as affordable housing as part of any unilateral undertaking legal agreement linked to a planning permission. The scheme presented includes for all of the units to be affordable housing. The 100% provision exceeds affordable housing policy requirements, but in itself would have significant weight within the planning balance.
- 6.13 The proposal would accord with Policy CC6 (Accessibility and the intensity of development) as it is a highly sustainable location accessible by all modes of transport and the intensity of development is considered appropriate.
- 6.14 A residential-led, mixed-use development is, therefore, acceptable in principle subject to addressing a range of policy matters including: design, amenity, mix, and sustainability as follows.

b) Housing Density and Mix

- 6.15 The proposal includes 62 dwelling units, with a mix of 1 bed, 2 bed and 3 bed units, mostly in flats and some in houses. In relation to housing mix CR6 'Living in the Central Reading' sets out as a guide that in developments of 15 dwellings or more, a maximum of 40% of units should be 1-bed units and a minimum of 5% of units should be 3-bed units. The proposal would require 4 x 3 bed units which would be achieved in the form of 2x 3 bed houses and 4 x 3 bed flats, and, therefore, exceeds the policy guidance. The proposal would include 77% 1 beds, but this is deemed to be acceptable due to the nature of the housing that would be provided.
- 6.16 The proposal includes 13 supported living flats (C2 use) targeted at people living alone to meet an identified need and it is considered that the proposed unit mix is appropriate in this instance under Policy H6.
- 6.17 In relation to density the local plan allocation at Policy CR14a suggests 80-120 dwellings however, paragraph 5.4.33 of the supporting text to Policy CR14e states that "*where dwelling or floorspace figures are included alongside the allocations, these are intended as a guide, and usually reflect an indicative maximum capacity. They are based on an initial assessment taking into account the characteristics of each site. However, the capacity of sites will ultimately depend on various factors that need to be addressed at application stage, including detailed design and layout. The fact that a site is allocated in CR14 does not preclude the need to comply with all other policies in the local plan*". Policy H2 Density and Mix sets out that the capacity of a site will depend on various factors that need to be addressed at application stage.
- 6.18 The scheme proposes a density of 113dph that is in keeping with the indicative density range of 'above 100dph' in the Town centre specified in Policy H2.

c) **Design and Effect on Character and Appearance of the Area and Heritage**

- 6.19 The NPPF (Para 126) sets out that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development.
- 6.20 Policy CC7: Design and the Public Realm, requires all development to be of a *“high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located.”* Design includes layout, landscape, density and mix, scale: height and massing, and architectural details and materials.
- 6.21 Developments in Central Reading should demonstrate a number of attributes as defined under Policy CR2 including: Building on and respecting the existing grid layout structure of the central area, providing continuity and enclosure through appropriate relationships between buildings and spaces, and frontages that engage with the street at lower levels, and contributing towards enhanced ease of movement through and around the central area; well-designed public spaces and other public realm; where possible, include ways of providing green infrastructure designed into the development, for instance through roof gardens, green walls and green roofs, to enhance the otherwise very urban environment; architectural details and materials to be of high quality and respect the form and quality of the detailing and materials in areas local to the development site; public realm should contribute to the diversity of the central area, and be designed to enhance community safety.
- 6.22 Policy CR14a specifically identifies that development of the site needs to :
- *Conserve and where possible enhance the setting of the Conservation Area and nearby listed buildings.*
 - *Take account of nearby scale of development, including higher density development to the east;*
- 6.23 The southern part of the site is within the Russell Street / Castle Hill /Oxford Road Conservation Area and within close proximity of listed buildings, which are both defined as heritage assets. The extract below shows that part of the site is within the CA and is opposite and close to a number of listed buildings.

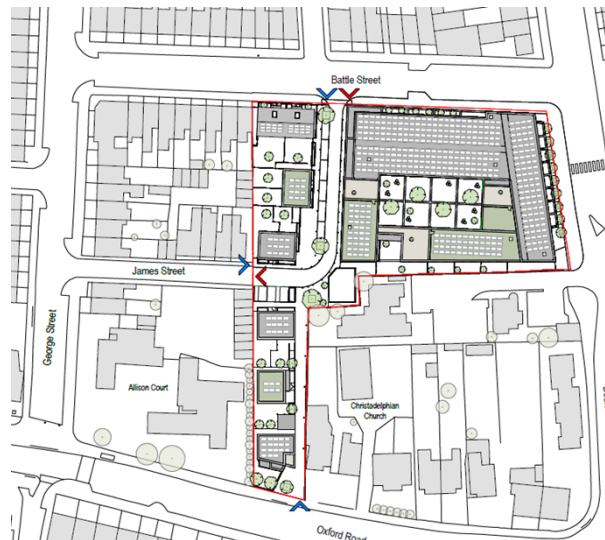


The star marks the part of the site on Oxford Road

- 6.24 Therefore, the proposals have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the NPPF (section 16) and local policies EN1, EN3 and EN6, which state:
- 6.25 EN1 - *“All proposals will be expected to protect and where possible enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings, the historic character and local distinctiveness of the area in which they are located. Proposals should seek to avoid harm in the first instance. Any harm to or loss of a*

heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification, usually in the form of public benefits.”

- 6.26 EN3 - *“the special interest, character and architecture of Conservation Areas will be conserved and enhanced. Development proposals within Conservation Areas must make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. Positive consideration will be given to proposals which take opportunities to enhance the character of conservation areas.”*
- 6.27 EN6 - seeks that in areas characterised by heritage assets the historic environment will inform and shape new development.
- 6.28 Part of the site is also within the designated High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ), which is a heritage-led initiative project run by Reading Borough Council and supported by Historic England, to create economic growth and improve the quality of life in historic high streets. The objectives include to improve the physical condition and viability of the high streets and to develop a comprehensive strategy to improve the public realm.
- 6.29 The Conservation Area (CA) Appraisal identifies that redevelopment within or adjoining the CA should respect the general height, massing and alignment of existing buildings and use a palette of materials which reflect its existing character, predominantly comprising red brick, and that there is a lack of green canopy cover in the area.
- 6.30 The site is an irregular shape and comprises three distinct blocks of form with the scale of the proposal intended to act as a transition between the taller development of the town centre to the east and the low-rise residential development to the west and to accord with the scale of adjoining development



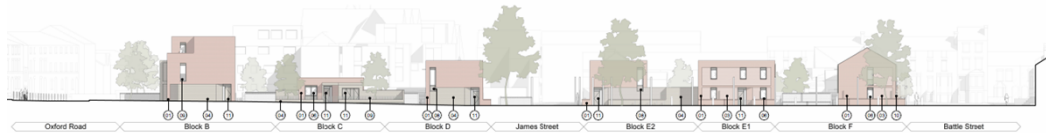
6.31 The main blocks are as follows:

Block A - A perimeter courtyard block, which has development which addresses the street frontages of Battle Street and Bedford Road and steps down in scale on the Mews (west) and the southern wing of Block A. Four storeys are proposed to the main frontages to Bedford Road and Battle Street and a two-storey part to the south adjacent to existing flats. The building

line is maintained along Bedford Road and Battle Street and there is tree planting proposed to enhance the appearance within the wider streetscene.

Blocks F, E1 & E2 - houses fronting Battle Street, and 2 blocks, one adjacent to the end of James Street and one facing the new 'mews' - 2 storeys

Blocks B, C and D - Three buildings on the narrow linear section of the site from Oxford Road to the end of James Street - three, one and two storey respectively.



Section looking towards the west



Block A Elevation from the Mews looking towards Bedford Road



Blocks A and E2 looking towards Battle Street



Block B (Block A in the distance) from Oxford Road looking towards Battle Street

Block A

6.32 The proposed facades of the block are simple and repetitive in detailing and composition. The subtle height variation and recessed top floor break up the scale and add visual interest to this mixed-use block. There are corner windows to the Battle Street/ Mews corner with a set-back so that there is an articulation in the massing along the Mews frontage side and this creates a more celebrated corner as envisaged in policy. The parapet wall height to the corner of Battle Street and Bedford Road is higher than the remainder of

the building and it projects further forward than the remainder of the Battle Street frontage, which serves to break down the overall length of the building and provide articulation in the massing. The design solution for the balconies on Bedford Road (eastern façade) are considered suitable for the gateway location. It is considered that the proposed four storey building would be sympathetic to its surroundings. The overall massing and articulation of the main blocks to Battle Street and Bedford Road include a set-back which enable planting to be achieved to the frontage.



Blocks A and F from Battle Street

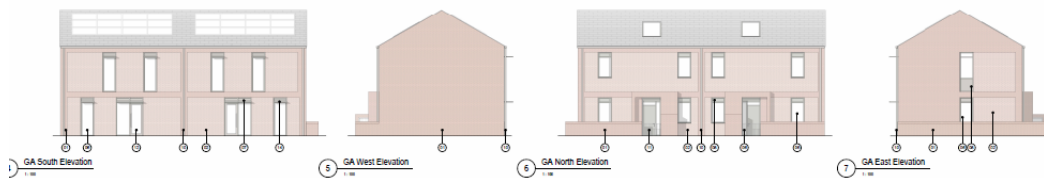


Block A from Bedford Road

6.33 In terms of the internal layout, each user group would access spaces through their own core with lifts and stairs. Units would be single aspect.

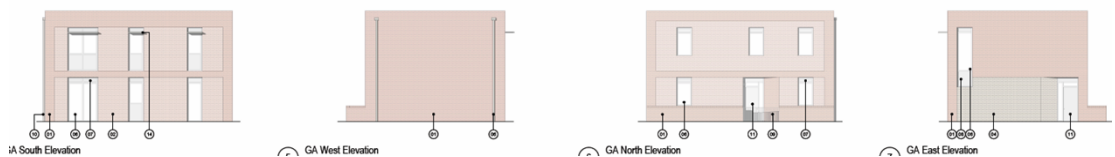
Block F - houses

6.34 The proposed houses fronting Battle Street use traditional pitch roof form and set back with front gardens to accord with the overall design of the adjoining terrace.



Blocks D, E1 & E2 - two storey buildings- flats

6.35 These two storey dual aspect blocks would face the Mews. They would be of a simple contemporary form of a similar scale to the existing terraces and using some traditional materials. The flat roofs would maximise the potential for PV panels and contribute to the sustainability of the scheme.



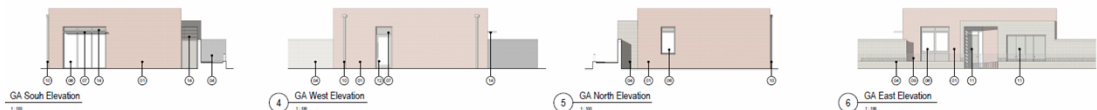
Block D



Blocks E1 & E2

Block C - single storey

- 6.36 The single storey accessible dwelling would be simple in form with an active frontage to the new pathway from Oxford Road. There are other examples of single storey buildings in between buildings eg the church to the east of the site and this scale of building would maximise the redevelopment of the site, whilst minimising impacts on existing buildings.

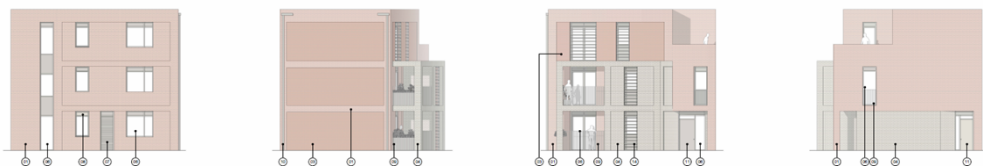


Block C

- 6.37 Buildings C, D, E1 and E2 are either single or two storeys, and are considered to be at an appropriate scale to fit in with the surrounding development, whilst ensuring amenity affects are minimised in terms of overbearing, loss of privacy, outlook and effect on daylight and sunlight, as discussed further below.

Block B

- 6.38 The southern part of the site facing Oxford Road is located within a Conservation Area. It is currently a vacant plot, which has a negative impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.



- 6.39 A Heritage Statement has been submitted as part of the application and the design of the Oxford Road building (Block B, as above) would be three storeys and would include a parapet to reflect architectural detailing of other buildings in the vicinity as well as to enable maximisation of PV panels. Although contemporary in appearance it would include recessed balconies and projecting bay features, alignment of windows, and materials which would reflect and be consistent with nearby buildings.

- 6.40 The building would be set back, consistent with the prevailing building line, and would include space for soft landscaping to the front with paving and boundary treatment of railings and a wall on the frontage. It would improve the appearance of the site and would be the gateway to the site from Oxford Road and would include an active frontage and the entrance to the public

path connecting from Oxford Road to Battle Street. It would incorporate tree planting and the relocated trough from Bedford Road.

- 6.41 It is considered that it would have appropriate massing and form and would successfully fill the gap in the urban grain on this side of the road by restoring the active frontage to Oxford Road.
- 6.42 It is, therefore, considered to be appropriate within the context of the Conservation Area and Listed Buildings as well as its location within the High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ).
- 6.43 The overall scheme is considered to create continuity and enclosure, through the use of a series of perimeter blocks with public fronts and private backs seeking to 'stitch' the new development into the network of existing streets. This enclosure of built form would assist with natural surveillance, wayfinding and legibility, particularly along the mews street from Oxford Road.
- 6.44 The proposal includes windows and front doors to the streets to create active frontages and would provide access directly from a level footpath with no steps or ramps.
- 6.45 The building lines to Battle Street and Bedford Road align with neighbouring buildings and include a set-back to allow defensible space in the form of raised beds and trees. The buildings along the Mews and the path linking Oxford Road to Battle Street would have entrances and windows facing on to these public areas.
- 6.46 The proposal includes streetscape enhancements with the reintroduction of frontage development to Bedford Road, Battle Street and Oxford Road and a new Mews street and would make a positive contribution to the public realm. It would include green infrastructure which would enhance the urban environment.
- 6.47 There would be enhanced permeability through the site both for vehicles and pedestrians and the improved pedestrian links for both residents and the wider community. There would be vehicular access from Battle Street (one way) to James Street (remaining as two way) out onto George Street for access, deliveries, maintenance and refuse collection. The improved pedestrian link would be from Battle Street to Oxford Road.
- 6.48 In terms of materials the proposed scheme utilises the area's predominant red brick with grey bricks for ground floor elements and entrances. Fibre cement cladding is proposed to the top floor of the supported living elements on the Battle Street elevation, to lighten the mass to this elevation and fibre cement slates are proposed for the pitched roofs to the Battle Street homes, to match the adjacent slates on the terraced housing.
- 6.49 In certain parts of the scheme it is proposed to use Flemish bond brickwork to reference the historical context and decorative brickwork within the passageway wall to illustrate the historical and cultural context of the area designed in collaboration with local artists.
- 6.50 It is considered that the proposed approach to the overall layout, massing and design of the development has been well thought out and justified

appropriately in the context of the site's surroundings, including impact on heritage asset

- 6.51 The development proposals were assessed by the Reading Design Review Panel (DRP) at pre-application stage (Feb 2022), and they supported the approach with regard to the scheme seeking to respond to the urban grain with the key aims of: mending the city block; routes through connecting to Oxford Road; a scale to reflect the adjacent buildings; and placemaking through the inclusion of a Mews and courtyard. They identified that “*a development of this order can be accommodated if the design is evolved to address a few subtleties*” which included:

*“- The realignment of frontages along Battle Street & Bedford Road
- The introduction of a focal / ordering space central within the site
- Reorientation and improved engagement of the Mews buildings with the public realm.
-The enhancement of boundary treatments between the Mews gardens and the public route through the site.”*

The submitted scheme has responded to these matters.

- 6.52 The overall bulk and mass and the proposed design appearance is considered to be sympathetic to the surrounding character making a positive contribution to it, whilst offering a contemporary character. Subject to the above conditions it is considered that it accords with relevant policies CR14a, CC7, EN1, EN3 and EN6 and meets the statutory requirements of Sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to preserve the setting of listed buildings and to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of conservation areas respectively.

d) Residential Amenity

- 6.53 Policy CC8 requires development to 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; Noise and disturbance; Artificial lighting; Vibration; Dust and fumes; Smell; Crime and safety.
- 6.54 Policy CR14a also includes criteria to: “
- *Avoid overlooking of the rear of existing residential properties;*
 - *Address noise impacts on residential use; and*
 - *Address air quality impacts on residential use.”*
- 6.55 Policy EN16 seeks to ensure development is not damaging to the environment and sensitive receptors by way of pollution. Policy EN15 specifically seeks to protect existing occupiers from poor quality and EN17 from noise associated with plant equipment. Policy CR6 requires new residential type development within the defined Reading Central Area to demonstrate how issue of noise and other disturbance from town centre uses have been considered and where necessary mitigated.

Privacy and Overlooking

- 6.56 In terms of Block A the southern wing is ca 6.6m from the nearest point of the existing flat blocks to the south and includes a roof garden. The flats to the south have their main living spaces to the east and west and the majority of this south wing is opposite the flats' parking and landscaped areas. As the internal layout of the existing flats, has kitchens and bathroom windows towards the site, it is not considered that there would be a significant detrimental impact with respect to overlooking and loss of privacy for either the proposed or existing residents.
- 6.57 The 4-storey block which faces Bedford Road is ca 20m to the nearest property and the block facing Battle Street is opposite 3 storey terraced houses and at distance of ca 18m (building to building). It is considered that there would be sufficient distance to ensure minimal impact on overlooking and loss of privacy.
- 6.58 The east facing building fronting the mews (Block E1) would have some oblique views into the rear of existing dwellings on James Street and Battle Street at a distance of ca 13.6m, but it is considered that this is a common relationship in built -up areas.
- 6.59 Block E2 would be adjacent to the end of James Street, and the closest existing terrace has a small side facing window, but this would face a blank elevation.
- 6.60 Block D would be sufficiently distant from James Street terraces and the closest west facing windows of Bedford Road flats.
- 6.61 Allison Court is 9m from the Oxford Road building (Block B) and has living rooms which would face the new blank elevations so there would be no direct overlooking. There would be some oblique views to Allison Court from the rear (kitchen windows).
- 6.62 There would some views from the kitchen windows of Block B to the amenity space and windows of the single storey dwelling (Block C). This would be minimised through the use of landscaping.

Access to Sunlight and Daylight

- 6.63 The submitted Daylight and Sunlight Assessment has been independently reviewed for the LPA. It was confirmed that the scope of the assessment is reasonable and that using the previous pool buildings as a comparison to the proposed scheme is also reasonable. However, although consented schemes can be used as an alternative target, in this instance the previous consented scheme is almost 20 years old and officers, therefore, consider that comparisons to this approved, but lapsed scheme, is not applicable in this instance.

Existing Properties

- 6.64 The impacts of proposed development on existing surrounding properties, in terms of receipt of daylight, is assessed via the Vertical Sky Component (VSC), which is a measurement of the amount of daylight falling on a vertical wall or window; and the No Sky Line (NSL) which is a measurement of the how much sky can be seen from a room/window. An assessment of sunlight is made using the Annual Probable Sunlight Hours (APSH) parameter which is a measurement of the average of the total number of hours during a year in which direct sunlight is expected be received.

- 6.65 A minor adverse impact includes where only a small number of windows or limited area of open space would be affected; the loss of light would only marginally be outside the BRE guidelines¹; the affected room has other sources of skylight or sunlight. A major adverse impact includes a large number of windows or large area of open space would be affected; the loss of light is substantially outside the guidelines; all of the windows in a particular property would be affected.
- 6.66 The Assessment reviewed windows at the following existing properties: nos. 6-30 Battle Street; no. 23 Battle Street; no.8 James Street; 1-14 Allison Court; nos. 32, and no.33 Bedford Road; 146-148 Chatham Street, 134 Oxford Road; and 2 flat blocks 1-21 Bedford Road (to the south of proposed Block A).
- 6.67 Of the windows assessed there would be minor adverse impacts on the lower ground rooms of nos.6-14 Battle Street and also to the ground floor rooms of nos. 6-10.
- 6.68 No. 23 Battle Street would experience some loss of light to windows within the side of a rear extension, but has another window serving the same room which would meet guidelines.
- 6.69 No. 8 James Street would experience minor adverse impacts to a kitchen window and side bedroom window. There would be a major impact to the sunlight within the garden. However, because of its size and orientation, there would already be restricted levels of sunlight.
- 6.70 Of nos. 1-14 Allison Court there would be a single east facing window at ground floor which would experience a minor adverse impact, marginally below guidelines. This room is understood to be served by an additional front (south) facing window.
- 6.71 Flats 1-21 Bedford Road there would be a minor adverse impact to flats 9-21 to a kitchen/ living/ dining room rear window, but the overall room would have sufficient daylight and sunlight.
- 6.72 The impact of the development on the existing properties is largely negligible, with a few areas of minor adverse impact. There is one major impact in terms of loss of sunlight to a garden area, which already experiences below standard levels of sunlight. This would be a very limited harmful effect when the scale and benefits of the scheme are considered overall.

Proposed Units

- 6.73 With regard to the proposed units in addition to the BRE report there is also BSEN17037:2018 'Daylight in Buildings', which for daylight provision to rooms recommends target illuminances over at least 50% of a room as 100lux for Bedrooms, 150lux for living rooms and 200lux for kitchens. This is the method used in the submitted daylight/sunlight assessment. With respect to sunlight this is measured as the hours of sunlight received to a point on the inside of windows on a selected date (suggested by the BRE report as 21st March) with minimum =1.5hrs, medium= 3hrs and maximum=4hrs. The submitted assessment has assumed a cloudless sky and therefore the data presented represents a maximum possible amount of sunlight. The standard states that at least one habitable room in a dwelling should receive at least

¹ Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight: A Guide to Good Practice, BRE

the recommended number of hours exposure to sunlight and the BRE suggest that living areas may be seen as more important than bedrooms.

- 6.74 The BRE Report suggests that for open space to be well sunlit that at least 50% of its area should receive at least 2 hours of sunlight on 21st March and this is the method used in the submitted assessment.

Daylight to proposed units

- 6.75 The submitted assessment has considered ground and first floor rooms of Block A and the ground floor rooms of Blocks B-F, therefore, not all rooms in the proposed scheme have been included in the assessment.
- 6.76 For Block A, 11 of the 30 rooms assessed would be below daylight recommendations and the independent review undertaken by BRE sets out that the second and third floors have equivalent rooms, and there would, therefore, be the potential for at least some of these to also be below the recommendations, i.e. up to 23 bedrooms, albeit in general terms there would be an improvement in daylight the higher up the room is.
- 6.77 Eight living areas of the 26 analysed would be below daylight recommendations. As with the bedrooms there would be equivalent rooms at the second and third floors, but may also have the potential to be below recommendations, i.e. up to 16 living rooms.
- 6.78 The majority of the rooms, below the recommendations, lie to the eastern façade (towards Bedford Road) and to improve these would require design changes to the proposed balconies. The balconies themselves are considered important to the overall amenity provision of the flats and also form a key part of the overall design presented. It is considered that the benefits in terms of the provision of balconies outweighs any negative impact resulting from rooms which would not fully meet daylight recommendations.
- 6.79 For the remainder of the Blocks, one bedroom in Block C would be below daylight recommendations, but a bedroom is considered to be less sensitive to daylight provision than living rooms, and this limited infringement is not considered significant when the scheme is considered overall.

Sunlight to proposed units and open spaces

- 6.80 For Unit A 15 of the 24 living areas assessed at ground and first floors would have at least 1.5 hours of sunlight, and by extrapolating these to other living rooms in the block it would mean that at least 29/50 (58%) would meet the minimum sunlight recommendation. Those below recommended guidance levels would largely be the single aspect north facing units (to Battle Street) and the eastern facing units with balconies. As with daylight the amendment of the balconies would lead to some improvement. However, when weighed in the planning balance in terms of the efficient use of this brownfield site and the significant benefits in terms of the type of housing provision including 100% affordable housing, the provision of balconies for amenity space, it is not considered that it would be so harmful as to warrant refusal on this basis.
- 6.81 All the proposed living areas of Blocks B-F would be able to meet at the minimum recommendation for sunlight provision.
- 6.82 There would be some areas of gardens/ open space that would fall below the recommended guidelines, for sunlight, but this would not be uncommon when

considering maximising the redevelopment and reuse of this urban site and the resulting orientation and layout required.

Visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development

- 6.83 This has been addressed in the design section above.

Harm to Outlook

- 6.84 The development of the site would be a significant change to the current cleared site, but overall, there would be a limited harm to outlook to surrounding residential properties taking into account the previous swimming pool and that any re-use of this urban site would have some effect on outlook for some properties. Reintroducing a perimeter block would, as stated above, 'stitch' the new development into the network of streets to accord with sound design principles, and as commended by the Design Review Panel, and this is considered to outweigh any harm to outlook.

Noise and disturbance

- 6.85 A noise assessment has been submitted and this urban site includes areas which would be impacted by noise from the road environment, primarily from traffic along Oxford Road and Bedford Road corridors. The proposal includes for affected facades on those roads to have triple glazed windows and to be ventilated mechanically, and the Environmental Health Officer is satisfied that the glazing specification and mechanical ventilation proposed demonstrates that future occupiers of the flats would be subject to acceptable internal noise levels and a condition is included along with informative regarding sound insulation (a building regulations requirement) to minimise disturbance between adjacent units. This would accord with Policy EN16.
- 6.86 The proposed hours of operation for the day centre would be Monday-Friday from 7am to 5pm, so would not significantly affect the residential units and would not be an uncommon period of operation for a centrally located community facility.
- 6.87 The proposal includes noise generating plant (air source heat pumps). A condition is recommended requiring the submission and approval of a noise assessment and the implementation of identified mitigation measures. This would accord with Policy EN17.

Air Quality

- 6.88 The site is also located within an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and an air quality assessment has been submitted with the application which concludes that the predicted concentrations of relevant pollutant (NO₂, PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}) concentrations would be well within objective limit values. Future occupants would, therefore, not be exposed to pollutant concentrations above the relevant objective levels **and the** impact of the development with regards to new exposure to air quality would be considered to be negligible. The assessment also concludes that there would not be a significant impact on air quality in the local area as a result of the proposed development. The Environmental Health Officer has confirmed that no mitigation would be required and the proposal would comply with relevant Policies EN15 and EN16.

Artificial Lighting

- 6.89 An External Lighting Strategy was submitted, and this includes a detailed proposal for lighting for the scheme, and it recommends that the strategy

outlined which includes criteria, luminaries, switching methods, lamp types etc is adopted and developed into a more detailed design. It is proposed that all external lighting would be designed to accord with relevant lighting standards and would achieve the following:

- External lighting illuminates areas around buildings, such as external doors, amenity, car parking and footpaths leading to buildings.
- Amenity lighting (bollards) and external security lighting illuminate communal areas, footpaths, signage, storage areas and parking areas.
- External lighting design for road, footpaths and public amenity areas are in accordance with BS 5489-1:2013.
- Lighting designed to the standards set by BS 5489-1:2013 is also recommended in ILP guidance to act as a measure to reduce crime within developments.
- 5m high street columns and a series of LED external lighting throughout the site ensures a safe approach for all residents to their front door.
- 24 hours lighting to communal areas provided both internally and externally.
- External lighting located at all the front doors, including the communal entrance doors to the apartment building. Other areas will have day light time clock operation, where required.
- Passive Infrared Sensor (PIR) controlled lighting will be operated in specific areas.
- A series of hoods and cowls will be provided to avoid glare/light spill.
- Also planting will be used as a measure to mitigate effects impact on nearby dwellings and surrounding roads.

6.90 The submission and approval of an appropriate external lighting plan will be included as a condition.

Crime and safety

6.91 The DAS states how the design has been guided by Secured by Design principles and a condition is included requiring the submission and approval of such. The routes through and around the site would be well defined and overlooked. The enclosure would assist in reducing crime and fear of crime. A number of safety measures have been incorporated including:

- Rear access routes to provide access to gardens, cycle stores and bin stores have been carefully designed to ensure that they are as short as possible and would only have a single point of entry via secure entry gates.
- The courtyard space would be secured by fences and via access control gates.
- The communal entrances to the flats would include an 'airlock' entry system to provide two means of defence before entering communal corridors.
- Residents would only have access to the lobbies that provide access to their own front door.
- Lighting to communal areas would be provided both internally and externally. External lighting would also be located at all of the front doors, including the communal entrance doors.
- The proposed landscaping has been carefully considered, with a combination of low-level planting and tree canopies to be at least 2.4m from the ground, in order to maintain clear sight lines and natural surveillance.
- Perimeter treatment along the mews, including planting and bollards have been intentionally selected to prevent vehicles encroaching onto pavements.
- Rear gardens would be secured with fencing defining the private space.
- Defensible space is proposed around the ground floor dwellings.

Housing Standards

- 6.92 Policy H5a requires all new building housing located outside the Central Area to comply with the nationally prescribed space standards. This is not a requirement in the Central Area, but it is welcomed that all the proposed units would meet the national space standards providing good sized units of accommodation for future occupiers
- 6.93 Part f of Policy H5 requires that at least 5% of dwellings are wheelchair user dwellings in line with M4(3) of the Building Regulations. The proposal would meet this Policy.
- 6.94 In addition the development would also include for all units to be wheelchair accessible dwellings. There would also be 1.5m wide corridors to all flat circulation spaces and 1.8m wide corridors to the Older Persons' Day Centre to allow wheelchairs to turn round. To ensure ease of access and future adaptability habitable room sizes would be 1500m wide and doors to all habitable rooms, wcs and bathrooms would have a minimum 0.75m clear opening width.

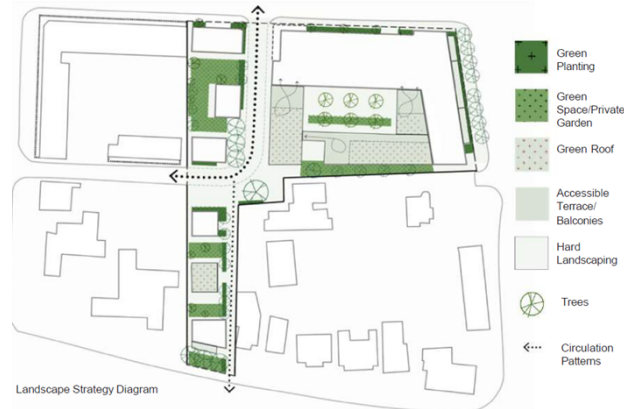
Amenity Space

- 6.95 Policy H10 deals specifically with private and communal space and for flats requires communal space, balconies and/ or roof gardens, and para. 4.2.40 states that *"Policy H10 seeks to secure private and communal outdoor amenity areas on all residential developments, the extent of which will be guided by the site's proximity to quality public open space."*
- 6.96 The central courtyard to Block A is proposed for singular use by the Old Persons' Day Centre; The proposed houses, i.e. those to the Battle Street frontage, have similar sized gardens to the adjacent existing terraces and the provision is considered acceptable. Private gardens would also be provided for one/ two storey flats and the ground floor supported living flats. There would be balconies for the General Needs Flats facing onto Bedford Road and Oxford Road and accessible roof terraces and green roofs for the Sheltered Flat residents. The provision for on-site amenity for residents would secure good levels of amenity space for this central location, consistent with surrounding residential sites.
- 6.97 The application is therefore considered to accord with the relevant policies CC8, CR6, CR14a, EN15, EN16, EN17, H5 and H10.

e) Landscaping and Ecology

- 6.98 Policy EN14 (Trees, Hedges and Woodland) states that individual trees, groups of trees, hedges and woodlands will be protected from damage or removal where they are of importance, and Reading's vegetation cover will be extended.
- 6.99 Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) sets out that good design should incorporate appropriate landscaping.
- 6.100 The site is within Abbey Ward, which is identified as a ward of low canopy cover within the Reading Tree Strategy (2021) where planting is of greater importance to help bring the canopy cover of the ward up to 12% by 2030 to mitigate the effects of air quality being within the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), and to respond positively in terms of measures to adapt to climate change (Policy CC3).

- 6.101 The proposed landscape scheme includes tree planting to the Battle Street and Bedford Road frontages, within the central courtyard of Block A, within the new Mews and along the public pedestrian route from Oxford Road to Battle Street, to the south of Block A and within garden areas of the remaining blocks as well as other planting and green roofs.



- 6.102 The Natural Environment (Trees) Officer provided detailed comments with regard to appropriate tree species. Further details have been submitted by the applicant and the Natural Environment Officer comments will be reported in an update. However, the matters addressed are not fundamental to the acceptability of the proposal from a landscape and tree perspective.
- 6.103 As the existing site consists of hardstanding and very few trees it is considered that the proposed scheme would represent an enhancement in terms of the appearance and greening of the site within the town centre in accordance with Policies CC7 and EN14
- 6.104 Policy EN12 seeks that development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity and should provide for a net gain of biodiversity wherever possible by protecting, enhancing and incorporating features of biodiversity on and adjacent to development sites and by providing new tree planting and wildlife friendly landscaping and ecological enhancements wherever practicable.
- 6.105 The submitted ecological appraisal concludes that small areas of scattered scrub and ephemeral / short perennial plants around an open area of hard standing and a small number of urban street trees would be directly impacted but are of low ecological value.
- 6.106 The assessment also identifies that the site has a low potential to support populations of common nesting birds. Mitigation methods identified include incorporating in-wall bat box units, in-wall general bird nest units, external swift boxes and bee bricks. Subject to conditions as recommended by the LPA's Ecological Advisor, and the resulting measures and landscaping enhancements, the scheme would deliver biodiversity gains in accordance with Policy EN12.

f) Transport/ Parking

- 6.107 Policies TR1, TR3 TR4 and TR5 seek to address access, traffic, highway and parking related matters relating to development.

6.108 The site is located within Zone 2 and on the edge of Zone 1 in the adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD, and to meet parking standards would need to provide 73 spaces and five visitor spaces. However, the following proposed provision has been confirmed as acceptable by Transport based on the extensive parking restrictions in place that include the operation of a residential parking scheme, double yellow lines etc and the frequent bus service and general proximity of the town centre.

6.109 Future occupants would not be entitled to a parking permit or visitor permits and a condition is included to ensure that the development does not harm the existing amenities of the neighbouring residential properties by adding to the already high level of on street car parking in the area.

6.110 The proposal includes 9 car parking spaces on site, three of which would be accessible spaces, allocated as follows:

- 2 spaces - 1 per family house (Block F)
- 1 space - for wheelchair accessible unit (Block C)
- 3 spaces - Older Person’s Day Centre (Block A)
- 3 spaces - Supported Living Mental Health Flats 3 (Blocks A, E1 and E2)



6.111 All spaces would have an electric charging point and this provision would exceed the Policy TR5 requirements.

- 6.112 Two existing permit bays on Battle Street would be converted to a shared Loading/ drop off bay. Four existing permit bays would be removed to create the entrance from Battle Street and the drop off/loading bay, two would be relocated to Battle Street, however, as permit holders could park in the shared bays along Battel Street, which are being retained, this is deemed acceptable.
- 6.113 The proposed scheme would include a secure cycle store within Block A to accommodate 32 spaces - 1 per 2 dwellings and 8 for staff and individual cycle stores for the family houses and 2-3 storey flats. A secure mobility scooter store for 7 scooters for shelter residents and day care centre. Transport has confirmed that this provision would be acceptable subject to the receipt of amended plans showing the details of layout, which would then form an approved plan/s. These will be reported in an update.
- 6.114 The proposal would include a one-way Mews linking Battle Street and James Street, the latter street remaining two-way. This would allow for delivery, refuse and fire vehicles to access the development and, further to conformation of tracking, has been confirmed by Transport as acceptable. Transport raised an issue with regard to the pavement widths within the Mews, however it has been agreed that this will be amended, as set out in para.4.84, to provide for 1.7m wide pavements, which Transport has confirmed would be acceptable, subject to the receipt of acceptable amended plans, which would then be included under the approved plans condition. As a result of this proposed amended Mews layout, Transport has requested updated tracking plans for refuse and fire vehicles, and these will be reported in an update.
- 6.115 In terms of refuse vehicles servicing Block A the agent has confirmed that amended plans will be submitted to address the issue of proximity to the proposed centralised refuse store with chute. This will be reported in an update. For the remaining units there would be smaller lockable bin stores accessible for refuse collection from the remainder of the development.
- 6.116 The proposal would create an enhanced pedestrian link between Battle Street and Oxford Road providing a safe and convenient access to the nearest bus stop on Oxford Road and other services. It would not impact detrimentally on highway safety, and it would provide for reduced levels of parking in a sustainable location.
- 6.117 Subject to the above recommended conditions and obligations and receipt of amended plans the scheme is considered acceptable regarding Policies TR1, TR3 TR4 and TR5.

g) Open Space and Public Realm

- 6.118 Policy EN9 requires all new development to make provision for appropriate open space based on the needs of the development and for sites of 50 dwellings or more development must ensure satisfactory provision of children's play area and neighbourhood parks.
- 6.119 At pre-application stage it was made clear that due to the limitations presented on site, a commitment would be required to pay an off-site contribution, in order to meet policy requirements. The submission documents identify that, given the specialist housing and support services, the provision of 100% affordable housing and major regeneration benefits of

the scheme, it was not proposed to make an off-site contribution towards open space.

- 6.120 Albeit it is recognised the significant benefits that the proposal would bring, the deficiency in open space within the central area and the increasing pressure generally on the Borough's open spaces from development, is also a significant matter for consideration, which needs to be addressed. It is, therefore, recommended that an open space contribution is secured in order to make the scheme acceptable overall in planning terms.
- 6.121 An obligation for an off-site contribution is therefore included in the recommendation above and this could be used for either the nearby Bedford Road open space and/or for public realm improvements on the Oxford Road within the conservation area and HSHAZ, the latter would also benefit residents when taking leisure walks. This would contribute towards enhancements within the Conservation area and the HSHAZ and would, therefore, be policy compliant as explained further within paragraphs 6.151-6.153 below. However, in acknowledging the type of housing proposed and the likely occupants, it is accepted that the level of demand for open space may be less intensive than for other more standard private housing sites. Therefore, in recognition of this, the level of open space contribution sought would be less than an equivalent standard private housing scheme.
- 6.122 It is considered that the on-site public realm would significantly enhance the site and with the recommended obligations for open space would accord with Policy EN9.

h) Sustainability and Energy

- 6.123 Matters of sustainability are a priority for Reading Borough Council with Policy H5 'Standards for New Housing' requiring that all major new-build residential development should be designed to achieve zero carbon homes and to adhere to water efficiency standards more than Building Regulations. Requirements are also set out in Policies 'CC2 Sustainable Design and Construction', CC3 'Adaptation' to Climate Change' and a Supplementary Planning Document.
- 6.124 Policy CC4 'Decentralised Energy' states that any development of more than 20 dwellings is required to consider the inclusion of decentralised energy provision within the site itself, unless it can be demonstrated that the scheme is not suitable, feasible or viable for this form of energy provision. There is also an expectation in developments of over 10 dwellings to link into an existing district energy network, where one is present within the vicinity of an application site or demonstrate why this is not feasible. (Chapter 8 of the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD).
- 6.125 Policy CC5 requires minimisation of waste during construction and the life of the development.
- 6.126 The proposed scheme has been designed in line with zero carbon homes standards using Passivhaus principles for all uses with the aim for the development to achieve net zero carbon through reducing energy demand via high levels of insulation, airtight construction, triple glazed windows and air source heat pumps for heating, cooling ventilation and hot water, and on-site renewable energy generation and storage via photovoltaic panels and battery storage. An initial Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) calculation

(measurement of the improvement of the dwelling emission rate) indicates that the development with the above measures would be at or close to zero carbon in operation.

- 6.127 In response to the Sustainability Officer comments the applicant confirmed that an initial assessment of utilising ground source heat pumps was carried out and discounted. For a 100kw output in the order of 20 no. 85 m deep boreholes spaces 6m apart would be required and there would be insufficient space within the site for such works.
- 6.128 The Passivhaus principles exceed the required BREEAM standard and therefore this approach can be considered to achieve an improved outcome in terms of sustainability. Necessary conditions/obligations would, however, be required to ensure a standard which is equal to the SPD level, i.e. that as a minimum new dwellings should achieve 35% improvement in regulated emissions over the Target Emissions Rate (TER) in the 2013 Building Regulations, plus a contribution of £1,800 per tonne towards carbon off-setting. Therefore, a carbon offset payment is included as a recommended financial contribution to be secured through the Unilateral Undertaking, for the policy to be fully met (as set out in para. 4.4.6 of the RBLP).
- 6.129 In terms of Policy CC3 the scheme has been orientated to maximise opportunities for natural heating, ventilation and reduce exposure to wind. Green roofs are also appropriately located in areas exposed to direct sunlight. Trees would provide adequate shade and tree species have been selected which can adapt to changing climatic conditions. The submitted flood risk assessment and drainage strategy set out how the development would minimise the impact of surface water runoff including being attenuated within the site using tree pits and permeable paving and discharged below ground into a system designed to cater for the 1% AEP (1:100 year) storm with 40% additional storage to allow for climate change.
- 6.130 In accordance with Policy CC4 the development would include decentralised energy within the site in the form of PV panels and air source heat pumps (ASHP), which would provide heating and hot water to each flat. Policy CC4 also requires links into an existing district energy network, where one is present within the vicinity of an application site, and where such is feasible. An identified District Heating Energy Cluster, within the adopted SPD, is ca 325m away and is not yet in existence.
- 6.131 The layout and design of the development includes storage for recycling waste in centralised bin stores as well as bin chutes. The requirement for a Site Waste Management plan is recommended as a condition. This would accord with Policy CC5.
- 6.132 The submitted Sustainability Statement, notes that low flush fittings and fixtures would be selected to meet the higher water efficiency standard of 110 litres per person per day.
- 6.133 Overall, subject to the conditions and obligations, the scheme would accord with measures in Policies CC2, CC3, CC4, CC5 and H5.

i) **SuDS and Water Supply**

- 6.134 Policy EN18 requires all major developments to incorporate Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) with runoff rates aiming to reflect greenfield conditions or be no worse than existing.
- 6.135 The site is located in Flood Zone 1 and is not over 1ha, therefore, no site-specific flood risk was required and there would, therefore, be minimal risk of flooding. There is a high to medium risk of pluvial flooding.
- 6.136 The submitted drainage strategy identifies that deep bore soakaways into the underlying chalk offer potential for discharging storm waters from the development. Furthermore, the drainage strategy provides a sustainable solution to potential pluvial flooding by discharging runoff to a surface water system designed to cater for the 1% AEP (1:100 year) storm with 40% additional storage to allow for climate change within the existing site boundary.
- 6.137 The site would also include green roofs, planting and permeable paving to further reduce surface water run-off.
- 6.138 The site allocation Policy CR14a requires that the developer should “*take account of the potential impact on water infrastructure in conjunction with Thames Water, and make provision for upgrades where required*”.
- 6.139 Thames Water have confirmed that on the basis of the information provided, they have no objection with regard to the water network and water treatment infrastructure capacity. In addition, the foul water drainage would be discharged to the existing foul water sewer network using an existing on-site connection and Thames Water have also confirmed that there would be capacity within the sewer network.
- 6.140 Subject to addressing the points raised by the SUDs Manager (as set out in paras. 4.46-4.48 above) and subject to the SUDS conditions as included in the recommendation above, the scheme is considered to comply with Policy EN18.

j) **Environmental matters - Contamination**

- 6.141 The Environmental Health Officer confirmed that the submitted Phase 1 contamination assessment identifies risks from contaminated soils and potential risks from ground gas in made ground. A Remediation Strategy was subsequently submitted, and this has been confirmed as acceptable. Conditions to ensure implementation in accordance with the strategy and verification and to allow for any unidentified contamination would ensure compliance with Policy EN16.

k) **Unilateral Undertaking**

- 6.142 In accordance with Policies CC2, CC9, H3 and H5, the following obligations would be sought:
- Affordable Housing - 30% affordable housing at Social Rent
 - Employment Skills and Training Plan - construction
 - Carbon Off-Setting financial contribution based on a formula
 - Transport - S278 highway works and £5,000 for Traffic Regulation Order

- Open Space - offsite contribution towards open space/ public realm improvement
 - Monitoring and legal costs
- 6.143 Policy H3 requires *“on sites of 10 or more dwellings, 30% of the total dwellings will be in the form of affordable housing; provision should be made on site in the first instance with a financial contribution being negotiated to make up the full requirement as appropriate. In all cases where proposals fall short of the policy target 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.”*
- 6.144 The applicant has been clear from the outset of the application and during pre-application discussions that the proposal would deliver 100% affordable housing on site. This would be in the form of 62 units, comprising a mix of 1, 2, and 3 beds with a proposed tenure of Social Rent. This would accord with types of affordable housing within the adopted Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document. It has also been confirmed by the applicant that Homes England expect the applicant to deliver 100%, so the Homes England funding for the scheme is based on this assumption.
- 6.145 The provision of an 100% affordable housing scheme would be significantly more than the Policy H3 30% on site affordable housing requirement. As such, any provision above the required 30% amount would be considered to be a tangible planning benefit of the proposals, in the assessment of the overall planning balance for the scheme as a whole.
- 6.146 Legal agreements (UU) can only secure what is reasonably required to make a development acceptable in planning terms. Section 122 of Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 specifically limits the use of planning obligations. The regulations state:
- A planning obligation may only constitute a reason for granting planning permission for the development if the obligation is—*
- (a)necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;*
(b)directly related to the development; and
(c)fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.
- 6.147 Officers have, therefore, relied on what is reasonably required by the Reading Borough Local Plan as a starting point. In this case the proposal of 100% affordable housing goes significantly beyond the 30% Policy H3 requirement (19 units). It, therefore, needs to be determined what is reasonable, bearing in mind legal cases which demonstrate that a willing applicant does not in itself justify the provision. Officers are also mindful of considering whether the obligation would be necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, i.e. where proposals conflict with other policies in the plan, a higher percentage could be justified. There have been other examples in the Borough where a higher (than policy required) percentage of affordable housing has been secured previously, to *“make the development acceptable in planning terms”*.
- 6.148 To ensure that the above CIL tests are met in this instance, officers have carefully considered if any other policy deficiencies exist, that would justify requiring a higher percentage of affordable housing that exceeds policy

compliance. For the proposed scheme it is not considered this is the case, therefore, the UU will include the policy required 30% Affordable Housing obligation, which is in accordance with Policy H3 and the Council's Affordable Housing SPD, but being clear that it is the applicant's intention to deliver 100% affordable housing on the site.

- 6.149 Policy CC9 seeks that development that would result in employment should provide mitigation in line with its impacts on labour and skills. As a major category residential development and in line with the adopted Employment Skills and Training SPD (2013), the development is expected to provide a construction phase employment and skills plan, working in conjunction with REDA, to demonstrate how it would benefit the local employment market or an equivalent financial contribution towards local skills and training.
- 6.150 As set out in the Sustainability section above, to meet policy H5, a contribution will be required towards carbon off-setting.
- 6.151 In terms of the open space contribution sought policy CC9 includes improvements to amenities, including public realm and street care enhancements. Policy CR2 identifies the importance of public realm in design and Policy EN3 that improvements to the public realm can contribute to making a positive contribution to Conservation Areas.
- 6.152 EN9: Provision of Open Space requires all new developments to make *"provision for appropriate open space based on the needs of the development"*. For schemes of over 50 dwellings and in areas identified as deficient, new open space provision is sought.
- 6.153 Although the on-site amenity space and on site public realm would contribute in part to meeting open space requirements it would be insufficient to meet policy requirements in terms of outdoor space for recreational activity specifically children's play areas and neighbourhood parks, hence an off-site open space contribution is sought to enhance a nearby existing open space and/or public realm along the Oxford Road within the conservation area, to mitigate the impact and as set out in the recommendation above. This figure would be less than that sought for a comparable standard private housing scheme, because the level of demand for open space generated from the proposal, due to the type of housing, has been assumed to be less than for a standard housing scheme. This is set out in paragraphs 6.120-6.121 above.
- 6.154 The applicant has confirmed their commitment to these obligations, which would be part of a Unilateral Undertaking.

l) Equalities Impact

- 6.155 In determining this application the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The proposal would include future occupants and users who would include vulnerable individuals in terms of elderly people and those in supported living units. In terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered that the development has been designed positively and there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The scheme is a key regeneration site in central Reading, allocated for housing. The proposal would deliver 100% affordable housing and would meet specialist and general housing needs as defined in the Housing Strategy for Reading 2020-2025 and Policy H6. The development would provide a significant public benefit and the delivery of affordable housing. These matters carry significant weight in the planning balance.
- 7.2 The development would deliver a range of economic, social and environmental benefits in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development as defined in the NPPF.
- 7.3 The proposal makes effective use of an urban site in a sustainable location and would not cause harm to the Conservation Area or to the setting of listed buildings.
- 7.4 The design is considered to be of good quality, which would be carbon neutral in accordance with sustainability policies, incorporating enhanced public realm and amenity space, and include the reintroduction of a pedestrian link through the site for enhanced accessibility.
- 7.5 The scheme was subject to extensive pre-application discussions and officers have worked positively and proactively with the applicant, and overall officers consider this to be a supportable scheme, which accords with relevant national and local policy and other material considerations. The planning application is therefore recommended for approval subject to conditions and the completion of a UU legal agreement as detailed above.

Case Officer: Alison Amoah

APPENDIX A: Plans

Site Plan



Block A Floor Plans



Ground Floor



First Floor



Second Floor

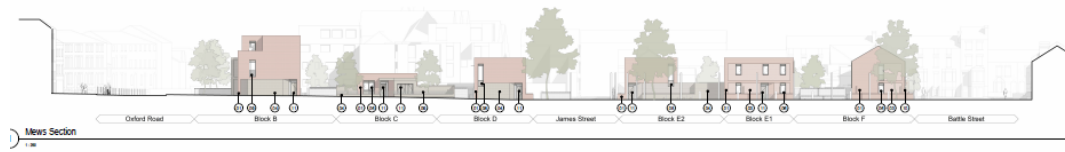


Third Floor

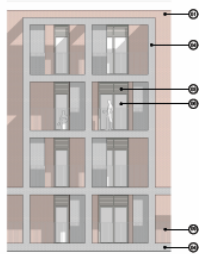


Roof

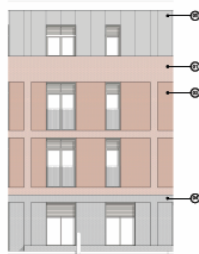
Elevations



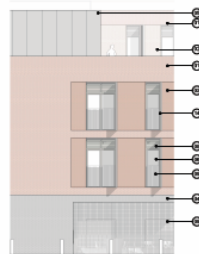
Block A Bay Elevation Detail



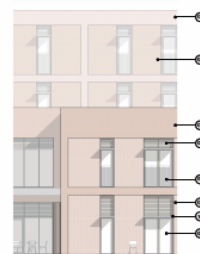
1 Bedford Road Bay Elevation
1:100



2 Battle Street Bay Elevation
1:100



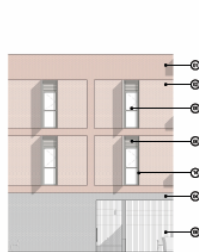
3 Mears Bay Elevation
1:100



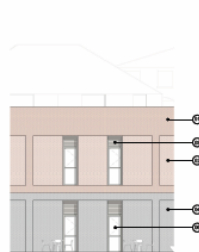
4 South Bay Elevation
1:100



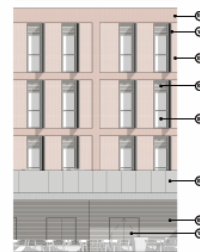
5 Courtyard North Bay Elevation
1:100



6 Courtyard West Bay Elevation
1:100

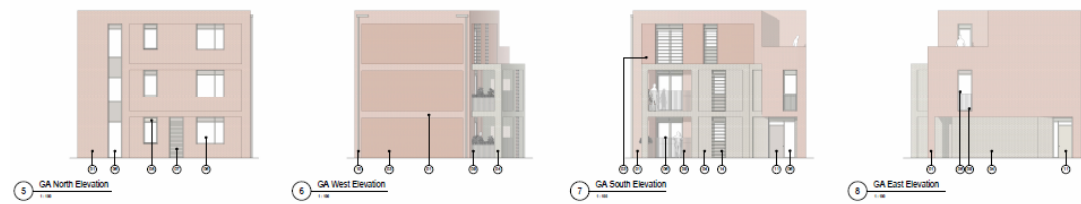


7 Courtyard South Bay Elevation
1:100

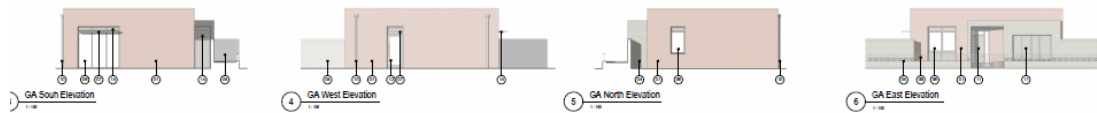
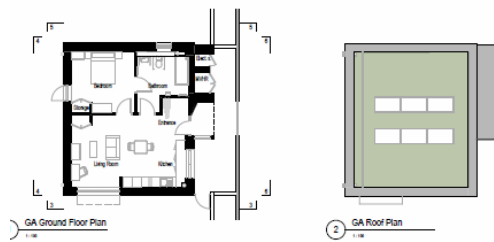


8 Courtyard East Bay Elevation
1:100

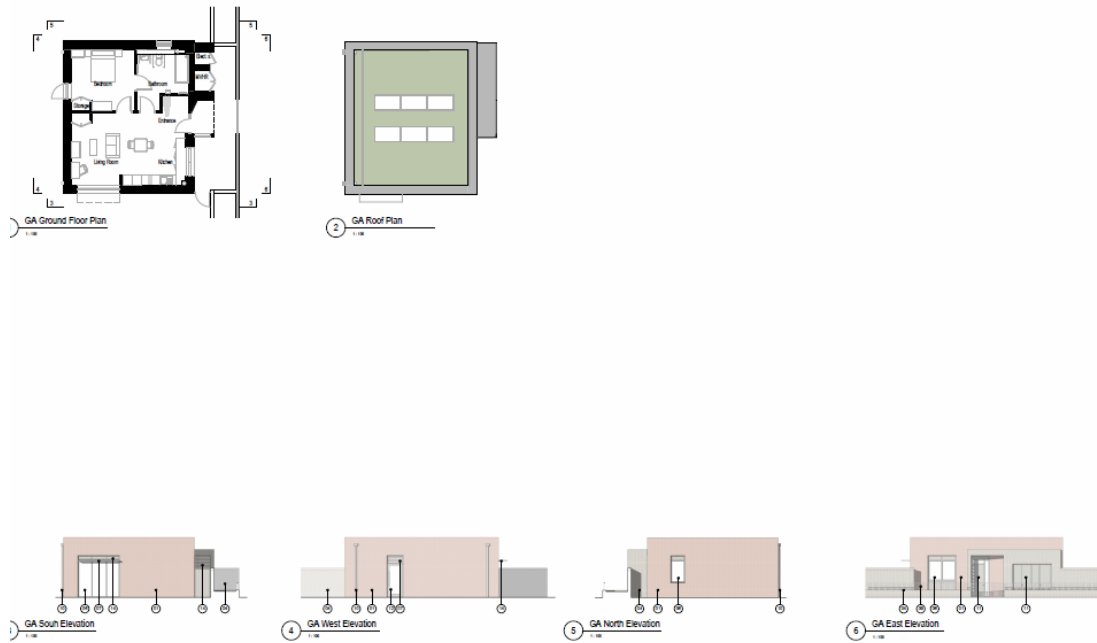
Block B Plans & Elevations



Block C Plans & Elevations



Block D Plans & Elevations



Block E1 & E2 Plans & Elevations



Block F Plans & Elevations



CGI Images





E. Courtyard East View



F. Mews South View



G. James Street East View



H. Passageway and Mews North View



A. Balle Street East View



B. Balle Street West View

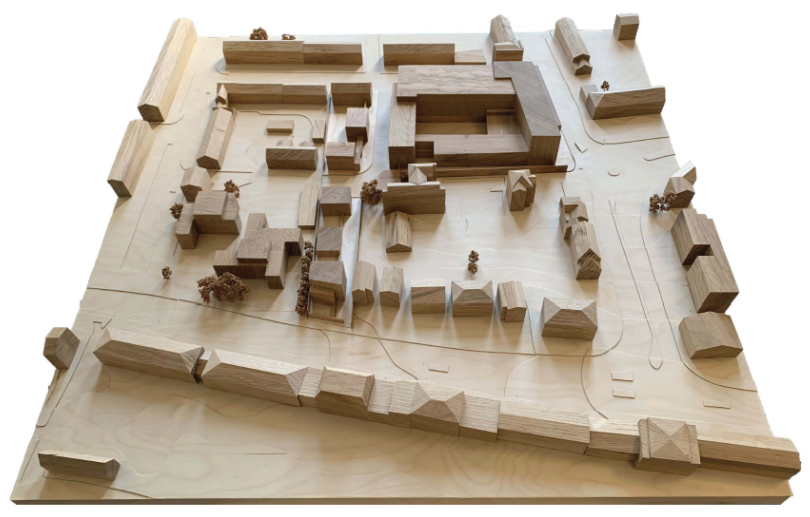


C. Derby Street South View



D. Mews and Courtyard Entrance South View

Model



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COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 1st March 2023

Ward: Coley

App No.: 221576

Address: 4 Downshire Square, Reading, RG1 6NJ

Proposal: The demolition of the single storey side extension, relocation of the dwelling rear door, creation of a new vehicular access and parking area to the north part of the site, with vehicular turntable, existing vehicular access blocked up, replacement low brick wall and piers with metal railings and central front gate to house, including external and landscaping works.

Applicant: Finerain Developments

Deadline: 16/12/2022

extension of time yet to be agreed

RECOMMENDATION:

Grant

Conditions:

Time Limit (Standard)

Approved Plans

Materials (As Specified)

Landscaping Small Scale (To be approved)

Proposed turntable (to be retained)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The site relates to a detached bungalow located on the eastern side of Downshire Square. The site is within the Downshire Square Conservation Area and is also located within an Air Quality Management Area. The property has a large (wide) rear garden and detached garage to the south of the site. It is one of the widest plots in this part of the conservation area. The area is predominantly residential, featuring large detached and semi-detached properties and the Grade II listed All Saints Church and community hall is to the north at the top of Downshire Square. There is a wide variety of design styles, although most properties remain unaltered.

1.2 The application has been called in to be decided by Planning Applications Committee by Ward Councillor Ellie Emberson due to various concerns identified and the planning history of the site.

Site Location Plan



2. PROPOSAL

2.1 The proposal is for the demolition of the single storey side extension, relocation of the dwelling rear door, creation of a new vehicular access and parking area to the north part of the site, with vehicular turntable, existing vehicular access blocked up, replacement low brick wall and piers with metal railings and central front gate to house, including external and landscaping works.

2.2 Submitted Plans and Documentation:

Drawing No. 02-01 Proposed Plan (illustrating neighbouring dropped kerbs) dated 09/2022, received 03 February 2023

Drawing No. 02-01 Proposed Block Plan dated 09/2022, received 18 January 2023

Drawing No. 04-01 Existing and Proposed Elevations dated 09/2022, received 18 January 2023

Drawing No. 04-01 Proposed Elevations dated 09/2022, received 18 January 2023

Drawing No. 04-01 Proposed Elevations dated 09/2022, received 18 January 2023

Drawing No. 02-01 Existing Block Plan dated 08/2022, received 21 October 2022

Drawing No. 06-01 Existing Block Plan dated 08/2022, received 21 October 2022

Drawing No. 01-04 Existing Front and Rear Elevations dated 08/2022, received 21 October 2022

Drawing No. 01-05 Existing Site Section dated 08/2022, received 21 October 2022

Drawing No. 01-02 Existing First Floor Plan dated 08/2022, received 21 October 2022

Drawing No. 01-01 Existing Ground Floor Plan dated 08/2022, received 21 October 2022

Drawing No. 02-02 Existing Roof Plan dated 08/2022, received 21 October 2022

Drawing No. 01-01 Existing Ground Floor Plan dated 08/2022, received 21 October 2022

Drawing No. 01-07 Existing Section dated 08/2022, received 21 October 2022

Existing site location Plan 4 Downshire Square dated 08/2022, received 21 October 2022

Application Form dated, received 21 October 2022

3. PLANNING HISTORY

- 191358 Erection of new building comprising 9 flats following demolition of existing bungalow and detached garage. Refused
- 940401 2 metre boundary wall and single storey side extension for garage. Refused
- 940738 Erection of a garage. Permitted
- 200571/FUL - Demolition of existing dwelling house and large detached garage and erection of new building comprising of 3 townhouses and 2 flats. The application was refused 17th July 2020 under delegated powers and dismissed at appeal 27th April 2021.
- 211416 Erection of 1 x detached and 2 x semi-detached dwellings following demolition of the existing bungalow and detached garage. Refused. (Officer recommendation to grant overturned by PAC on 20 July 2022).

4. CONSULTATIONS

(i) Statutory

none

(ii) Non-Statutory

- RBC Transport Development Control - No objection subject to condition as indicated above.
- RBC Natural Environment - No objection subject to condition and informative as suggested above
- Conservation Area Advisory Committee - no comment received.
- Conservation and Urban Design Officer - comment awaited.

(iii) Public Comments

Notification letters were sent to nearby occupiers on Downshire Square. A site notice was displayed, and a press notice was published.

4.1 An objection was received with the primary concern being the plot that would be created to the south of the bungalow. Summary is as follows:

- The application splits the current site into two - no details of what will happen to the southern part of the site
- Building density will remain undetermined without detailed plans
- Development of the southern end of the site will result in increased traffic

Officer note: the design and access statement submitted with the application states that the southern part of the site will be subject to future development outside of this application. A separate planning application will be required to be submitted for any future developments and will be consulted on if submitted.

- Plumbing works not shown and the proposed driveway will be located on the external stop cock & man hole
- ***Officer note: for determination at Building Regulations stage.***

The proposal to block the existing driveway retaining the history cast iron railings are only temporary

- External alterations will change the character of the building and conservation area
- Using various applications to get around the planning rules and ultimately changing the character of the original house

Officer note - determination of any planning application will take into account any relevant planning history and the cumulative impact of such proposals on the original house.

- Removal of a street tree and proposal does not show a lot of trees
- Impact on wildlife because of the proposed patio and parking
- Inability to maintain the house
- Use of site as a garage
- House currently on the market

(iv) Local Ward Councillors

4.2 The following concerns were raised by the three Local Ward Councillors via email received from Cllr Ellie Emberson on 8 November 2022:

- Road safety and availability of parking
- Position of parking - the proposed change in position of parked cars will impact of the visual amenity for residents with abutting gardens;
- Lamppost relocation - concerned on the impact of light for the neighbourhood generally by the relocation of this;
- Southern part of the site fenced off - this is mentioned in the architect's notes. I am unclear on whether this forms part of the planning application, I assume not as it is not mentioned in the application form, but I would seek reassurance on this due to the visual impact on an important conservation area.
- Common parking strategy - this is noted in the architect's notes. I do not support this sentiment and cannot recall any property with parking effectively in the back garden nearby
- Landscape enhancements

5. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

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) which states at Paragraph 11 "Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development".

5.2 The development plan for this Local Planning Authority is the Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019). The relevant policies are:

- CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction
- CC3: Adaptation to Climate Change
- CC7: Design and the Public Realm
- CC8: Safeguarding Amenity
- EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
- EN3: Enhancement of Conservation Areas
- EN4: Locally Important Heritage Assets
- EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodland
- EN15: Air Quality
- H9: House Extensions and Ancillary Accommodation
- H10: Private and Communal Outdoor Space

- TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
- TR4: Cycle Routes and Facilities
- TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging

5.3 Relevant Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) are:

Design Guide to House Extensions SPD
The Sustainable Design and Construction SPD

Other documents
The Reading Borough Council adopted Tree Strategy
Downshire Square Conservation Area Appraisal

6. APPRAISAL

The main matters to be considered are as follows:

- Design considerations and effect on character
- Impact on residential amenity
- Transport
- Landscape/ecology
- Equalities impact

Design considerations and effect on character

- 6.1 The application site falls within the Downshire Square Conservation Area. The area is predominantly residential, featuring large detached and semi-detached properties and the Grade II listed All Saints Church is to the north at the top of the Downshire Square road. There is a wide variety of design styles, although most properties remain unaltered.
- 6.2 The proposed development includes the demolition of the existing side extension, new car park within the rear garden, new landscaping and new boundary fencing on the western boundary (property frontage). The proposal would also include a new dropped kerb, relocation of the existing lamp post and moving the existing cushion 3m north of the existing site.
- 6.3 The proposed demolition of the existing single storey side extension would not significantly alter the character and appearance of the existing building. Given that the existing side extension is set back from the front and subservient to the main house, the removal of the extension would not be very noticeable and thus the proposal is not considered to have any harmful impact on the character of the original building.
- 6.4 In addition, the proposed boundary fencing is not considered to harm the character and appearance of the host property, neighbouring properties and the street scene as there is no established type and

design of boundary fencing on the street. The proposal therefore would not be considered out of keeping with the character of the street.

- 6.5 Furthermore, the proposed tree planting and landscaping would add a soft touch and would allow the property to fit in with the existing character of the street and the wider conservation area.
- 6.6 A concern was raised by Cllr Emberson regarding the proposed car park within the rear garden of the property. There are a number of properties within the immediate surrounding area, including some of the adjoining properties, which have garages within their rear gardens. This type of car parking arrangement therefore is not uncommon in the area and thus would not appear out of keeping with the existing character of the area. In addition, two sides of the car park will be fully enclosed with new planting to obscure the parked cars and therefore the proposal is not considered to cause visual harm to the surrounding area.

Impact on residential amenity

- 6.7 Given that the proposal would not change the height of the building and no new upper floor openings are proposed as part of this application, the proposal is not considered to have any adverse impact on privacy, amount of natural light to the neighbouring properties nor would it overshadow any adjoining properties. The proposal therefore is considered to comply with policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

Transport

- 6.8 The applicant was asked to submit revised plans illustrating visibility splays of 2.4m x 43m, the lamp column, location of utility covers in the footways and the existing speed cushion. In addition, the new location of the lamp post was required to be shown on the plans. Revised plan (ref 02-01) illustrating visibility splays, the new location of the lamp post and the position of the existing was received by the local planning authority on 17 January 2023.
- 6.9 Transport was further consulted, and the following was a comment received on 20 January 2023.

“The proposed access is located too close to the speed cushion and would cause damage to vehicles, therefore it will need relocating.

Revised plans illustrating a relocated speed cushion that does not conflict with the accesses for other adjacent property on both sides of the road is required.

Relocation of the speed cushion and lamp column as well as the closure of unused access will require a S278”.

- 6.10 The proposed plan (ref 02-01) received on 3 February 2023 was updated to include the new position of the speed cushion and the dropped crossing for the surrounding properties. Transport was reconsulted and no further objections were received subject to a condition ensuring that the proposed turntable is retained.
- 6.11 A license will need to be applied for to undertake all works on the public highway this includes the relocation of the lamp column. All costs will need to be fully met by the applicant. All unused accesses will need to be reinstated in line with the footway to ensure that the application does not result in a reduction in on street parking. The applicant was informed and agreed to enter into a section 278 agreement to cover the works.
- 6.12 A concern was raised by Cllr Emberson regarding the impact of the proposed relocation of the lamp post on the amount of light to nearby properties. The lamp post would be located approximately 8.7m north of the existing location however the architect’s note on the plan indicates that the actual position to be confirmed by highways authority. Given the proposed location of the lamp post in relation to the existing, it is considered unlikely that there would be a significant change in the amount of light to the surrounding properties to the detriment of the nearby residents.
- 6.13 The proposal therefore is considered acceptable on transport grounds and would comply with policies with policies TR3, TR4 and TR5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019

Landscape/ecology

- 6.14 Concerns were raised regarding the level of detail provided by the applicant with respect to the retention of existing trees and the landscaping principles. To address the above concerns, the agent on 17 January 2023 submitted updated plans (ref 02-01) which included the proposed tree planting and landscaping schemes.
- 6.15 Natural Environment was reconsulted. No further concerns were received however the agent was requested to indicate on the plan the new street tree adjacent to the proposed access. Updated plans and elevations illustrating the new street tree were received by the Council on 24 January 2023 and no further objections were received from Natural Environment subject to a landscaping condition requiring the applicant to submit a detailed hard and soft landscaping scheme prior to first occupation/use of the permitted development. An informative advising the development to provide some form of physical protection for the street tree to avoid

accidental damage during the installation of the new access to be attached.

- 6.16 A concern was raised by the neighbour with respect to the impact of the proposed car parking within the rear side of the property and the rear patio on the amount of available garden space and consequently on wildlife habitation. Whilst the amount of space that would be taken up by the proposed car park and patio would appear to be large, it would not result in a significant reduction in the amount of garden space available for wildlife habitation. The property has a large rear garden and sizeable front garden and therefore the proposal is not considered to adversely impact on the amount of garden space.
- 6.17 In light of the above the proposal is considered to comply with policy CC3 and EN 14 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019

Equalities Impact

- 6.18 When determining an application for planning permission the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups as identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this 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 proposed development.

CONCLUSION

- 7.1 This proposal has been carefully considered in the context of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and supplementary planning documents. The recommendation is shown above.

Case Officer: Beatrice Malama

Proposed Plans and Elevations

Figure 1: Proposed Block Plan



Figure 2: Proposed Front Elevation



Figure 3: Existing Front Elevation



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COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 1st March 2023

Ward: Norcot

App No: 221693/FUL

Address: 63-86 Rowe Court, Reading

Proposal: Demolition of any remaining fire damaged structure and re-instatement of 63-86 Rowe Court to provide a four-storey building, comprising of 24 studios/ one-bed, one person homes, associated car parking, cycle parking, refuse, amenity space and landscaping

Applicant: C/O Agent

Agent: Mr Jon Murch

Target Date: 22nd February 2023 (Extended until 3rd March 2023)

RECOMMENDATION: GRANT full planning permission subject to the following conditions and informatives:

CONDITIONS:

1. Standard Time Limit
2. Approved Plans (Officers recommend plans submitted under those listed for 'Option 2')
3. Materials as specified
4. **[Pre-commencement]** Construction Method Statement
5. Vehicle Parking (as specified)
6. Cycle Parking (as specified)
7. Refuse and Recycling (as specified)
8. Biodiversity enhancements (to be approved)
9. Lift to be retained in perpetuity
10. Communal amenity space to remain in communal use at all times
11. **[Pre-commencement]** SAP Major - As Designed
12. SAP Major - As Built
13. Hours of Construction
14. Mechanical Plant - Noise Assessment (to be approved)
15. Sustainable Drainage (as specified)
16. **[Pre-commencement]** Arboricultural Method Statement
17. Landscaping details (to be approved)
18. **[Pre-commencement]** Employment, Skills and Training
19. Site security strategy (to be approved)

INFORMATIVES:

1. Terms
2. Reason for pre-commencement conditions and agreed by agent
3. Building Control
4. Complaints about construction and demolition
5. Encroachment
6. Highways
7. CIL
8. Positive and Proactive

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 63-86 Rowe Court formally comprised of a privately owned residential block comprising of 3 storeys (with accommodation in the roof) containing 24 studio/ 1 bed apartments (including 2 duplex apartments). On 15th December 2021, the block was largely destroyed in a fire started by arson which led to two fatalities. In early 2022, the site was flattened as the structure was deemed unsafe to remain. In March 2022, the site was handed over to the applicant from the police, since when it has remained untouched and closed off from the public by locked hoarding.
- 1.2 The remainder of Rowe Court, a cul-de-sac, comprises of 15 blocks of residential dwellings, a mixture of flats and two storey dwellings. Properties were built in the 1980s design with a similar design; properties are characterized by gable roofs, red and grey brickwork and dark wooden projecting windows.
- 1.3 To the rear (north-west) of the site is Osborne Road, to the south is Drayton Way and to the north-east is Craig Avenue. These are residential areas.
- 1.4 The site has few constraints; it is not listed, in a conservation area, flood zone or air quality management area.
- 1.5 The application is presented to the Planning Applications Committee due to being a major development. A member site visit was carried out on 26th January 2023.



Site Location Plan (showing the former building)



Image of the former block (Google Street View, 2019)



The site today, photograph taken January 2023

2. PROPOSAL

- 2.1 Planning permission is sought for the re-instatement and improvement of a 4-storey building (3 storey with roof accommodation) with the same dwelling mix as what was lost as a result of the fire (24 x studio/1 bed units, including 4 duplex flats). The rebuilding of the block will be funded by the insurance provider, whose funding will cease in December 2023. All flats are privately owned and are required to be rebuilt in a similar fashion by the insurance provider. Given some of the flats were rented accommodation, it is not clear if all the previous occupiers would return (as they

may have found other, permanent accommodation), but all leaseholders would remain the same.

- 2.2 The new building would measure a maximum height of 12.6m, maximum width of 38m, maximum depth of 16.5m which. This represents an increase in depth of 3.2m and width of 3m when compared to the block that was destroyed. The overall height of the building would be 1m lower than the building that was destroyed. The reason for the overall increase in scale of the block is to ensure that the floor area of the new dwellings can meet the Nationally Prescribed Space Standards. The flats that were lost did not meet these standards.
- 2.3 Parking provision is proposed to remain as per the previous arrangement. 6 parking spaces are proposed to be re-provided in the existing car park. Again, the level of parking is to remain the same due to constraints in the insurance provision and clauses dictated in the leases attached to the former (and proposed) flats, which will remain. The remainder of parking spaces in the car park belong to other leaseholders/ residents of the remainder of Rowe Court, but which are currently enclosed within the hoarding for safety reasons and have been since the fire.
- 2.4 The original set of plans showed all flats to be provided with a balcony, with balconies positioned on the front and rear elevations of the building. These plans are referred to as 'option 1'. However, following Officer concern that rear balconies would result in overlooking of the rear amenity spaces of some properties on Osbourne Road and privacy concerns for residents here, a revised set of plans were provided. These show the building without rear balconies and the plans are referred to as 'option 2'. Officers are recommending 'option 2' plans to be approved due to the concerns as outlined above which will be discussed later in the report.
- 2.5 As well as balconies, communal amenity space with landscaping is also proposed at the rear of the site, in the same location as previously, albeit smaller in size due to the increase in the size of the building.
- 2.6 Documents/ Information submitted:

'Option 1' drawings (proposing front and rear balconies):

0792-WPA-0102 Rev P1a - Site Plan Proposed
0792-WPA-0110 Rev P1a - Ground Floor Plan Proposed

Received 16th February 2023

0792-WPA-0101 Rev P1 - Block Plan Proposed
0792-WPA-0111 Rec P1 - First Floor Plan Proposed
0792-WPA-0112 Rev P1 - Second Floor Plan Proposed
0792-WPA-0113 Rev P1 - Third Floor Plan Proposed
0792-WPA-0114 Rev P1 - Roof Plan Proposed
0792-WPA-0200 Rev P1 - Elevations - Sheet 01 Proposed

0792-WPA-0201 Rev P1 - Elevations - Sheet 02 Proposed
0792-WPA-0300 Rev P1 - Sections Proposed

Received 7th February 2023

'Option 2' drawings (proposing front balconies only):

0792-WPA-0102 Rev P2a - Site Plan Proposed
0792-WPA-0110 Rev P2a - Ground Floor Plan Proposed

Received 16th February 2023

0792-WPA-0101 Rev P2 - Block Plan Proposed
0792-WPA-0111 Rev P2 - First Floor Plan Proposed
0792-WPA-0112 Rev P2 - Second Floor Plan Proposed
0792-WPA-0113 Rev P2 - Third Floor Plan Proposed
0792-WPA-0114 Rev P2 - Roof Plan Proposed
0792-WPA-0200 Rev P2 - Elevations - Sheet 01 Proposed
0792-WPA-0201 Rev P2 - Elevations - Sheet 02 Proposed
0792-WPA-0300 Rev P2 - Sections Proposed

Received 7th February 2023

Other information/ plans submitted:

Management and Maintenance Plan for Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) -
ref. 5245_MOM_ROW)RPT_MMplan
Drainage strategy and SuDS assessment for the management of surface water runoff
and foul water discharge - Ref. 5245_MOM_ROW)RPT_BGDstrategy

Received 14th February 2023

0792-WPA-0000 Rev P1 - Location Plan Existing
0792-WPA-0001 Rev P1 - Block Plan Existing
0792-WPA-002 Rev P1 - Site Plan Existing
0792-WPA-0020 Rev P1 - Elevations - Sheet 01 Existing
0792-WPA-0021 Rev P1 - Elevations - Sheet 02 Existing
0792-WPA-0030 Rev P1 - Sections Existing

Received 7th February 2023

Ecological Enhancement Notes Reference EEN-RG-AESG-TN-01

Received 7th February 2023

Supporting Letter prepared by DaviesMurch

Received 23rd November 2022

Application Form

CIL Form

Phase I Geo-Environmental Site Assessment - ref. P1048-01/R1/V1 dated August 2022

Phase 2 Contaminated Land and Geotechnical Report - ref. P1048-02/R2/RV1

Energy Strategy - ref. P2431-ENE-01 Rev P1

Daylight & Sunlight Review prepared by eb7

Arboricultural Impact Assessment

Tree Constraints Plan

Tree Protection Plan

BS5837:2012 Tree Survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment - ref. GHA/DS/122160:22

Design and Access Statement Rev P0

Verification of Insurance dated 31st October 2022

Received 14th November 2022

3. PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 No formal planning applications at 63-86 Rowe Court, however the following applications relate to the wider Rowe Court estate:

880354 - Residential Development of 126 dwellings and associated vehicular access
- Application Permitted

4. CONSULTATIONS

- 4.1 Internal Consultees

Transport - No objection subject to conditions

Ecology - No objection subject to conditions

Natural Environment - No objection subject to conditions

Environmental Protection - No objection subject to conditions

Waste Operations - No objection

Accessibility Officer - No objection

Housing - No comments received

Sustainability - No comments received

Building Control - Design appears complaint. A suitable fire strategy needs to be submitted at Building Regulations approval stage

Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) - No objection subject to condition

4.2 External Consultation

Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service -

“At this stage there is no duty placed upon the Fire Authority under the aforementioned legislation to make any comment relative to the application. However, the applications plans have been briefly examined and the applicant should be reminded that access for fire-fighting, particularly vehicular access, must comply with B5 of the Building Regulations guidance.

Any structural fire precautions and all means of escape provision will have to satisfy Building Regulation requirement. These matters are administered by the local authority Building Control or approved inspectors, who are required to consult with this fire authority.

Please be advised that any comments made by the Fire Authority in this letter must not be taken as formal approval that your plan/s conform to current Guides or Codes of Practice for means of escape in case of fire.”

Reading’s Economic and Destination Agency (REDA) - An Employment, Skills & Training plan can be secured via condition

Thames Valley Police Crime Prevention Design Advisor (CPDA) - Objection, amendments suggested to placement of garages and cycle store, installing boundary treatment, and ensuring entrance is secure and lockable
Officer note: Amended plans were received addressing most of these points

Thames Water - No comments received

Scottish and Southern Electric (SSE) - No comments received

Southern Gas - No comments received

4.3 The following addresses were formally notified of the application in writing on 25th November 2022:

1-62 Rowe Court (all numbers)

87 - 126 Rowe Court (all numbers)

1-11 Osbourne Road (all numbers)

49-63 Craig Avenue (odd numbers)

26-46 Drayton Road (even numbers)

4.4 In addition, 5 site notices were displayed on 25th November 2022 for the requisite period of 21 days.

4.5 6 objections were received relating to the following matters:

- Concerns over overlooking into gardens and rear windows of properties in Osbourne Road from the balconies and rear dormers. This contradicts planning advice where Osbourne Road residents could not have a development that overlooked the former building
- Concerns over loss of light to properties in Osbourne Road
- Concern over loss of view from Osborne Road
- No boundary treatment to obscure views to Osbourne Road
- Balconies would change the aesthetics of the road
- The building would not be located a 20m back-to-back distance with 87 Rowe Court, as per policy CC8
- Do not want the refuse door facing neighbouring properties as it may have adverse impacts in terms of smell/ noise and poor view
- Concern that food waste bins could attract rodents
- Will bin store come further out than the current kerbed edge which could impact ease of using 4 parking spaces in front of 87 Rowe Court
- Concern over the placement of the bike store as this has attracted undesirable behaviour in the past
- Design and materiality is not in keeping with current properties
- What measures will be in place to ensure hours of construction are abided by? Many residents work at home and would be disrupted by construction
- The Daylight/ sunlight report provided does not refer to 87 Rowe Court
- Tree protection fencing is proposed outside of the application site. This covers parking spaces belonging to properties that were not destroyed by the fire

- Application boundary is misleading as it only covers the building itself, not all the land that has been fenced off since the fire
- No indication is given regarding the re-instatement of a street light which is an ongoing safety issue
- There has been no consultation with the Rowe Court Management (Reading) Limited - a number of the proposals will impact the management requirement costs for the whole road
- Two owners of the former flats have not been consulted
- Inaccuracies on the block plan regarding numbering of neighbouring properties and an incorrect date being put on the submitted CIL form
- Consultation period is inadequate given the volume of documents submitted
- Questioned who would want to live in the flats again and is it normal for these to be rebuilt. Consider the site would be better as a memorial garden or similar
- Would be good to use the space for parking, communal space for residents or a memorial rather than flats
- Lack of emergency exits
- Rowe Court as a whole needs tighter control on parking
- Increased traffic will affect the busy roads and infrastructure in the area
- Have not been notified of the committee meeting or been given details of how to speak at the committee

Officer comment: These matters will be discussed under the relevant sections of the report. If they fall outside a general theme, they will be responded to in the 'other matters raised in representations' section of the report

5 letters of support were received for the following reasons:

- Want to get properties reinstated to move on with their lives
- Appreciate changes made to comply with regulations and support changes to window positioning on the top floor
- This is a good way forwards after the tragic events

Officer comment: These are noted

2 Observations were received relating to the following matters:

- Concern over what parking is allocated and to who
- No electric vehicle charging points or road markings

Officer comment: These will be discussed in the transport section of the report

- Questioning what the windows on south elevation are as these are not shown as windows on the floor plans

Officer comment: These are 'tax windows' and are for decorative purposes only

5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy Framework, among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'.

5.2 The application has been assessed against the following policies:

5.3 National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

5.4 Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction

CC3: Adaption 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

EN18: Flooding and Drainage

H1: Provision of Housing

H2: Density and Mix

H3: Affordable Housing

H5: Standards for New Housing

H10: Private and Communal Outdoor Space

TR1: Achieving the Transport Strategy

TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters

TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging

Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents

- Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)
- Revised Sustainable Design and Construction (2019)
- Planning Obligations Under S106, April (2015)
- Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (2021)
- Employment, Skills and Training (2013)
- Reading Tree Strategy (2021)
- DCLG Technical housing standards - nationally described space standards (2015)
- National Design Guide: Planning practice for beautiful, enduring and successful places (2019)

6. APPRAISAL

6.1 The main issues for consideration are:

- Principle of Development
- Dwelling Mix and Density
- Design and impact on the character of the area
- Impact on Existing and Future occupiers
- Amenity Space
- Transport Matters
- The Natural Environment
- Sustainability
- Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems
- Affordable Housing
- Other Matters:
 - *Fire Safety*
 - *Employment, Skills & Training*
 - *CIL*

a) Principle of Development

6.2 The NPPF states that LPAs should “encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value”.

6.3 Therefore, it is clear that the priority for development should be on previously developed land, in particular vacant and derelict sites and buildings.

6.4 The site was previously in use residential purposes and is empty as a result of demolition that has happened on site to date to date.

- 6.5 It is not considered that the residential use has been abandoned in planning terms, despite being demolished to slab level. The leading case on the issue of abandonment is *Hughes v Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions* [2000] 1 PLR 76. In order to establish whether a residential use had been abandoned four criteria were relevant:
- a. *The physical condition of the building*
 - b. *The length of time for which the building had not been used for residential purposes*
 - c. *Whether it had been used for any other purposes; and*
 - d. *The owner's intentions*
- 6.6 In this case the building is in no proper physical condition at all (indeed there is no building), but the time since it was formerly used for residential purposes has not been extensive, there has been no intervening use of the site, and the intention of the owners (both freehold and leasehold) is to continue a residential use of the site. As such, the site has not abandoned its residential use in planning terms.
- 6.7 Therefore the site is an established brownfield site and this would see the replacing of properties recently lost with no gain in number. re-instatement of residential development on the land is accepted in principle. The removal of any remaining fire damaged structure is also accepted. However, the scheme is also required to be assessed in relation to other material considerations which are set out below.
- b) **Dwelling Mix and Density**
- 6.9 Policy H2 states that: *On new developments for 10 or more dwellings outside the central area and defined district and local centres, planning decisions will ensure that over 50% of dwellings will be of 3 bedrooms or more, having regard to all other material considerations.*
- 6.10 Furthermore, policy H2 provides guidance on the number of dwellings per hectare. The site is an urban location which policy H2 stating that the indicative density ranges are 60-120 dwellings per hectare. This proposal would result in 333 dwellings per hectare. Whilst the density is high, in this unique situation there is justification for it. The proposed density is therefore considered acceptable.
- 6.11 The mix is proposed to be 24 studio/ 1 bed flats, as it was previously. It is noted that this does not comply with Policy H2 of the Reading Borough Local Plan as no 2/3-bedroom family dwellings would be provided. However, the policy states that the target of 50% 3-bedroom accommodation units would be subject to having 'regard to *all material considerations*'. The Local Planning Authority has obtained legal advice on the material planning considerations in this unique case, and these are required to form part of the planning balance to help assess if a shortfall in policy could be justified in this exceptional circumstance.

- 6.12 It is considered that the funding provided by the insurers to re-instate the building is a material consideration in this case. Whilst it would be desirable to achieve an improved dwelling mix, this would not be possible as the sole funding channel will only re-provide the block in a relatively like-for-like fashion, and so the mix cannot be altered.
- 6.13 In this highly exceptional circumstance, a degree of flexibility is warranted and is considered to outweigh shortcomings of the dwelling mix.

c) **Design and impact on the character of the area**

- 6.14 Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) states: *“All development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located”*. It goes on to state that developments should *“Create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder or fear of crime does not undermine quality of life or community cohesion”*.
- 6.15 Rowe Court comprises of three storey block and two storey dwellings. It has a high degree of uniformity in terms of the blocks’ materiality and overall style, scale and roof form. In terms of architectural style, the surrounding buildings have tiling wrapping onto façade, projecting bay windows with dark timber cladding, terracotta brick with grey blue brick banding, with some mock Tudor detailing.



Example of building in Rowe Court

- 6.16 The proposed block will comprise of three storeys with accommodation in the roof space (owing to the duplex flats). As such, when viewed from the front and rear elevations, it has a likeness to a four-storey building. However, the overall height of the building would be reduced by ~1m compared to the building that was destroyed. In terms of depth and width, the building will increase by 3m and 3.2m respectively. However, it is still considered that the development would sit comfortably within the plot and its scale in relation to the wider estate is also acceptable.

6.17 The proposed block will take architectural cues from the wider estate. Namely:

- Dark window frames and balustrades - balconies aiming to give the impression of a form of 'bay window'
- Two tone brickwork (terracotta and grey brick)
- Terracotta tiles
- Projecting entrance bay
- Wrapping decorative tiling at high level



Proposed materials/ features to integrate with the remainder of Rowe Court

6.18 These features/ materials are considered positive and will help the development to integrate with the wider estate, albeit in a contemporary form.

6.19 In terms of roof form, Rowe Court comprises of blocks and dwellings with gable roofs. Whilst the new block has a roof design featuring dormer windows, it will have a gable end when viewed from the side elevations.

6.20 A noticeable distinction between the building proposed, and that which was lost, are the presence of projecting balconies. There was concern raised in neighbouring objections that this would not integrate with the remainder of Rowe Court. Officers acknowledged that balconies are not found elsewhere on the road. Their presence on the front elevation will be a new feature of the street scene. However, given the block's position at the end of the estate, meaning its visibility is more limited unless travelling up the road, and combined with the positive elements of the design

as mentioned above, it is not considered that the balconies would result in harm to the appearance and character of the street.

- 6.21 During the course of the application, the Thames Valley Police Crime Prevention Design Advisor raised design concerns over the location of the proposed garages and cycle storage and wanted to ensure that suitable secure lobby is provided.
- 6.22 The location of the proposed garages attached to the southern elevation of the building meant that direct sight lines were not present and it created a convenient recess for those intent on crime and anti-social behaviour to congregate behind, undetected. Furthermore, the cycle store was located to the rear of the site where there was not considered to be a good level of surveillance. As a result of these comments, the two garages have been relocated to the northern elevation, behind the bin store, along with the cycle store behind that. As a result, the opportunities for those intent on crime to discretely congregate on site has been minimised. The bin store, garages and cycle store will benefit from natural surveillance from 87-89 Rowe Court.
- 6.23 The agent has confirmed that a secure lobby with a phone entry system will be provided. A security strategy will also be secured via condition to ensure that the development is designed to minimise crime and disturbance for future occupiers and neighbouring residents.
- 6.24 As such, the proposal is considered acceptable in relation to Policy CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

d) **Impact on Existing and Future Occupiers**

- 6.25 Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) is concerned with preventing significant detrimental impact to the living environment of existing or new residential properties, including in terms of privacy and overlooking, loss of daylight and visual dominance, amongst other impacts.

Existing Occupiers

- 6.26 The application site is surrounded by residential properties. To the rear (north-west) of the site is Osborne Road, to the south is Drayton Way and to the north-east is Craig Avenue. These are residential areas. As such, the impact on neighbouring properties on all the above need to be considered.

Remaining properties on Rowe Court

- 6.27 The building would be 22m away from 57-62 Rowe Court which respects the separation distances set out under policy CC8 and is reflective of the previous arrangement.

- 6.28 There would be a 14.8m distance between the closest part of the building (the single storey bin store) and 87-89 Rowe Court. The building, excluding the bin store, will not directly face onto these properties. It is acknowledged that the submitted light assessment appeared to not make reference to neighbouring property 87 Rowe Court, which was raised in neighbour objections. However, Officers consider that due to the layout and separation distances, that properties on Rowe Court would not experience substantial harm in terms of loss of light, overbearing or loss of privacy.
- 6.29 Concern was raised over the placement of the bin store, and that the doors to the store would open in the direction of 87-89 Rowe Court resulting in adverse noise and odour pollution. However, due to the adequate separation distance, it is not considered that any noise or odour from the bin store would be a reason to resist the proposal.

Drayton Way

- 6.30 The proposed building's side would be located approximately 32m away from the rear elevations of properties on Drayton Way. This is comparable to the previous situation and is considered a substantial separation distance.

Craig Avenue

- 6.31 The proposed building's side elevation would be 23.6m away from the rear elevation of properties on Craig Avenue which is considered a suitable distance for the development not to result in overbearing impacts or loss of light. Furthermore, no side windows are proposed on the building to look towards Craig Avenue, so there are no concerns in terms of overlooking or loss of privacy.
- 6.32 A condition will be applied restricting the hours of construction to standard hours in the interests of protecting neighbouring residents from disturbance during construction.

Osbourne Road

- 6.33 A number of objections have been received from occupiers of Osbourne Road, concerned that the development would reduce access to natural light and privacy to rear windows and gardens. The proposed building would be located 24.5m away from the rear of properties at Osbourne Road. As such, the development would comply with the 20m back-to-back distance as outlined in Policy CC8 and therefore would not be considered to result in a substantial loss of light, overbearing impacts or loss of privacy to rear windows. Concern was raised from neighbours over the impact on views from their rear windows, however views are not a material planning consideration.
- 6.34 However, Officers do share concern with neighbours regarding the proposed introduction of rear balconies, as shown on 'option 1' drawings, to serve the rear flats and the potential loss of privacy to the rear amenity spaces of 1, 3 and 5

Osbourne Road in particular. The rear elevation of the new building would be located 8.5m from the boundary with properties on Osbourne Road. This is a closer relationship than previously existed.

- 6.35 Whilst private balconies provide valuable amenity space, balconies were not found on the former building, and therefore this is a new overlooking relationship that would be established. It is considered that the rear balconies at first and second floor level would result in direct and uninterrupted views into these neighbouring gardens when the balconies are in use, contrary to policy CC8.
- 6.36 As such, 'option 2' drawings, which see only balconies to serve the front flats proposed is recommended for approval by Officers as the omission of rear balconies would retain privacy for the occupiers of Osbourne Road in line with Policy CC8. However, both sets of plans/options have been put forward for member consideration following the member site visit where the levels of amenity space for future residents was discussed. Amenity space for residents will also be discussed later in the report.

Future Occupiers

- 6.37 As mentioned in paragraph 2.2, the proposal would see dwellings meeting the Nationally Prescribed Space standards which they did not previously. This is considered a particular improvement to the scheme in terms of quality of future accommodation within the Borough. All dwellings would have windows in habitable rooms with acceptable levels of light and outlook.
- 6.38 In line with Policy H5, the building will meet M4(3) of Building Regulations in that 5% of the dwellings will be wheelchair user friendly. This is achieved through the incorporation of a lift so all floors can be accessed. A condition will be attached ensuring that the lift is maintained in perpetuity. The RBC Accessibility Officer also raised no objection and noted that as the dwellings will be larger in size than those previously will also be positive for wheelchair users.
- 6.39 As such, the proposal is considered acceptable in terms of Policies H1, H5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) in these respects.

e) Amenity Space

- 6.40 Policy H10 states: "*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*". The policy goes on to state that generally 1-2 bedroom flats outside central Reading should have 25 sqm of private or communal amenity space.

Communal amenity space

- 6.41 The re-instated block would be provided with 218 sqm of communal amenity space. This equates to 7sqm per dwelling. It is noted that this is a reduction from 16 sqm per dwelling owing to the increase in scale of the building. The amenity space is not able to be enclosed by boundary treatment because a legal right of way exists for leaseholders of the wider estate. Nevertheless, as the amenity space will be at the rear this will allow the space to retain some privacy and is comparable to the former situation, which also did not have boundary treatment surrounding the amenity space for the same reason.
- 6.42 The proposed communal amenity space is currently not level, raising up towards the boundary with dwellings on Osbourne Road. Officers had discussions with the agent to see if there would be scope to flatten this space to improve its 'useability' for future residents. Officers were advised that this would not be possible due to planting and tree root zones. The reducing or re-grading the topography would necessitate the removal of the remaining trees and hedgerow planting because it would not be possible to retain the root zones at their current level. Furthermore, there is a relatively significant difference in levels between the site and the neighbouring properties at Osbourne Road, with the sloping topography retaining the higher ground of Osbourne Road. If this 'bank' were removed, a retaining wall would be necessary along the length of the boundary.





Photos showing the rear, communal amenity space

- 6.43 Given the constraints of the site and the previous level of amenity space, the amount and condition of communal amenity space in its current form is accepted. The communal space, albeit not level, will provide sufficient room for basic functions such as clothes drying. Furthermore, some future residents will also have access to private balconies which is an improvement on the previous situation.
- 6.44 As such, the level of communal amenity space presented in ‘option 2’ is deemed acceptable in light of the context of the scheme, and front balconies are considered a positive addition in terms of amenity. A condition will be attached ensuring the communal amenity space remains for the benefit of all residents at all times. The proposal is therefore deemed acceptable in relation to Policy H10 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

f) **Transport Matters**

- 6.45 The Council has produced a Parking Standards and Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), which includes different standards in four different zones according to the accessibility of those zones. The site is located in Zone 3, Secondary Core Area, of the Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD.
- 6.46 It would appear that the parking being provided is reflective of the existing provision. Given that the same number and tenure of units is proposed, and that the majority of spaces are demised to specific leasehold unit, it is considered that the parking demand will be unaltered. A condition will be applied to ensure vehicle spaces are retained, as per the submitted plans.

- 6.47 It is noted that some spaces have been relocated to facilitate the new site plan including repositioning of leasehold garages. The dimensions of the proposed garages do not comply with current standards and are not always used for parking especially if they are below standard dimensions. However, given that the garages are a replacement facility, the Transport department do not object on this basis
- 6.48 As per Policy TR5, within communal car parks for residential or non-residential developments of at least 10 spaces, 10% of spaces should provide an active charging point. However, as part of this proposal, only 6 spaces are being re-provisioned in an existing car park (as illustrated within the red line area). As such, it is considered acceptable that the development does not meet the threshold for electric vehicle charging infrastructure as specified in policy TR5.
- 6.49 Refuse storage provision has been designed following correspondence with Reading's Waste department. The bin store enclosure is located a short distance from the main entrance adjacent to the car park entrance. The existing turning head will be used by refuse collection vehicles to enable on-street serving to occur.
- 6.50 Cycle storage is provided in accordance with the Council's current standards which states 0.5 storage spaces/unit. The development provides a lockable, secure communal cycle store for 12 cycles and these are in the form of two tier stands. A condition will be applied ensuring the cycle parking provision is implemented and maintained.
- 6.51 A condition will also be applied to ensure a Construction Method Statement (CMS) is submitted and approved before any works commence on-site. As well as demonstrating a commitment to ensuring the number of HGV movements are managed and controlled, the CMS must demonstrate that appropriate measures will be implemented to ensure the safety of pedestrians and cyclists around the construction site.
- 6.52 As such, the proposal is deemed acceptable from a Highways perspective in accordance with Policies TR3 and TR5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) subject to conditions.

g) The Natural Environment

i) *Trees*

- 6.53 Policy EN14 (Trees, Hedges and Woodland) states that: *“New development shall make provision for tree retention and planting within the application site, particularly on the street frontage, or off-site in appropriate situations, to improve the level of tree coverage within the Borough, to maintain and enhance the character and appearance of the area in which a site is located, to provide for biodiversity and to contribute to measures to reduce carbon and adapt to climate change. Measures must be in place to ensure that these trees are adequately maintained.”*

- 6.54 One Field Maple tree must be removed to enable development. This tree has a poor form due to heavy and unbalanced pruning following damage incurred during the fire and its removal is agreeable (subject to replacement planting). Tree protection measures are shown on 4 trees that are outside of the red line boundary but are within the applicant's ownership (blue line boundary). As this land is owned by the applicant, it is considered reasonable that this tree protection could still be secured. Concern from neighbours was raised over tree protection being placed on parking spaces not associated to the new dwellings under this application. However, tree protection measures need to remain in place whilst construction is ongoing, and then will be removed.
- 6.55 An Arboricultural Method Statement has been provided with the general principles for tree removal and protection being agreed. However, a number of slight amendments to this document are necessary to provide points of clarification; a new version will be secured via condition.
- 6.56 In terms of landscaping, three field maple trees are provided in the rear amenity space. Full details of these trees will be secured via condition. In addition, further details on the proposed biodiverse green roof and the line of planters/ hedge vegetation for ground floor units 1, 2, 7 and 8 will also be secured via condition.
- 6.57 Subject to conditions to secure details of the proposed landscaping which has been indicatively shown on the site plans, along with an updated arboricultural method statement, the proposal is accepted in relation to Policy EN14 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

ii) Ecology/Biodiversity

- 6.58 Policy EN12 states that *“On all sites, development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity and geodiversity, and should provide a net gain for biodiversity wherever possible”*
- 6.59 The Council's Ecologist has confirmed that the proposals are very unlikely to affect any priority habitats, protected species, or designated wildlife sites given the condition of the site.
- 6.60 The submission indicates biodiversity enhancements in principle, namely the inclusion of bee bricks, a hedgehog highway and an insect hotel, along with a green roof. Whilst bird boxes are also shown, these are to be attached to trees rather than being integral. In addition, there are not any integral bat boxes shown, bats of which are a protected species.
- 6.61 Therefore it is clear there is a willingness by the applicant to provide biodiversity enhancements, along with opportunities on site, but further details on this and will be required by condition/
- 6.62 The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in relation to Policy EN12 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) subject to condition.

h) **Sustainability**

- 6.63 Policy CC2 states: *Proposals for new development, including the construction of new buildings and the redevelopment and refurbishment of existing building stock, will be acceptable where the design of buildings and site layouts use energy, water, minerals, materials and other natural resources appropriately, efficiently and with care and take account of the effects of climate change*
- 6.64 Policy CC3 states: *All developments will demonstrate how they have been designed to incorporate measures to adapt to climate change*
- 6.65 Policy CC4 states: *Any development of more than 20 dwellings and/ or non-residential development of over 1,000 sq m shall consider the inclusion of decentralised energy provision, within the site, unless it can be demonstrated that the scheme is not suitable, feasible or viable for this form of energy provision*
- 6.66 Policy H5 states: *All new build housing will be built to the higher water efficiency standard under Regulation 36(3) of the Building Regulations 79 and All major new-build residential development should be designed to achieve zero carbon homes*
- 6.67 Decentralised energy provision is provided in that all dwellings will be provided with an air source heat pump (ASHP). These are to be located at level 3 of the building. It is noted in the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD that Ground Source Heat Pumps (GSHP) should be explored and are favoured over ASHPs in the first instance. However, in this case, the applicant has advised that the building will be on light foundations so considers drilling deep bore holes unjustifiable. Similarly, installing shallow coils over a large surface area would require large sections of the retained existing car park to be excavated which would then have to be made good with new paving and tarmac, and would disrupt the property of other leaseholders of the wider estate. Finally, GSHP's would require a larger communal plant room with hot water storage tanks, for which there is no space for at ground level given the fixed brief to re-provide dwellings.
- 6.68 With the above in mind, and the proposed provision of ASHPs and other sustainability enhancements such as the biodiverse green roof, the sustainability measures as outlined are deemed acceptable.
- 6.69 In terms of water efficiency, it is confirmed that the scheme is being designed according to the higher water efficiency standard of *Regulation 36(3) of the Building Regulations*. This will be achieved through the specification of water efficient appliances, taps and flow rate control devices where required.
- 6.70 The Council's Sustainable Design and Construction SPD states in paragraph 3.11 that "in achieving Zero Carbon Homes for major residential developments, the preference is that new build residential of ten or more dwellings will achieve a true carbon neutral development on-site. If this is not achievable, it must achieve a minimum of 35% improvement in regulated emissions over the Target Emissions Rate in the 2013 Building Regulations, plus a Section 106 contribution of £1,800 per remaining

tonne towards carbon offsetting within the Borough (calculated as £60/tonne over a 30 year period.”

- 6.71 Although it is unfortunate that the development cannot achieve zero carbon, the submitted sustainability statement demonstrates that the development achieves a 63% improvement. As per the SPD, the remaining 37% would ordinarily be offset by a financial contribution, which the application projected this to equate to £11,792. However, given the circumstances surrounding the application, and the insurer only providing the cost of the re-instatement of the building, Officers accept that this financial contribution is not able to be provided.
- 6.72 In light of this, and the sustainability measures which are proposed, which are an improvement on the building that was lost, the proposal is considered, on balance, be acceptable in relation to policies CC2, CC3, CC4 and H5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

i) Sustainable Drainage Systems

- 6.73 Policy EN18 requires all major developments to incorporate ‘Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems’ (SUDS) with runoff rates aiming to reflect greenfield conditions and, in any case, must be no greater than the existing conditions of the site. The applicant has submitted a Surface Water Drainage Strategy which demonstrates that it attenuates surface water on the roof of the building and discharges it at a lower rate than existing. An appropriate maintenance plan has also been submitted. On that basis, the proposal is considered acceptable in relation to policy EN18 of the Local Plan (2019) subject to a condition that the drainage strategy is implemented and maintained as specified.

j) Affordable Housing

- 6.74 Policy H3 requires that ‘...on sites of 20 or more dwellings, 30% of the total dwellings will be in the form of affordable housing’
- 6.75 As the proposal is for the re-provision of private dwellings that have been destroyed, with these being bound by and with existing leases and insurance funding, no on-site affordable housing is proposed. This is accepted in this particular instance.

k) Other Matters

Fire Safety

- 6.76 A fire statement is only formally required to be submitted as part of a planning application that involves a building of over 18 metres (or 7 stories) tall containing more than one dwelling. Given the proposed building does not meet this criteria a fire statement has not been submitted as part of the application.

6.77 However, given the circumstances surrounding this application, the agent has provided the following key principles to inform a full detailed fire strategy to be developed:

- Emergency lighting to complying with BS 5266-1
- Smoke detector to comply with BS 5839
- All stair core doors to be fitted with Fire door keep shut Signage and Fire door keep locked to stores, plant rooms and service risers
- Appropriate compartmentation to be installed throughout
- Additional windows at the top floors have been noted as a positive given these were not found on the previous building

6.78 Within a neighbouring comment, there was concern that the building will only have one entrance/ exit. However, there is no requirement under this application to insist on additional entrances/ exits. Building Control Officers have also advised that having one entrance/ exit is also accepted and does not prevent a development from complying with building regulations in respect of fire safety so long as an acceptable fire strategy is submitted. This will be provided at the Building Regulations stage, following the granting of any planning permission.

6.79 Officers trust that the proposals will be carefully reviewed by Building Control at the time of Building Regulations approval to ensure that the fire strategy measures in place on completion are suitable.

Employment, Skills and Training

6.80 In accordance with Policy CC9, and the details within the supporting Employment, Skills and Training SPD, an obligation would ordinarily be included in the S106 for the applicant to either develop an Employment Skills Plan for construction skills, in conjunction with Reading's Economic and Destination Agency (REDA), or provide a financial contribution.

6.81 However, given the scheme is bound by funding provided by the insurance policy, there is not sufficient funds to provide a financial contribution or a S106 agreement. As an alternative, it has been agreed that an Employment Skills Plan will be provided and this will be secured via a planning condition, which has been agreed by REDA.

CIL

6.82 The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) would apply at a rate of £167.06 per sqm. The contribution would equate to approximately £250,760, subject to review by the Infrastructure Monitoring Officer following the granting of any planning permission.

6.83 Other matters raised in representations

- Application boundary is misleading as it only covers the building itself, not all the land that has been fenced off since the fire

Officer comment: The application site is outlined in red. During the course of the application, the red line was amended to incorporate the proposed amenity space which was omitted in error. The application site does not concern the entire area that is currently fenced off from the public. Additional space around the former building is required to be closed off for safety reasons

- No indication is given regarding the re-instatement of a street light which is an ongoing safety issue

Reading Borough Council Highways team have advised that once the hoarding has been removed from site, the Council will be able to access and re-instate the street light

- There has been no consultation with the Rowe Court Management (Reading) Limited - a number of the proposals will impact the management requirement costs for the whole road

Officer comment: The LPA have consulted members of the public via site notice and letter. It would be the responsibility of the applicant to liaise with relevant management groups

- Two owners of the former flats have not been consulted

Officer comment: All owners of the flats were listed under Certificate B of the application form, advising they have all been served notice of the application

- Inaccuracies on the block plan regarding numbering of neighbouring properties and an incorrect date being put on the submitted CIL form

Officer comment: Amended plans were received correcting the numbering of neighbouring properties. Whilst there is an inaccuracy on the CIL form, this will be dealt with by the Infrastructure Monitoring Officer following the granting of any planning permission

- Consultation period is inadequate given the volume of documents submitted

Officer comment: Both neighbour letters and site notices displayed, provided for the statutory 21 days to comment. However, comments received up until the date of a decision are considered

- Questioned who would want to live in the flats again and is it normal for these to be rebuilt. Consider the site would be better as a memorial garden or similar

Officer comment: The LPA can only assess the proposal as submitted. As the land is in private ownership, the owners are within their rights to submit an application for the re-building of a residential block

- Would be good to use the space for parking, communal space for residents or a memorial rather than flats

Officer comment: Same as above

- Rowe Court as a whole needs tighter control on parking

Officer comment: The proposal is deemed acceptable from a transport perspective, as discussed earlier in the report. This concern is a wider issue which is beyond the scope of this application. The RBC Transport/ Highways team could be contracted to discuss concerns with general parking controls in Rowe Court

- Concern that food waste bins could attract rodents

Officer comment: The waste will be collected via Council collections and adequate waste provision is provided. These measures will hopefully decrease the likelihood of rodents, along with residents exercising proper waste management.

- Have not been notified of the committee meeting or been given details of how to speak at the committee

Officer comment: All individuals that made representations (and have provided a correspondence address) will be notified in writing of the intended committee date of an application and details of how to speak at the committee. Letters are sent in the week leading up to a committee when the application has been formally put on the agenda for that meeting. At the time of writing this report, and when this representation was received, letters had not yet been sent.

6.84 Equalities Impact

In determining this application the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics including age and disability. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to the particular planning application. In terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development. The new building provides for accessibility for those with some disabilities.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 To summarise, the proposal is considered to have demonstrated acceptability in relation to a number of planning policies. Whilst there are shortfalls, this application is a re-instatement of a building that was destroyed in exceptional circumstances, and therefore is required to be assessed in that context. As such, Officers consider that flexibility and rationality is needed when assessing this sensitive application.
- 7.2 The proposal is therefore deemed acceptable subject to conditions. However, Officers would recommend the approval of ‘option 2’ drawings given privacy concerns posed to residents of Osbourne Road from rear facing balconies, as discussed in the report.

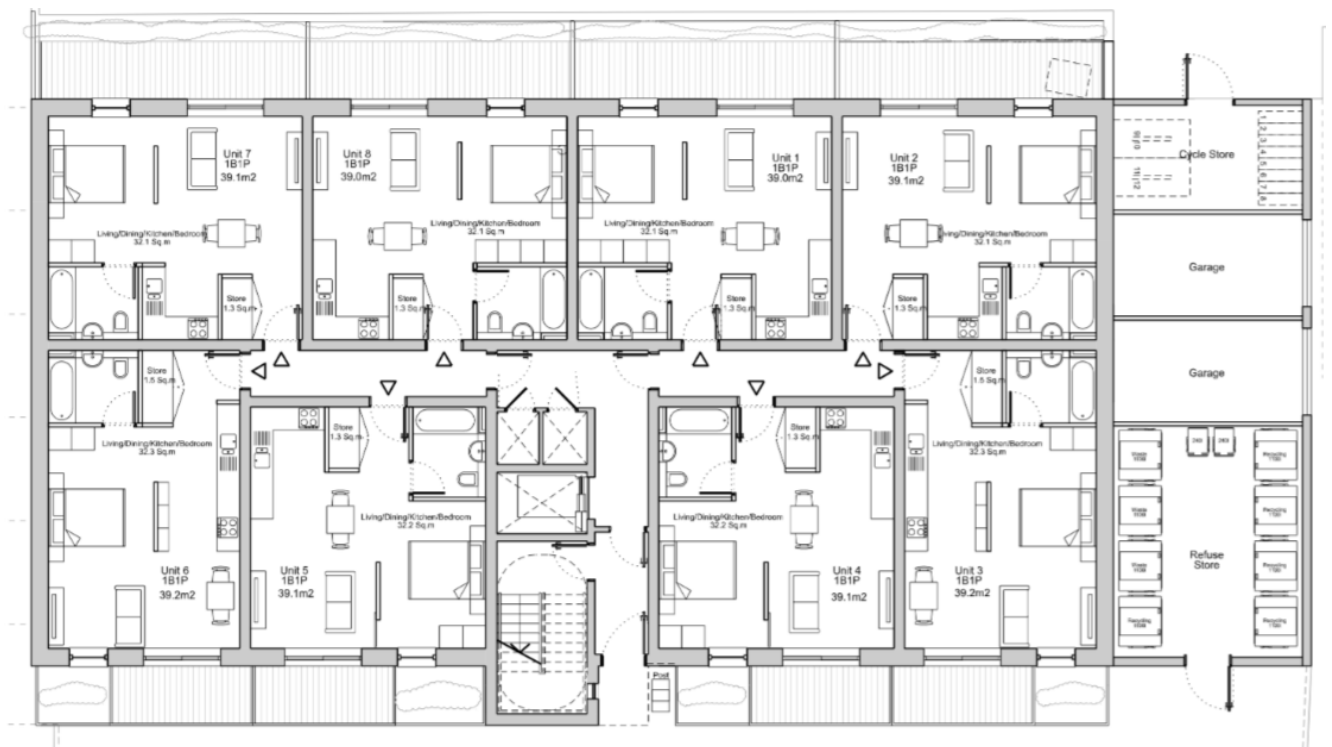
Case Officer: Connie Davis

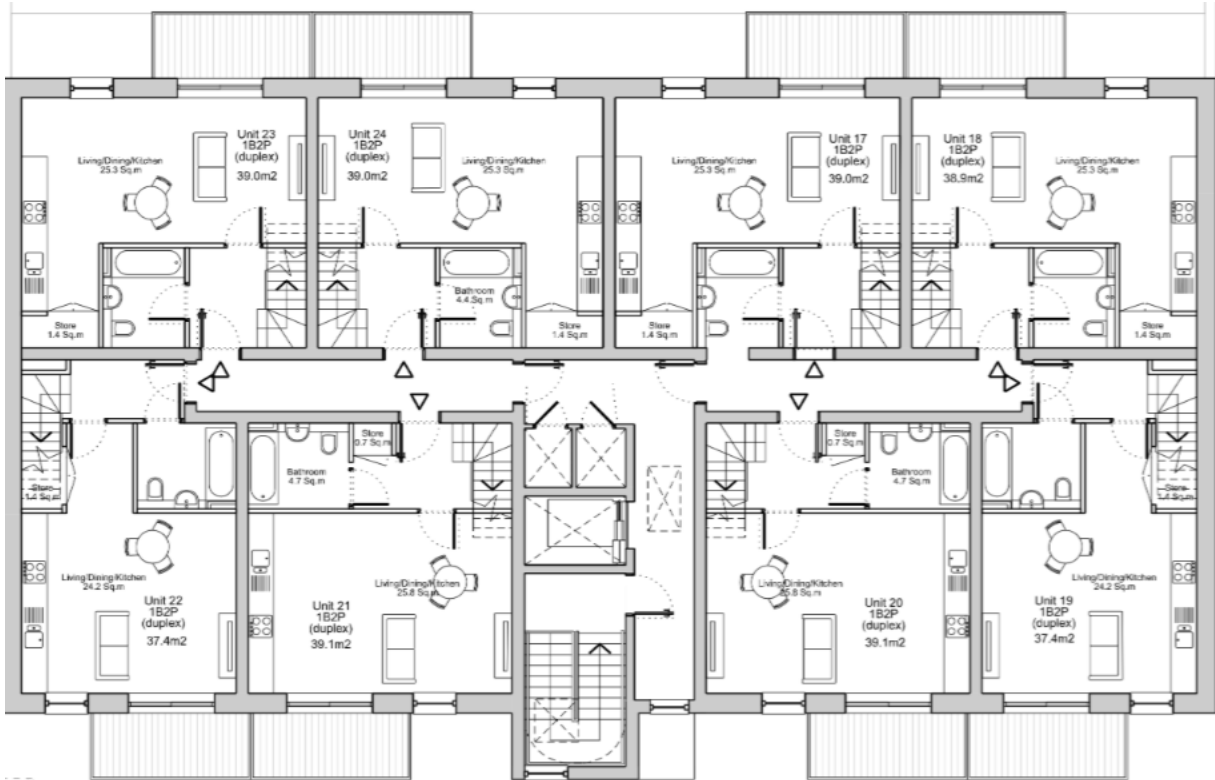
‘Option 1’ drawings (with front and rear balconies)

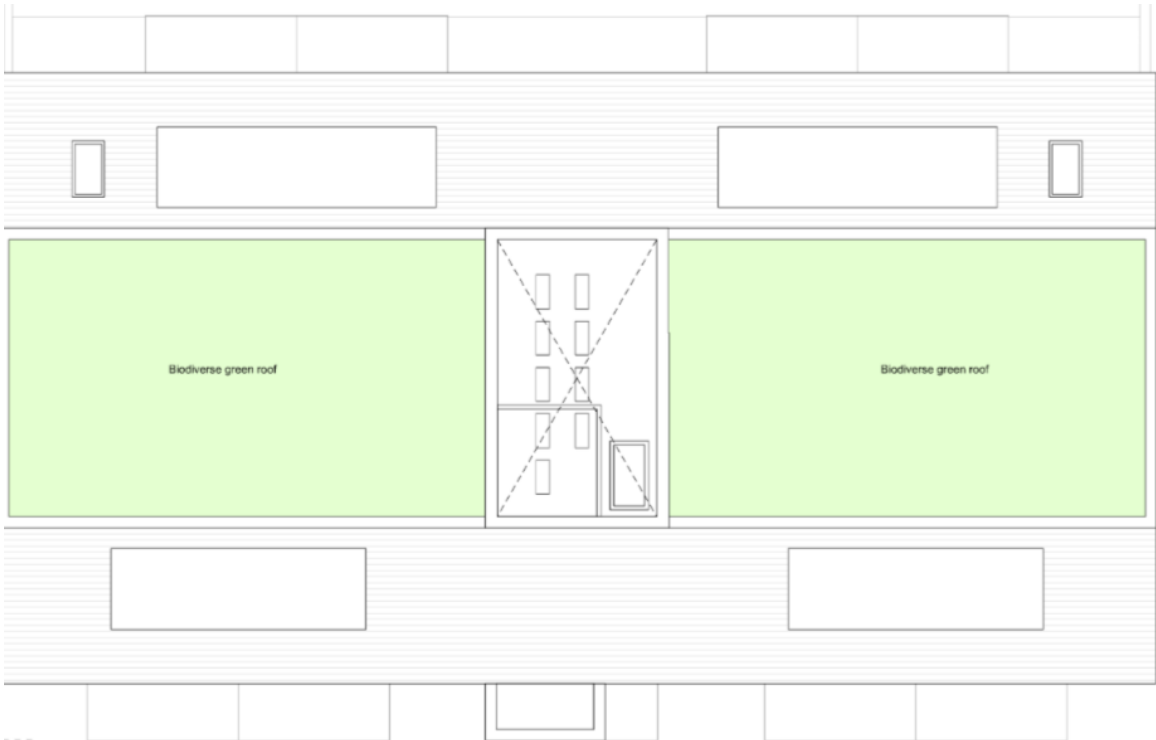
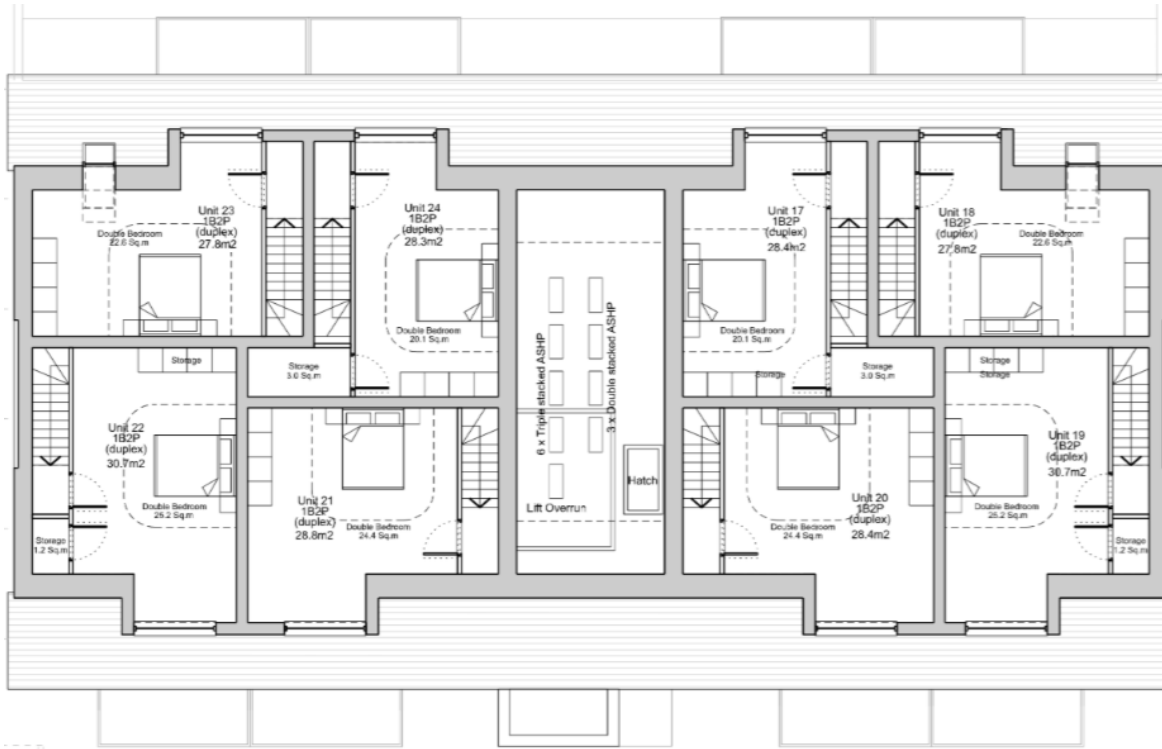


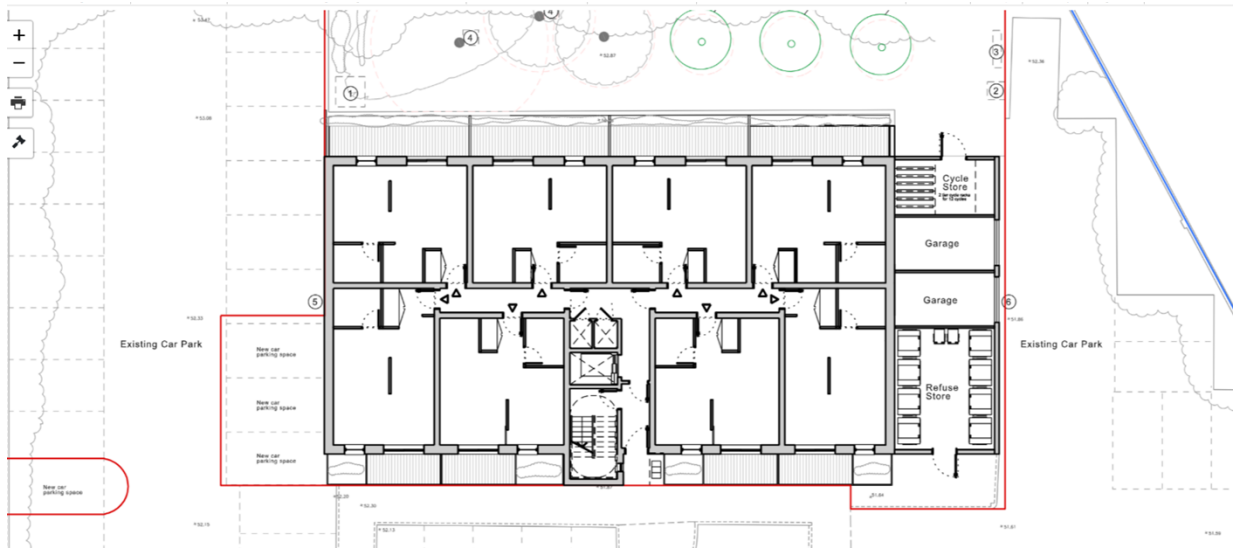


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'Option 2 drawings' (front balconies only):

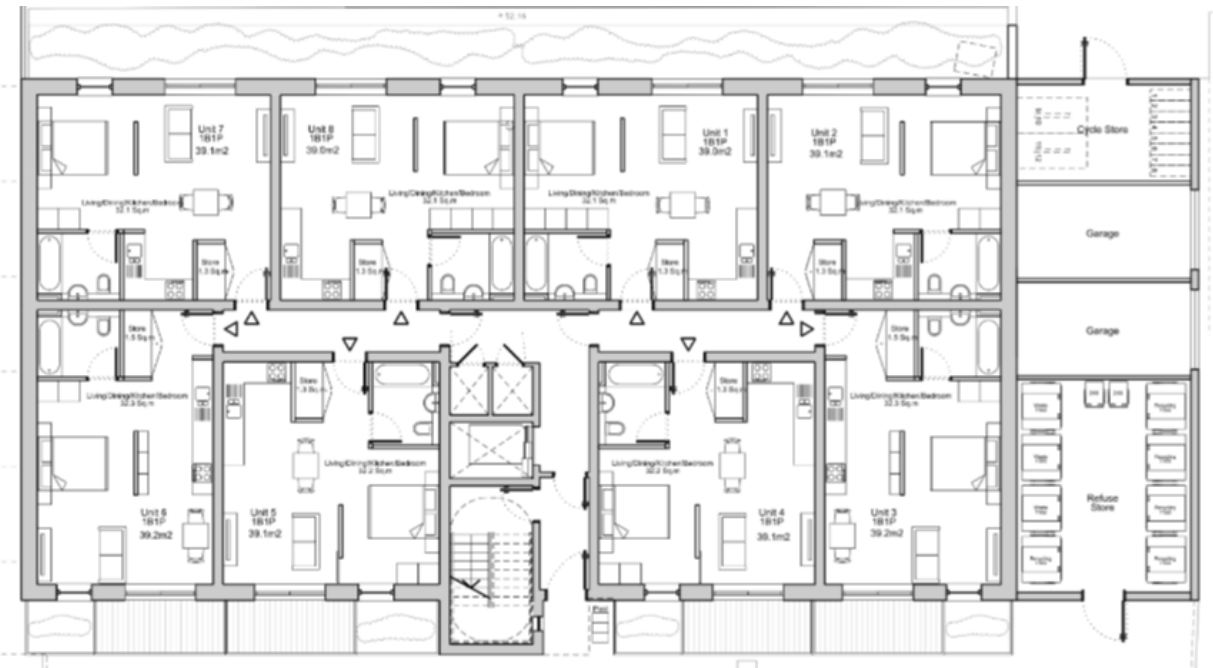


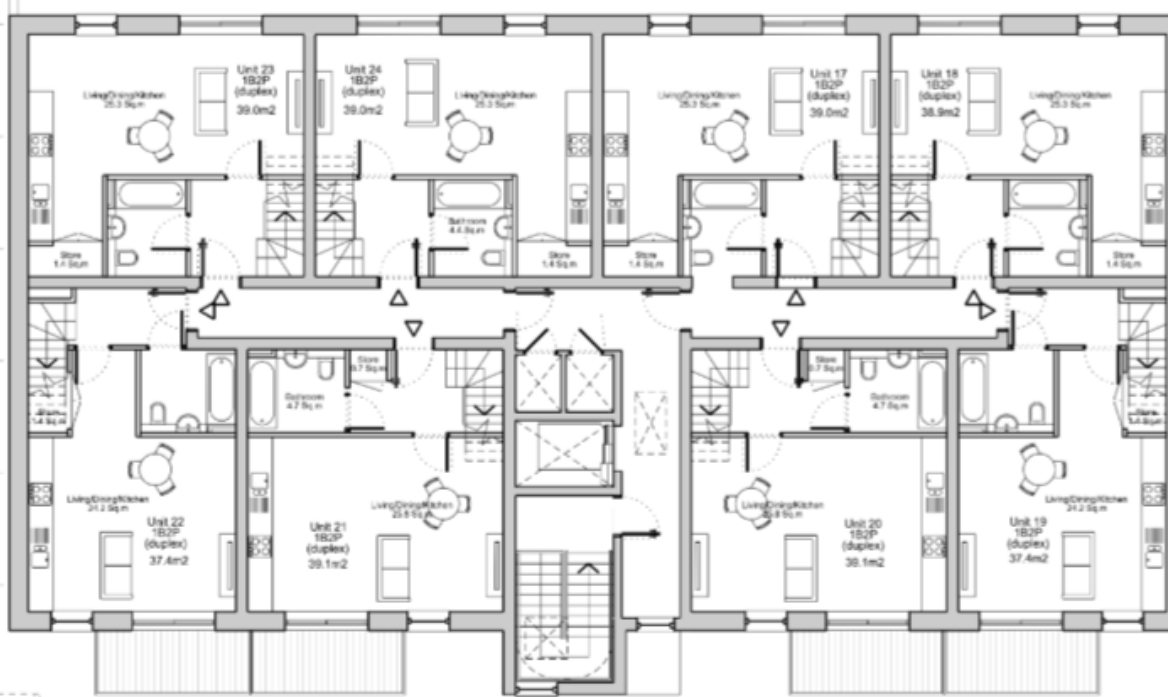
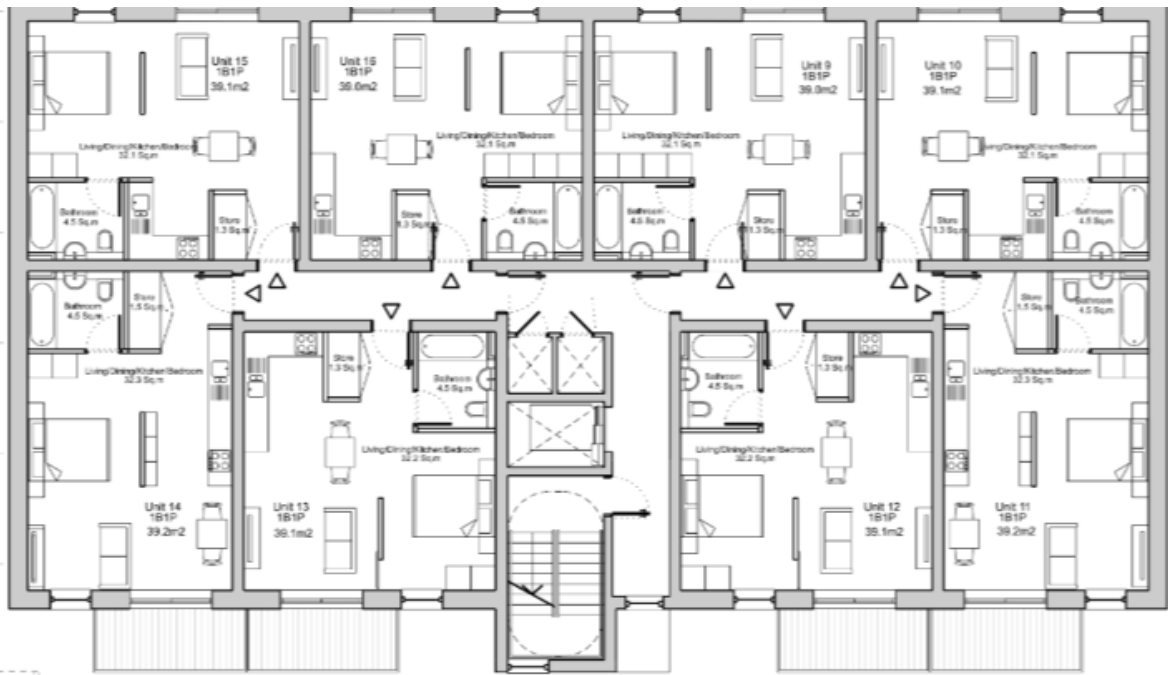
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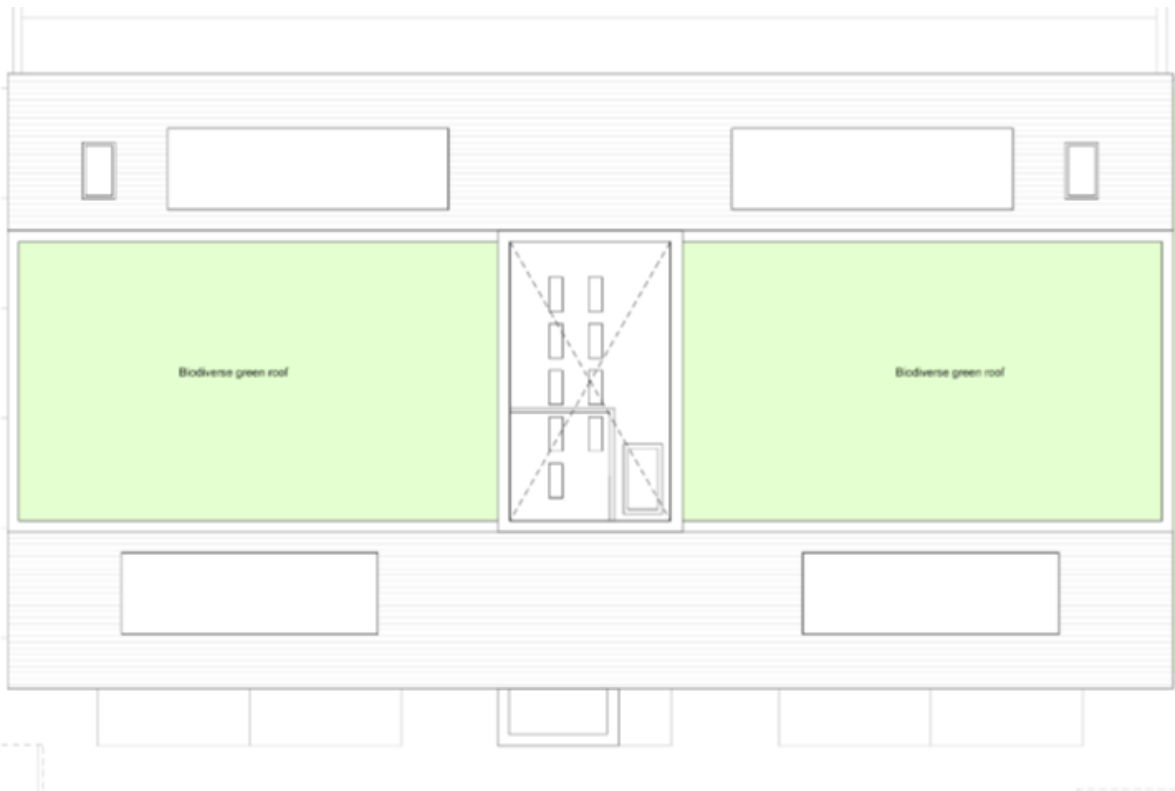
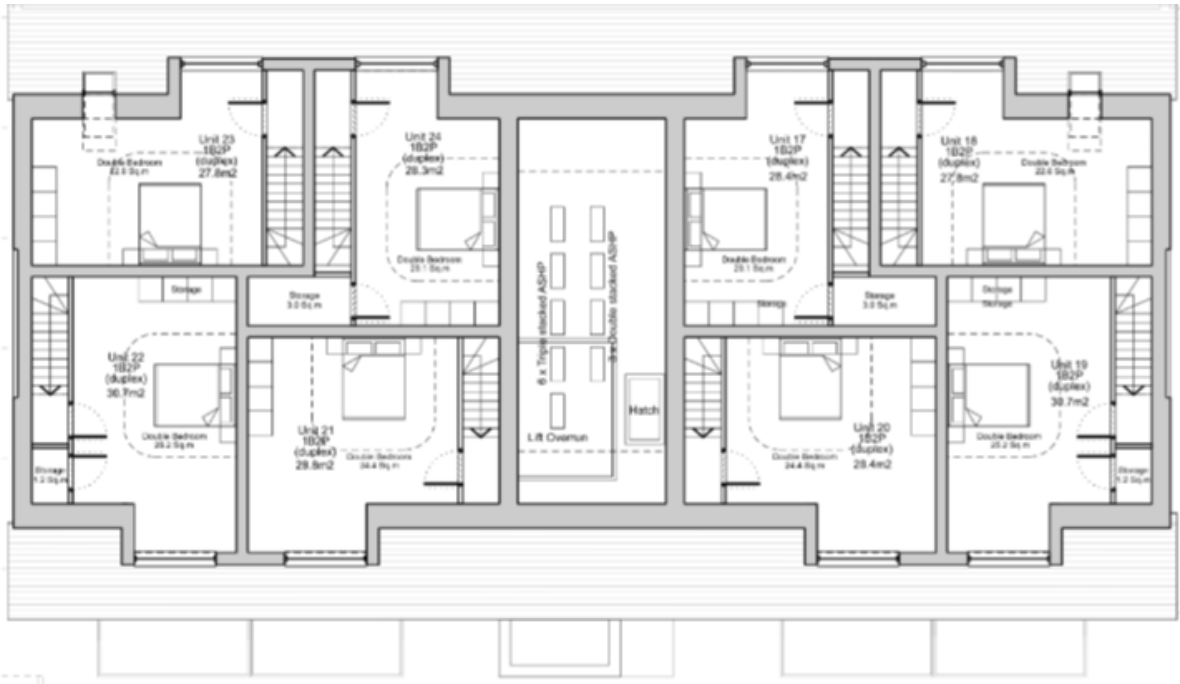


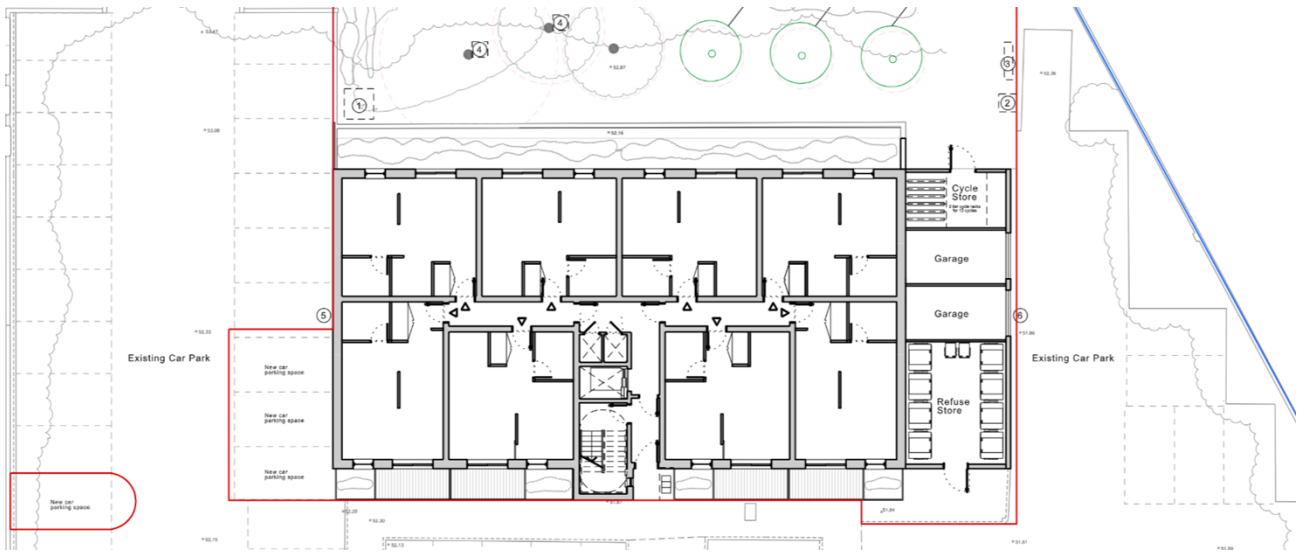


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COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 1st March 2023

Ward: Thames

Application No.: 220922/FUL

Address: 71-73 Caversham Road, Reading, RG1 8JA

Proposal: Partial demolition of former retail warehouse and erection of a mixed-use building comprising 29 residential units, retail floorspace (Use Class E(a)) at ground floor and associated car parking, cycle parking and landscaping (amended description).

Applicant: S2 Caversham Ltd

Date Valid: 22/08/2022

Application target decision date: Originally 21/11/2022, but a formal extension of time for the determination of the application has been agreed until 24/03/2023

26 week date: 20/02/2023

RECOMMENDATION

Delegate to the Assistant Director for Planning, Transport and Public Protection (AD PTPP) to (i) GRANT full planning permission subject to the satisfactory completion of a Section 106 legal agreement or (ii) to REFUSE permission should the Section 106 legal agreement not be completed by 24th March 2023 (unless officers on behalf of the AD PTPP agree to a later date for completion of the legal agreement).

The Section 106 legal agreement to secure the following:

- On-site provision of 8 Shared Ownership Affordable Housing units (6x1-bed units at first floor level and 2x2-bed units - one each at ground and first floor level), together with a cascade mechanism that should any Affordable Housing Units have not been disposed of to a Housing Association (HA) or Registered Provider (RP) within certain times and under certain circumstances, the applicant shall give notice to the Council to seek a Housing Association or RP, or for the Council to purchase the affordable housing units. Within certain times and under certain circumstances, should the Council not exercise this option the affordable housing contribution transfers to a financial contribution towards affordable housing elsewhere in the Borough (as per the policy requirements, with the amount totalling £585,344) and the on-site units are no longer required to be provided as on-site affordable units.
- A payment-in-lieu commuted sum financial contribution towards affordable housing of £58,400.
- Should the application site subsequently be extended/altered to create further residential units then contributions towards affordable housing would apply on a cumulative basis.
- Public Open Space financial contribution of £60,900.
- Employment, Skills and Training - The production, implementation and monitoring of an Employment and Skills Plan (ESP) for the Construction phase of the development. Or, in the event that the developer chooses not to provide the ESP themselves, a financial contribution commuted sum, calculated to be £6,621.83 using the SPD formula will be secured in lieu of an ESP.
- Car club provision, so future residents have access to and the use of a car club either on-site or as part of an existing provision nearby to the site in Central Reading.

- Highways works under Section 278 of the Highways Act 1980 with respect to proposed Cycle Route Improvement works affecting the existing highway on Northfield Road (see figure 9 below).
- Zero Carbon Offset financial contribution, as per the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD 2019. If zero carbon is not achieved the scheme must instead achieve a minimum of a 35% improvement in regulated emissions over the Target Emissions Rate in the 2013 Building Regulations, plus provide a financial contribution of £1,800 per remaining tonne towards carbon offsetting within the Borough (calculated as £60/tonne over a 30-year period).
- Contribution towards monitoring costs plus a separate commitment to pay the Council's reasonable legal costs in connection with the proposed S106 Agreement will be payable whether or not the Agreement is completed.
- Any unexpended contributions to be repaid within ten years beginning with the start of the Financial Year after the final obligation payment for each obligation is received. In accordance with Policy CC9.
- Indexation - All financial contributions to be index-linked from date of permission unless expressly stated otherwise.

And the following conditions to include:

1. *Time Limit - 3 years*
2. *Approved plans*
3. * Demolition works not to be undertaken before a contract for site redevelopment, as per submitted and approved details to LPA.
4. * Pre-commencement level 2 photographic recording of existing buildings for the Historic Environment Record
5. Pre-commencement, barring partial demolition works hereby approved, details of all external materials to be submitted to the LPA (and sample details to be provided on site - including the expectation for the brick bond to be similar to the southern warehouse façade to be demolished) and approved in writing with the LPA. Approved details to be retained on site until the work has been completed
6. Ground floor shopfront details (including sections) at 1:10 scale (expectation to comply with RBC Shopfronts SPD).
7. Compliance condition relating to the retention of the 'Smallbone' ghost signage on the Northfield Road elevation
8. * Pre-commencement Demolition and Construction Method Statement (including EP-based matters)
9. Compliance condition for provision of vehicle parking as shown prior to first occupation, with 4 spaces for the existing office use, 5 spaces for the proposed retail use (4 for customers and 1 for staff) and 5 spaces for future residential occupiers.
10. Compliance condition for provision of vehicular access as shown prior to first occupation
11. Compliance condition for provision of cycle parking as shown prior to first occupation
12. Compliance condition for provision of refuse and recycling storage facilities as shown prior to first occupation
13. Compliance condition for existing accesses to be stopped up after new access is in use
14. Pre-occupation submission and approval of all postal addresses in order to ensure that parking permits are not automatically issued
15. Compliance condition specifying no automatic entitlement to parking permit
16. Pre-occupation submission and approval of EV Charging Point Scheme details
17. Pre-commencement, barring partial demolition works hereby approved, detailed scheme for protection of future residential occupiers from the external noise environment
18. Compliance condition relating to delivery and waste collection times being restricted

- from 0800 to 2000 Mondays to Saturdays and 1000 to 1800 on Sundays and Bank Holidays
19. Compliance condition restricting the ground floor retail unit opening/operating outside 0700 to 2300 Monday to Saturday and 0800 to 1800 on Sundays and Bank Holidays
 20. Pre-installation of mechanical plant submission and approval of a noise assessment
 21. Pre-construction above foundation level submission and approval of air quality mitigation details
 22. * Pre-commencement (including partial demolition works hereby approved) contaminated land site characterisation assessment
 23. * Pre-commencement (including partial demolition works hereby approved) contaminated land remediation scheme
 24. Pre-construction above foundation level contaminated land validation report
 25. Reporting of unexpected contamination at any time
 26. Compliance condition relating to hours of demolition/construction works
 27. Compliance condition relating to no burning of materials or green waste on site
 28. Pre-occupation submission and approval of measures to prevent pests and vermin accessing bin stores
 29. Pre-commencement, barring the partial demolition works hereby approved, submission and approval of all hard and soft landscaping details, specifically including biodiverse roof details
 30. Pre-occupation submission and approval of boundary treatment details
 31. Pre-commencement, barring the partial demolition works hereby approved, submission and approval of habitat enhancement measures
 32. Compliance condition relating to protecting nesting birds during partial site clearance works
 33. Compliance condition for excavation works to not be left open overnight, to protect wildlife and animals during construction
 34. Pre-commencement, barring partial demolition works hereby approved, submission and approval of Sustainable Drainage Strategy
 35. Compliance condition for SuDS approved in condition above to be completed prior to first occupation of any part of the development and managed/maintained thereafter.
 36. Compliance condition for development to implement the FRA mitigation measures prior to first occupation
 37. Compliance condition permitting Class E(a) use only within the ground floor retail unit
 38. Compliance condition for the ground floor Class E(a) unit fronting Caversham Road to retain 'active window displays'
 39. Dwelling mix restricted to 23 x 1-bedroom, 5 x 2-bedroom and 1 x 3-bedroom units
 40. No conversion of non-residential floorspace to residential without separate permission
 41. Pre-occupation accessible and adaptable and 5% wheelchair user dwelling details
 42. Management of miscellaneous items (lights, meter boxes, flues, vents or pipes, and no window cleaning or telecommunications equipment, building maintenance unit, alarm boxes, television aerials or satellite dishes)
 43. Flat roof areas not to be used as roof terraces unless where specified on the approved plans
 44. Pre-occupation submission and approval of external lighting details
 45. Pre-commencement, barring partial demolition, Security Strategy details to be submitted and approved
 46. Pre-occupation submission and approval of privacy screen details
 47. Pre-commencement, barring partial demolition, submission and approval of fire statement / strategy measures.
 48. Pre-commencement, barring partial demolition, SAP assessment (energy) - design

stage

49. Pre-occupation of any residential unit SAP assessment (energy) - as built
50. Pre-commencement, barring partial demolition, submission and approval of an interim BREEAM Certificate demonstrating a minimum BREEAM 'Very good' rating
51. Pre-occupation of retail unit submission and approval of a final BREEAM Certificate demonstrating a minimum BREEAM 'Very Good' rating

Informatives:

1. Positive and Proactive Statement
2. Highway works
3. High density residential development and car parking
4. Section 106 Legal Agreement
5. Possible requirement for separate advertisement consent
6. Clarification concerning pre-commencement conditions (marked with an *)
7. CIL
8. Party Wall Act
9. Building Regulations
10. Terms and conditions
11. Noise between residential properties
12. Definition of shell and core, further to condition 3
13. TROs are subject to separate legislation

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The application site comprises a corner plot on the west side of Caversham Road (the IDR) and south side of Northfield Road, to the north-west of the town centre and Reading Station. The site is broadly rectangular in shape, flat in topographical terms and 0.16 hectares in size (see figure 1 below).



Figure 1: Site Location Plan (not to scale)

- 1.2 As existing, the site comprises a series of buildings. Most prominently on the eastern frontage of the site is a 2-storey retail warehouse. This has been vacant since December 2018 (as per the CIL form submitted by the applicant), having previously been occupied for many decades by Drews the Ironmongers. On the Northfield Road elevation, on the west side of the site are the smaller scale 2-3 storey buildings known as 'The Brewery' and 'The Malthouse', which like the main building were all historically former brewery buildings. As existing, these buildings are in active office use, with a vehicular parking and service yard located between the separate buildings and accessed off Northfield Road.

- 1.3 All of the existing application site buildings were added to the Council's list of locally important buildings and structures on 11/02/2020 (LL15: Former Dreads, 71-73 Caversham Road, 1 Northfield Road and the Malthouse Building). The local listing states:

A collection of buildings at the corner of Caversham Road and Northfield Road, with strong historical/social and industrial connections to the Reading beer industry.

The original owner, Henry Pendlebury Dowson, was a notable Reading figure. He was a well-known local businessman and maltster who owned two other malthouses in Reading. The buildings were built for the purposes of malting in the latter part of the Nineteenth Century, but these were later converted to other commercial uses; although the principal structures survive. The buildings contain features notable to the area and the industry such as patterned brickwork and decorative arches and are an important feature in the local townscape.



Figure 2: The application site from Caversham Road looking south-west (Nov 2022)

- 1.4 In dismissing a previous planning appeal at the site (see section 3 for details) the Inspector commented that the existing building has decorative brickwork, a low height with pitched roofs in various materials, notable window openings particularly the distinctly large ground floor windows on Northfield Road) and looks like a Victorian warehouse, with the original use as a maltings being able to be appreciated. The Inspector also commented that the site is a landmark owing to its corner position and the openness/alignment of Caversham Road and Northfield Road. Furthermore, the Inspector considered that the architectural and historical value at the site is largely as a whole (i.e. all buildings at the site collectively).
- 1.5 From a transport perspective the A329 Caversham Road forms part of the town's Inner Distribution Road (IDR), with two lanes in both north and south directions (see figure 2 above). The pedestrian network surrounding the site has adequate footway and street lighting provision. There is a staggered pelican crossing on Caversham Road, immediately south of Northfield Road. Vehicular access to the site is currently provided via Northfield Road only. Caversham Road and the surrounding road network all have extensive parking restrictions preventing on-street parking.

1.6 As already referenced above, the existing buildings at the site are locally listed, but it is also relevant to clarify that the site is not located within a conservation area and none of the buildings are statutory listed either. Accordingly, in practice, being locally listed means they are ‘non-designated heritage assets’ for the purposes of national planning policy, local planning policy and all related guidance. The following other designations and information in relation to the application site are considered to be relevant:

- The site is not specifically allocated for development within the local plan;
- The site is within the boundary of the Reading Central Area (Policies CR1-10)
- The site is within the Office Core (Policy CR1)
- The site is within an Air Quality Management Area (Policy EN15),
- The site is within Flood Zone 2 (Policy EN18)
- The site has potential for contaminated land (given its former uses) (Policy EN16)
- The site is within a Smoke Control Zone
- Caversham Road is part of the classified highway network (see Policy TR3) and Northfield Road is a cycle route (see Policy TR4)
- The site is outside, but adjacent to one of the three major opportunity areas within Central Reading, with the Station/River MOA being to the north and east of the site.
- The site is outside a designated tall buildings cluster (in contrast to the site to the east (former Royal Mail sorting office at 80 Caversham Road) which is inside the MOA / tall buildings cluster).
- The site is in Thames Ward.



Figure 3: Aerial view of the surrounding area looking north (from Google maps)

1.7 The surrounding area comprises a mix of uses. To the north, beyond Northfield Road is the 3-storey Shurgard self-storage facility, while to the east are the vacant former Royal Mail sorting office and distribution centre, with ancillary 3-storey offices closest to the Caversham Road boundary. To the north-east is the Vastern Court Retail Park, occupied by a series of operators. Both the Royal Mail and Retail Park sites are subject to either a current pending application (Royal Mail) or appeal (Retail Park) for redevelopment (see relevant history section below). To the south are a modestly scaled 2-storey terrace of buildings occupied by Pure Gym and formerly by Dawsons Musical Instruments store, with substantial surface-level parking to the rear. Beyond this is the 2-storey Caversham Road fire station and the main railway line. To the west on Northfield Road are the 3-storey block of flats known as Monmouth Court, beyond which are the low-rise domestic scaled Victorian terraced properties and streets such as Swansea Road and York Road, as seen in figure 3 above. As such, the character to the west is distinct from that to the east (as existing and in terms of policy).

1.8 The application is being considered at Planning Applications Committee as it relates to a major application which is recommended for approval by officers.

2. PROPOSALS

2.1 Full planning permission is sought for the partial demolition of the former retail warehouse building on the corner of Caversham Road and Northfield Road. The extent of retention / demolition of existing buildings at the site is summarised below in figure 4. The existing remaining building will be partly remodelled and partly redeveloped to provide a part 2 storey (and accommodation within the roofspace through two proposed dormers on the Northfield Road elevation and rooflights on both street elevations) building fronting onto Northfield Road and part of the Caversham Road frontage, rising to a part 5 and part 6 storey building in the new build parts of the site fronting Caversham Road.



Figure 4 - The extent of retention and demolition of existing site buildings

2.2 No changes are proposed to the 2-3 storey 'The Brewery' and 'The Malthouse' office buildings on the western side of the site fronting Northfield Road. These would remain unaltered as offices as part of the proposed works at the site, with these structures included within the redline boundary of the site.

2.3 The proposed development seeks to provide a 297sqm retail unit (Use Class E(a)) at part ground floor level, along the entire Caversham Road frontage of the site and part of the Northfield Road frontage too. The unit would be serviced via a proposed loading bay on Northfield Road, with access provided to the rear of the unit. A standalone retail refuse store is also proposed on-site, adjacent to the vehicular access point on Northfield Road. Cycle parking is also proposed to the front and rear of the proposed unit.

2.4 Aside from this retail component, the remainder of the development seeks to create self-contained residential units (Class C3). A total of 29 units are proposed across the building, with the proposed mix being 23 x 1-bedroom units, 5 x 2-bedroom units and 1 x 3-bedroom unit, as detailed in figure 5 below. 21 of the 29 units are proposed for market sale (17x1, 3x2 & 1x3-bed units), with 8 on-site shared ownership affordable housing units. This equates to a 27.59% on-site provision of affordable housing, with this comprising 6 x 1-bedroom units (all at first floor level) and 2 x 2-bedrooms units (one each at ground and first floor level). A commuted sum of £58,400 is proposed to ensure the affordable housing provision is at a policy compliant level. 2 wheelchair accessible (Part M4(3)) units are

proposed, split equally between the affordable and market tenures, comprising 1x1-bed shared ownership unit at first floor level and 1x2-bed market unit at fifth floor level.

Floor	1-bedroom	2-bedroom	3-bedroom	Total units	Units with private amenity space
Ground		1*		1	1
First	6*	1*	1	8	6
Second	7			7	7
Third	4	1		5	5
Fourth	4	1		5	5
Fifth	2	1		3	3
Total	23	5	1	29	27

* denotes the 6 x 1-bed and 2 x 2-bed shared ownership affordable housing units proposed

Figure 5 - Proposed mix of residential units.

2.5 The residential units will be accessed from two entrances, one off Northfield Road and a step-free option on the western elevation of the building, accessed via the on-site vehicle parking area/courtyard. Refuse and cycle stores associated with the residential units are integrated within the proposed building at ground floor level, with two lifts and a single stair core providing access to the upper floors. 27 of the 29 residential units would include private amenity space (see figure 5 above), largely in the form of external balconies, but also including a series of ‘winter gardens’ within units fronting Caversham Road. In addition, at fifth floor level an external shared podium garden courtyard is proposed. This is 70sqm in area and is shown to propose soft landscaping and seating spaces, with it intended to be available for use by all future residential occupiers. The roof level of the building includes photovoltaic panels and a biodiverse roof. Mechanical plant space is provided predominantly at ground floor level (shown below in figure 6), as well as rising through the floors of the building.

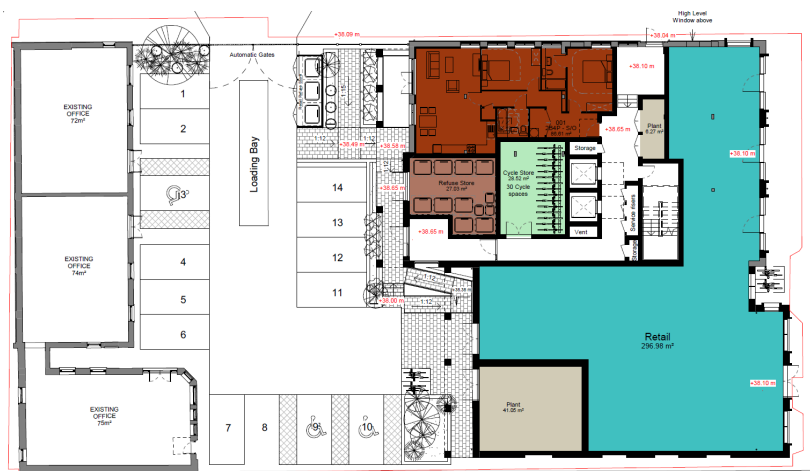


Figure 6 - Proposed ground floor plan

2.6 Vehicular access into the site will be via replacement automatic gates off Northfield Road, with fourteen vehicular spaces; providing for the existing office use (4 spaces), the proposed retail use (4 for customers and 1 for staff) and future residential occupiers (5 spaces). Included within this total are three wheelchair accessible parking spaces (see figure 6 above). The proposed parking provision represents an increase in two spaces when compared with the 12 spaces at the

existing site. The space will also include elements of soft landscaping to separate the pedestrians and vehicles and soften the proposed Northfield Road entrance.

2.7 During the course of the application's consideration, a number of changes have been made to the scheme, summarised as including:

- A change in the proposed external materials, with the omission of the originally proposed buff brick components and instead the new build brickwork elements will solely comprise red brick finishes.
- The original proposal sought to provide nil on-site affordable housing. During the course of the application, following negotiations, this has altered to firstly the proposed introduction of 4x1-bed first floor on-site shared ownership affordable housing units. Following further negotiations, the on-site provision was subsequently increased again to 8 shared ownership units (6x1-bed at first floor and 1x2-bed at both ground and first floor), which is the proposal under consideration.
- A change in the mix of units proposed, with one originally proposed 2-bedroom unit becoming a 1-bedroom unit at second floor level. The overall unit mix therefore changed from the original submission of 22 x 1-bedroom, 6 x 2-bedroom and 1 x 3-bedroom units to 23 x 1-bedroom, 5 x 2-bedroom and 1 x 3-bedroom units.
- An increase in size of the ground floor mechanical plant room, therefore slightly reducing the size of the ground floor retail space from 311sqm to 297sqm
- Changes to the proposed ground floor waste store, increasing provision and including collection vehicles servicing the store from the proposed on-site car park, as opposed to the original intention of this being from the proposed Northfield Road loading bay.

2.8 None of these changes to the scheme were considered to be of a nature or extent which warranted formal public re-consultation to occur.

2.9 In terms of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), the applicant duly completed a CIL Liability form as part of the submission of this application. This specifies that the building to be partly demolished / partly retained was last occupied for its lawful use on 20/12/2018, whilst the 2 separate buildings proposed to be retained on site are still in office use. Should there be no deduction for the existing floorspace to be retained, then solely on the basis of the proposed floorspace the CIL liability is likely to be £391,566.92 (proposed residential GIA of 2343.87 x 2023 indexation residential CIL rate of £167.06 per sqm - all floorspace figures are based on information supplied by the applicant). This figure would reduce if the proposed on-site affordable housing were to qualify for mandatory or discretionary social housing relief.

Drawings:

MP_SW_1000 Rev P2 - Site Location Plan

MP_SW_1004 Rev P1 - Existing Site Plan

MP_PL_1100 Rev P1 - Existing Ground Floor Plan

MP_PL_1101 Rev P1 - Existing First Floor Plan

MP_PL_1109 Rev P1 - Existing Roof Plan

MP_EL_1200 Rev P2 - Existing North Elevation

MP_EL_1201 Rev P1 - Existing South Elevation

MP_EL_1202 Rev P1 - Existing East Elevation

MP_EL_1203 Rev P2 - Existing West Elevation

MP_EL_1204 Rev P2 - Existing East Courtyard Elevation

MP_EL_1205 Rev P1 - Existing West Courtyard Elevation

MP_SW_1002 Rev P1 - Existing Street Elevations
MP_SE_1303 Rev P1 - Existing Section AA
MP_SE_1304 Rev P1 - Existing Section BB
MP_SE_1305 Rev P1 - Existing Section CC

MP_PL_1110 Rev P1 - Demolition - Existing Ground Floor Plan
MP_PL_1111 Rev P1 - Demolition - Existing First Floor Plan
MP_PL_1112 Rev P1 - Demolition - Existing Roof Plan
MP_EL_1212 Rev P1 - Demolition - Existing North Elevation
MP_EL_1213 Rev P1 - Demolition - Existing North Elevation
MP_EL_1214 Rev P1 - Demolition - Existing East Elevation
MP_EL_1215 Rev P2 - Demolition - Existing West Elevation
MP_EL_1216 Rev P2 - Demolition - Existing East Courtyard Elevation
MP_EL_1217 Rev P1 - Demolition - Existing West Courtyard Elevation
MP_SE_1306 Rev P1 - Demolition - Existing Section AA
MP_SE_1308 Rev P1 - Demolition - Existing Section BB
MP_SE_1309 Rev P1 - Demolition - Existing Section CC

MP_EL_1209 Rev P2 - Proposed West Elevation
MP_EL_1211 Rev P2 - Proposed East Courtyard Elevation
MP_SE_1300 Rev P1 - Proposed Section AA
MP_SE_1302 Rev P1 - Proposed Section CC

As all received on 22/08/2022

MP_SW_1001 Rev P2 - Proposed Site Plan
MP_PL_1104 Rev P3 - Proposed Second Floor Plan
MP_PL_1105 Rev P2 - Proposed Third Floor Plan
MP_PL_1106 Rev P2 - Proposed Fourth Floor Plan
MP_PL_1107 Rev P2 - Proposed Fifth Floor Plan
MP_PL_1108 Rev P3 - Proposed Roof Plan
MP_EL_1206 Rev P3 - Proposed North Elevation
MP_EL_1207 Rev P3 - Proposed South Elevation
MP_EL_1208 Rev P3 - Proposed East Elevation
MP_EL_1210 Rev P3 - Proposed West Courtyard Elevation

MP_EL_1212 Rev P2 - Proposed North Elevation (without Landscape)
MP_EL_1213 Rev P2 - Proposed South Elevation (without Landscape)
MP_EL_1214 Rev P2 - Proposed East Elevation (without Landscape)
MP_EL_1215 Rev P2 - Proposed West Elevation (without Landscape)

MP_SW_1003 Rev P3 - Proposed Street Elevations
MP_SE_1301 Rev P2 - Proposed Section BB
MP_RS_1500 Rev P2 - Retail Refuse Store Plans & Elevations
As all received on 01/12/2022

MP_PL_1102 Rev P5 - Proposed Ground Floor Plan
MP_PL_1103 Rev P4 - Proposed First Floor Plan
As received on 08/02/2023

Other supporting documents:

Air Quality Assessment by RPS Ref JAR02849 Rev 1 dated 10/05/2022;
Phase 1 Contaminated Land Preliminary Risk Assessment by RPS Ref JER8219 Version 03
dated 07/01/2022;

Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment by Amphibian, Reptile & Mammal Conservation Limited
Flood Risk Assessment and Surface Water Drainage Strategy by RPS Ref HLEF82310 Version 2 dated 09/06/2022;
Flood Risk Sequential Assessment by RPS Ref HLEF82310 Version 2 dated 17/02/2022;
Supporting letter by Quod Ref Q100020, dated 15/06/2022
Planning Noise Assessment by Waterman Ref WIE16329-101-R-1.1.4_Noise Issue 001 dated 11/05/2022;
Heritage and Townscape Assessment by Icen Projects;
Housing Delivery and Viability Statement by Quod dated June 2022;
Sustainability Overheating Risk Assessment TM59 by Hoare Lea Revision 00 - dated 11 March 2022;
Utilities Assessment by RPS Ref 82598 Version 004 dated 17/02/2022;
Planning Statement by Quod Ref Q100020 dated June 2022;
Transport Statement by Mayer Brown Ref S2CavershamRoad Rev A dated 11/05/2022;
Design and Access Statement by JTP Ref 01662B dated 20/06/2022
As all received on 22/06/2022

Sustainability Statement by Hoare Lea Rev 00, dated 19/05/2022;
Preliminary Ecological Appraisal by Middlemarch, Ref 158559-01, dated 18/08/2022
Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment by Middlemarch Environmental Ref 158559-02, dated 12/08/2022
The Biodiversity Metric 3.1 - Calculation Tool excel document by Middlemarch Environmental Ltd, dated 18/08/2022;
Landscape Principles by Quod, dated August 2022;
S106 Draft Heads of Terms Proposal by Quod Ref Q100020 dated July 2022;
Open Space Statement by Quod Ref Q100020 dated July 2022
As all received on 22/08/2022

Letter from Haslams 'Proposed development of 71-73 Caversham Road' dated 27/09/2019
Valuation Report by Haslams Surveyors LLP dated 24/09/2019
Feasibility Bunker Cost Model by AECOM Issue 1.0 dated 29/08/2018
As all received on 06/09/2022

Daylight and Sunlight Report by Calford Seaden Ref L190224/PS/G8, dated 20 September 2022
As received 23/09/2022

Energy Strategy by Hoare Lea Revision 01 - dated 06 October 2022
As received 06/10/2022

Email from Quod 'RE: 71-73 Caversham Road, Reading (220922)', dated and received 17/11/2022

Design and Access Statement Addendum by JTP Ref 01662B dated 20/11/2022
As received on 30/11/2022

Letter from Quod 'Formal Revision to Planning Application (Ref: 220922) on behalf of S2 Caversham Limited' Ref Q100020, dated 30/11/2022
As received on 01/12/2022

P22978.MEP.001 Rev B MEP Plant Locations Roof Layout
P22978.MEP.002 Rev C MEP Plant Locations Ground Floor Layout
CIL_01 Rev P3 - Proposed CIL Plans
Planning Comment Response Summary by MEP Concepts Rev A dated 19/12/2022

BRUKL Output Document Compliance with England Building Regulations Part L 2021 dated 08/12/2022

Part L compliance report - Unit 101 - 3B5P MF Type
Part L compliance report - Unit 104 - 1B2P MF-EF Type
Part L compliance report - Unit 001 - 2B4P GF Type
Part L compliance report - Unit 401 - 2B4P TF Type
Part L compliance report - Unit 502 - 1B2P TF Type
Part L compliance report - Unit 108 - 1B2P MF Type
Part L compliance report - Unit 301 - 2B4P MF Type
As all received on 22/12/2022

Email from Quod 'RE: 71-73 Caversham Road, Reading (220922)', dated and received 27/12/2022

Caversham Road - BREEAM update by Hoare Lea Ref DOC-2324398-05-JT-20230106-BREEAM Target Score update-REV01.docx
As received 06/01/2023

Email from Quod 'RE: 71-73 Caversham Road, Reading (220922)', dated and received 24/01/2023

Email from Quod 'RE: 71-73 Caversham Road, Reading (220922)', dated and received 31/01/2023

Email from Quod 'RE: 71-73 Caversham Road, Reading (220922)', dated and received 06/02/2023 at 10:49am

Email from Quod 'RE: 71-73 Caversham Road, Reading (220922)', dated and received 06/02/2023 at 12:48pm

MP_SC_1400 Rev P4 - Area Schedules

Email from Quod 'RE: 71-73 Caversham Road, Reading (220922)', dated 08/02/2023
As both received on 08/02/2023

3. PLANNING HISTORY

Application site

3.1 7437 - Store for cellulose. Granted 25/03/1960.

3.2 13987 - Lean to extension. Granted 09/09/1966.

3.3 77/01066/00 - New shopfront central infill link replacing existing building for retail & storage. Granted 06/01/1978.

3.4 95/00345/FD (Alternative Ref 950014) To fit roller shutters to front windows on outside. Refused 15/06/1995.

3.5 97/00509/AD Freestanding advertisement panel sign. Refused 08/09/1997.

3.6 191792/FUL - Demolition of former retail warehouse and erection of a mixed-use building comprising 44 residential units consisting of x5 affordable units, 194sqm of retail floorspace (Use Class A1) at ground floor and associated car parking, cycle parking and landscaping. Refused 16/10/2020.

3.7 The reasons for refusal related to (in summary):

1. Complete loss of 71-73 Caversham Road and its removal compromising the setting of the remaining cluster of non-designated heritage buildings; Also a

failure to demonstrate that retention and re-use has been explored fully and the scheme benefits not significantly outweighing the harm, contrary to Policies EN1 & EN4 and section 16 of the NPPF.

2. Out-of-scale and failure to transition down with neighbouring buildings within and adjoining the site along Caversham Road and Northfield Road, contrary to Policies CC7, EN1 & EN4 and section 16 of the NPPF.
3. Absence of a legal agreement to secure a financial contribution towards affordable housing, open space, highways works, car club, carbon offsetting, a s278 agreement and a construction stage ESP, contrary to Policies H3, TR1, TR3, TR4, TR5, H5, CC9 and the Affordable Housing and ESP SPD's.

3.8 Appeal (Ref: APP/E0345/W/20/3263270) dismissed 14/05/2021 following a Virtual Hearing on 24/03/2021. In dismissing the appeal, the Inspector stated in relation to the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area that:

“The new building would be substantially taller than the surroundings, particularly in relation to the west side of Caversham Road and Northfield Road where it would appear unduly tall, diverting attention from the street level to a new higher skyline. It would appear dominating and out of scale, more appropriate to an urban centre rather than a suburban location.

The perceived height of the building would also be emphasised by its narrow footprint. This would lead to a pronouncedly vertical orientated building.

The proposal would drop to 5 storeys towards Northfield Road. However even at that height it would appear out of context. Additionally, the seventh storey element behind would be visible from parts of Northfield Road” (Paragraphs 10-12)



Proposed East Street Elevation

Figure 7 - Dismissed at appeal Caversham Road (above) and Northfield Road (below) elevations



- 3.9 The Inspector also raised concerns with some elements of the detailed design, such as the elongated windows on the top two floors accentuating the perception of height, as would “eye-catching” window mullions (see figure 7 above). Another concern was the blank façade to the south (see figure 8 below), which the Inspector considered to lack relief and interest, making the building “*appear austere and overly dominant when seen from the south*” (paragraph 14). The Inspector concluded that “*the proposal would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the area*” (paragraph 16), contrary to Policies CC7 and EN4, together with paragraph 127 of the NPPF.



Figure 8 - Dismissed at appeal south elevation

- 3.10 With regard to the effect of the proposal on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset, the Inspector commented that:

“The existing building reflects the values of the Historic England Guidance, in particular, for its historic significance as an identifiable Victorian warehouse, built for the brewing industry and, aesthetic significance for its massing, form and in part detailing, as a landmark on a prominent corner. I therefore conclude that the building has significant significance as a non-designated heritage asset and its loss would harm the historic environment” (paragraph 28).

- 3.11 The Inspector clarified that the proposals would be in conflict with Policies EN1 and EN4, together with paragraph 197 of the NPPF. Noting that the proposals involved the demolition of the frontage building, but retention of the smaller office buildings, the Inspector specifically commented that, “*their architectural and historical value is largely as a whole, and the proposal would harm their group value*” (paragraph 25). The appeal decision is included in full as Appendix 11.

Nearby sites of relevance (80 Caversham Road, Vastern Court & Carters)

- 3.12 To the east of the application site at 80 Caversham Road (former Royal Mail site) outline planning permission (Reference 182252) was resolved to be granted (subject to conditions and the completion of a s106 legal agreement) at the Planning Applications Committee meeting on 30th March 2022, for:

Outline application considering access, landscaping, layout and scale for redevelopment proposal involving the demolition of all existing buildings and structures (Classes B1a & B2) and erection of new buildings ranging between basement and 2 - 24 storeys in height, providing 620 (72 x studio, 196x1, 320x2 & 32x3-bed) residential units (Class C3), office accommodation (Class B1a), flexible ground floor shop (Class A1), financial and professional services (Class A2) or restaurant/café (Class A3) uses, a community centre (Class D1), health centre uses (Class D1) and various works including car parking (94 spaces (70 at basement level)), servicing,

public and private open space, landscaping, highways, pedestrian and vehicular access and associated works. This application is accompanied by an Environmental Statement (amended description).

- 3.13 At the time of writing the legal agreement is in the process of being completed, so the application has not yet been formally determined by the local planning authority.
- 3.14 To the north of the 80 Caversham Road site, so to the north-east of the application site, is Vastern Court, Caversham Road (otherwise known as the Aviva site or Vastern Road/Court Retail Park) an appeal (Ref APP/E0345/W/21/3289748) under non-determination was lodged on 23/12/2021. The outline application (Ref 200328) was reported to Planning Applications Committee on 15/02/2022, whereby members resolved that had they been able to determine the planning application they would have refused outline planning permission. The application sought:

Outline planning permission with the details of access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale reserved for later determination. A demolition phase and phased redevelopment (each phase being an independent act of development) comprising a flexible mix of the following uses, Residential(Class C3 and including PRS), Offices (Use Class B1(a), development in Use Classes A1, A2, A3(retail), A4(public house), A5 (take away), D1 and D2(communitiy and leisure), car parking, provision of new plant and renewable energy equipment, creation of servicing areas and provision of associated services, including waste, refuse, cycle storage, and lighting, and for the laying out of the buildings, routes and open spaces within the development, and all associated works and operations including but not limited to demolition, earthworks, provision of attenuation infrastructure, engineering operations.

- 3.15 The appeal was heard via Public Inquiry between April and November 2022. The recommendation by the Inspector and subsequent outcome by the Secretary of State is awaited at the time of writing.
- 3.16 To the north of the site at the nearby Caversham Road / Vastern Road roundabout a full application (Ref 221324) at the former 'Carters' site was resolved to be granted (subject to conditions and the completion of a s106 legal agreement) at the Planning Applications Committee meeting on 1st February 2023, for:

Redevelopment of 97a-117 Caversham Road, and associated land to the rear, to provide 60 dwellings, including affordable housing, together with associated access, parking and landscaping.

- 3.17 At the time of writing the legal agreement is in the process of being completed, so the application has not yet been formally determined by the local planning authority.

4. CONSULTATIONS

i) Internal and External consultees

1) RBC Transport

- 4.1.1 Transport officers advise that the development proposes to consolidate the existing vehicular accesses to the site into a single dropped kerb access on Northfield Road.

The design of the proposed access is acceptable and will be secured via condition. This will provide access to the 14 proposed parking spaces at the site. These are designed to serve both existing office occupiers and future residents and those associated with the proposed retail unit. More specifically, there are 5 residential car parking spaces (including 2 disabled bays), 4 office car parking spaces, 1 commercial car parking space and 4 retail car parking spaces. To meet the 10% Local Plan requirement a minimum of two of the parking spaces will be enabled for electric vehicle charging (and 2 further spaces future-proofed), with details to be secured via condition. The site is located within the Zone 2, the primary core area but on the periphery of the central core area which lies at the heart of Reading Borough. In accordance with the adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD, the development is required to provide 1 parking space per residential unit (29 spaces) and 1 space per 10 units for visitor parking (3 spaces). In terms of the commercial uses, the existing office buildings would require 1 space per 100m² (4 spaces) and A1 non-food retail use would require 1 space per 50m² (7 spaces).

4.1.2 The proposed parking provision is therefore below the Council’s requirements. However, given the site’s close proximity to the centre of Reading, its easy access to public transport connections and the facilities within the town centre, a lower parking provision can be considered. The surrounding road network all has parking restrictions preventing on-street parking too. Therefore, a reduction in the parking provision will not lead to on street parking being detrimental to road safety and is considered acceptable, subject to conditions to secure the parking as shown and guard against parking permits being gained on-street.

4.1.3 The reduced level of car parking provision for the residential units will also be supported by future occupiers having access to a car club scheme as part of the proposals. This will be in association with an existing car club operator in Reading, at this stage would either be on site or joining up with an existing nearby Central Reading car club, and will be secured in full via s106 legal agreement.

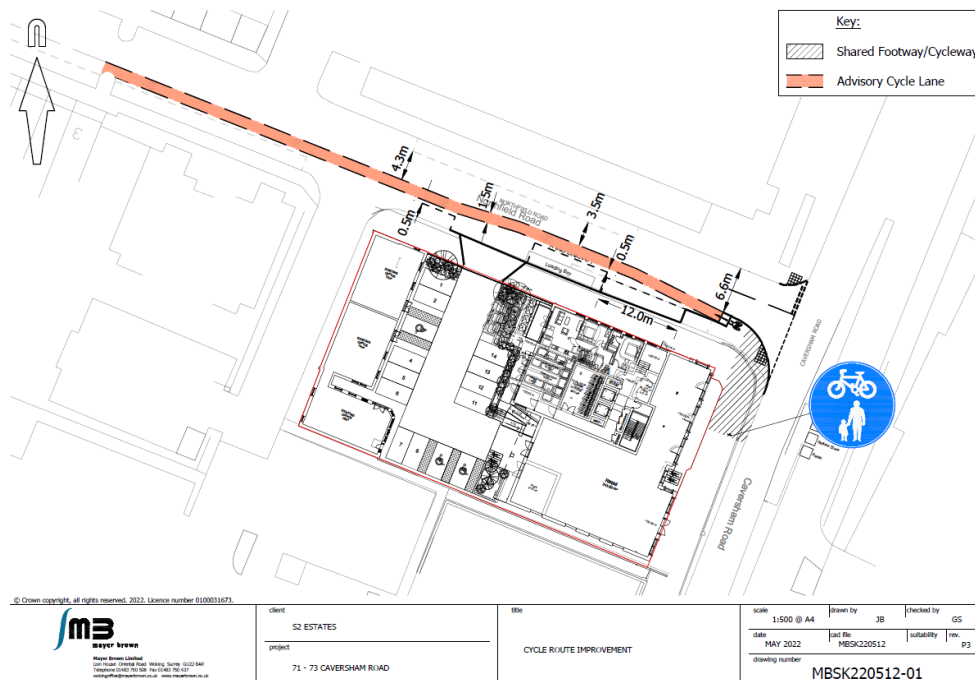


Figure 9 - Proposed cycle route improvements

4.1.4 To promote sustainable transport, the development also proposes cycle route improvements on Northfield Road, and a cycle parking provision that exceeds

minimum requirements. The proposals include the introduction of an on-carriageway dedicated cycle link along Northfield Road between the Caversham Road crossing and Swansea Road to the west (see Figure 9 above). This will provide connectivity to the northern entrance of the station connecting access to the town centre to the south and Christchurch Meadows to the north as well providing access to schools, leisure and employment in west Reading. This will require an agreement under Section 278 of the Highways Act 1980, but in principle is welcomed and supported. Given the off-site location of these works they will also be required to be secured in full via s106 legal agreement. The highway works to be secured under s106 legal agreement will also encompass works to 'stop up' disused accesses onto Northfield Road, with the footway reinstated at these points.

4.1.5 The development will provide 30 cycle parking spaces for residents by way of double stacked cycle storage, located in a covered storage area on the ground floor and secured by controlled entry points. Also proposed are two Sheffield stands providing 4 cycle parking spaces for the other uses and visitors, which will be located in the car park. Furthermore, another two Sheffield stands providing 4 cycle parking spaces are proposed to the front of the retail unit on Caversham Road. This over-provision is welcomed and all cycle parking will be secured via compliance based conditions.

4.1.6 In terms of refuse collection arrangements, refuse vehicles currently service the existing residential and commercial properties on Northfield Road. The Council's Waste department has provided comments on the level of bins required for the 29 residential units (see section 4.8 below). The waste collection crews will access the property through the electric gates and reverse up to the bin store area. All bins will be stored within 10m of the rear of the collection vehicle. From a transport perspective this on-site servicing would cause a temporary obstruction within the car park (see figure 10 below). However, it would only occur once a week for a short period of time and therefore would not unduly obstruct users of the on-site parking facilities. These waste storage facilities and arrangements will be secured via a compliance condition.

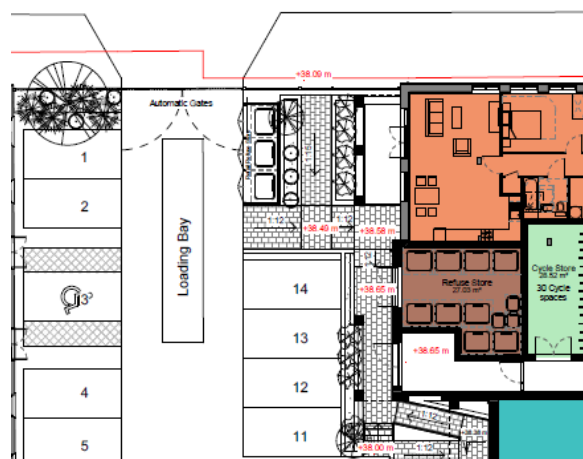


Figure 10 - On-site refuse facilities and collections

4.1.7 Turning to consider the servicing of and deliveries to the ground floor retail unit, this will take place from Northfield Road. To allow for this, a new loading bay is proposed along the site frontage, which will require a rearrangement of the on-street parking bays without any net loss in parking. This process involves changes to the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) which will require approval by the Traffic Management Sub Committee (TSUB) and will be subject to statutory consultation. Given TROs are considered under separate legislation to the Planning Acts there is a

possibility they may not be approved. However, any costs associated with the changes to the TRO and on-street signage and markings would have to be paid upfront by the applicant before commencement on site. From a Transport Planning perspective the on-street loading bay arrangement is a suitable solution, given it has not been demonstrated that deliveries to the retail unit could occur without causing obstruction to either the proposed car park or Caversham Road on a frequent basis.

- 4.1.8 A Demolition and Construction Method Statement will be required given the significant remodelling of the site proposed within this application. The proposed work should be in accordance with the Borough's Guidance Notes for Activities on the Public Highway. The Council's standard pre-commencement condition is recommended in this regard.
- 4.1.9 With the conditions and s106 obligations referenced above secured the proposals are considered acceptable from a transport planning perspective.

2) RBC Conservation and Urban Design Officer (CUDO)

- 4.2.1 The CUDO comments outline the background (including the dismissed at appeal scheme and subsequent pre-application discussions undertaken) and the legislative and policy context (national and local) for the proposals. In the interests of brevity, these are not specified within this report. The CUDO has commented on the significance of the existing buildings and the impact the proposals would have on these.
- 4.2.2 As a reminder, the site is a collection of locally listed commercial buildings (malting warehouses) from the 1870s, which were connected to a local brewery. The site is not in a conservation area. A previous scheme was refused and then dismissed at appeal, with the main issues detailed in section 3 above. The current proposal follows a series of pre-application discussions by the applicant with the local planning authority in 2021 and 2022, together with separate input from the Reading Design Review Panel (DRP - see section 4, part 17) below) in September 2022.
- 4.2.3 The existing buildings are considered to be of local significance, with the corner buildings (71-73 Caversham Road) originally being two malthouse warehouse buildings which formed part of Reading's important brewing industry. Externally, the northern warehouse building is reasonably intact, with good quality brick with 'burnt headers' in Flemish Garden Wall Bond, buff brick detailing over segmental windows and doors. On Northfield Road there also appears to be 'ghost' sign-lettering ('Smallbone') at first floor level. It is however acknowledged that there are later additions to the building and the roof has probably been replaced. The historical association with locally prominent businessman and brewer Henry Pendlebury Dowson between 1870 and 1900 is part of its importance, as is the original malthouse use giving it industrial and cultural importance in the town. Architecturally too, the building is representative of a commercial use and style that is significant to the development of Reading, with group value being derived from the survival of the buildings fronting Northfield Road too. This all cumulated in the buildings being locally listed, due to a combination of their age, architectural quality, landmark presence in the street scene and relationship to Reading's historic industries.
- 4.2.4 In terms of the impact that the proposals would have on the locally listed buildings, it is firstly acknowledged that the current proposals differ significantly to those

dismissed at appeal in 2021. In particular, it is no longer proposed to demolish the entirety of the 71-73 Caversham Road corner building, with the proposals now seeking to refurbish and extend a proportion of the northern warehouse building. Demolition is now only proposed to the southern half of the Caversham Road frontage, which historically was separate to the proposed retained/reconfigured building on the corner of Caversham Road and the entirety of the Northfield Road façade (see Figure 11 below). The CUDO's site inspection in February 2021 identified that there was no significant remnants or detailing left on the inside of this building.

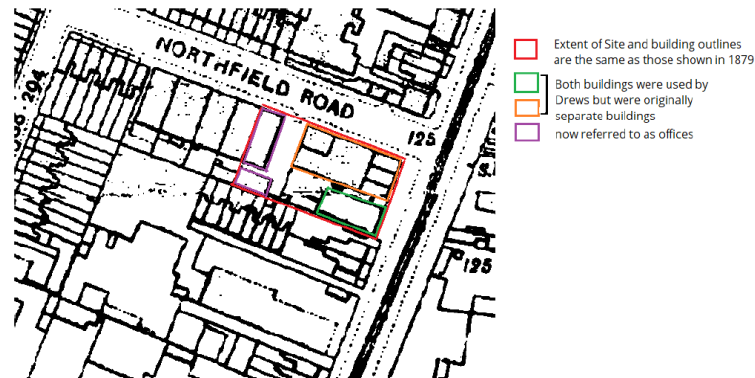


Figure 11 - Edited 1912-13 OS map showing separate buildings fronting Caversham Rd

4.2.5 In relation to the latest (as amended) scheme the most significant parts of the original warehouse buildings, on the corner of Caversham Road and Northfield Road, would be retained, which is a welcomed change in approach in comparison with the previous scheme. The extent of demolition is shown below in figure 12, which confirms that the Northfield Road elevation would remain, as would the first floor and roof of the northern half of the Caversham Road frontage. This includes the area where the 'Smallbone' ghost sign is located.

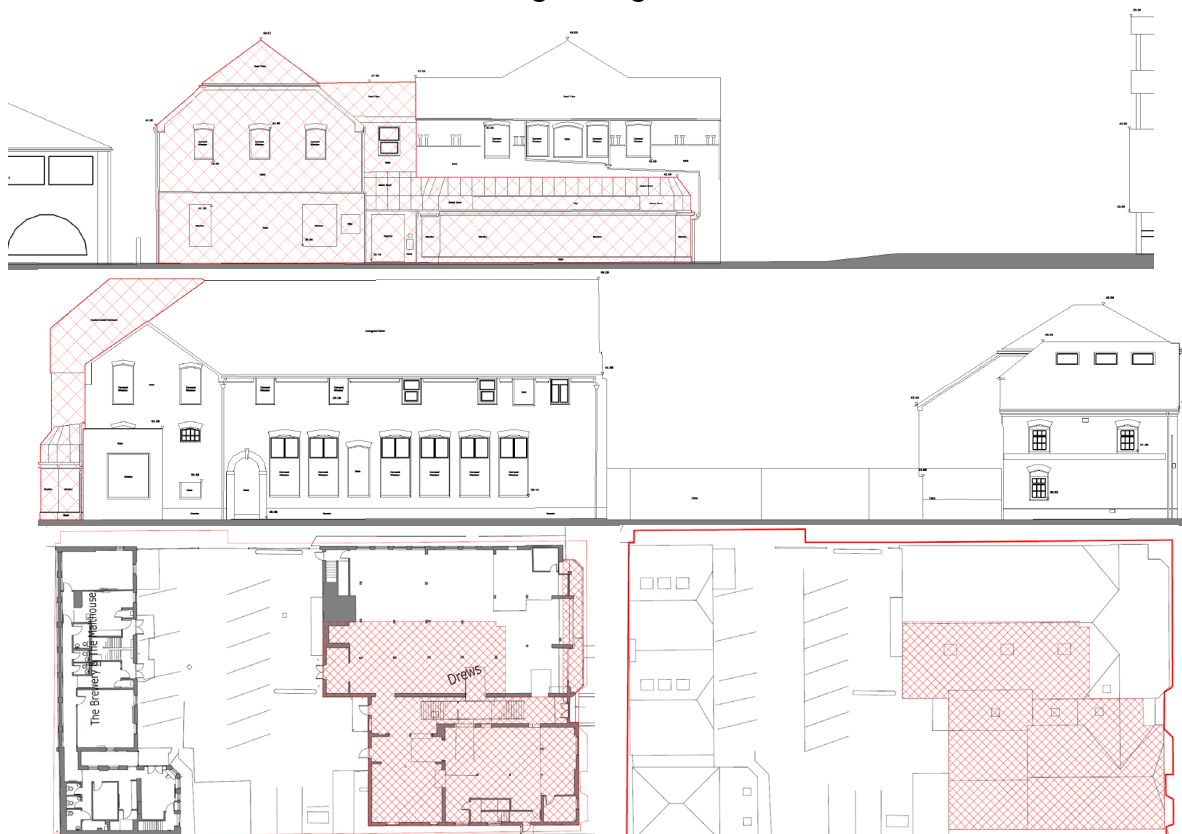


Figure 12 - Extent of proposed demolition hatched

palette of materials but its massing has not changed. The CUDO has no objections to the changes made to the scheme following the DRP comments. In short, the CUDO has no objections to the design quality of the new build element in itself, in the context of the locally listed building and the streetscene, being generally in line with policies CR2 and CC7 in particular. For example, the proposed shopfront would represent a significant improvement in comparison with existing. While it is considered that the new works would have some impact on the buildings identified by the Local Listing, on balance when the proposal is viewed from Caversham Road, the northern warehouse is still a prominent element of the site and the new build is clearly seen as a later addition. The retention of the rear 2/3 storey buildings also help explain the earlier malting site configuration and they are an important contributory element to the significance of the site.

4.2.10 Therefore, with regard to the overall impact of the proposals on the significance of the locally listed buildings at the site, the proposed development, aligning with paragraph 203 of the NPPF, is considered to have “less than significant harm” on the non-designated heritage asset. In addition, the proposed design (following revisions) sufficiently and suitably incorporates the existing and proposed component parts into the streetscape. The proposed scheme is a clear improvement in terms of the refused and dismissed at appeal scheme in regard to heritage issues, with the proposals in themselves moreover considered to be accepted in regards to size, scale and materials on its own merits. Hence the CUDO supports the proposal and raises no objection to the level of demolition shown, subject to the following conditions:

- Pre-commencement level 2 photographic recording of the buildings for the Historic Environment Record (the HER)
- Pre-commencement, barring demolition, proposed material details, including for the brick bonding to be similar to the southern warehouse façade to be demolished.
- Ground floor shopfront details at 1:10 scale (expectation to comply with RBC Shopfronts SPD).
- Compliance condition relating to the retention of the ‘Smallbone’ ghost signage on the Northfield Road elevation

3) RBC Environmental Health - Environmental Protection (EP)

4.3.1 EP officers are satisfied that the submitted noise assessment is acceptable, with it providing detail regarding the level of mitigation in terms of glazing and ventilation required to protect the new occupants from noise. The details regarding layouts and proposed glazing are not yet available therefore will need to be secured via condition. In addition, EP officers have specific potential concerns about noise disturbance to future occupiers from deliveries and waste collections associated with the retail use proposed and the operation of the use itself. As such, an hours condition for deliveries and servicing between 8am and 8pm daily, and opening/operating hours being between 7am-11pm Monday to Saturday and 7am-6pm on Sundays and Bank Holidays are recommended to protect future amenity.

4.3.2 Turning to consider the development causing noise disturbance from plant, this is possible and given the detailed specifications of any plant have not been specified by the applicant it is considered that a mechanical plant noise assessment condition is necessary and required, with details approved prior to any mechanical plant is permitted to be installed.

4.3.3 With regard to air quality and the proposal’s increased exposure to poor air quality, the assessment submitted concludes that the air pollutants will be below the

objective limits, and therefore mitigation is not required. However, as the levels of NO₂ are not 'good', as they are up to 37.4 ug/m³ which is marginally below a cut-off point of 40, and ventilation will be required to the main facades to protect occupiers from noise, it is considered that air quality should be taken into account when designing the ventilation strategy to ensure that polluted air is not drawn into the properties. Accordingly, a pre-construction above foundation level condition is recommended to secure a mitigation strategy to protect the health of future occupiers from poor air quality.

- 4.3.4 Separately, in terms of the proposed development itself increasing emissions, EP officers are content with the conclusion of the assessment that there will not be a noticeable worsening of air quality as a result of the development and therefore no further assessment or mitigation is needed.
- 4.3.5 Given there is a known significant problem with rodent activity in Reading town centre a condition will secure details to ensure the proposed bin stores are adequately pest-proof.
- 4.3.6 Moving on to consider contaminated land matters, the preliminary assessment submitted itself concludes that an intrusive investigation is needed to assess the risks. Officers concur and hence the standard four stage contaminated land based conditions (1. Site characterisation; 2. Remediation scheme; 3. Validation report; 4. Reporting of unexpected contamination) are recommended, with the first two components being prior commencement conditions.
- 4.3.7 With regard to the demolition and construction phases of development, dust, noise and pest control measures are recommended within the demolition and construction method statement condition suggested by Transport. Standalone compliance-worded conditions are recommended too in terms of hours of working and there being no burning of materials on site, all to protect nearby amenity.

4) RBC Valuations

- 4.4.1 At the outset of the application the applicant sought to justify, through a viability submission, a zero on-site provision of affordable housing. Notwithstanding this position, the applicant offered to provide a commuted sum payment-in-lieu towards affordable housing of £165,000. The applicant also indicated a willingness to enter into an early-stage review mechanism post-decision, which would enable the amount of affordable housing to potentially increase up to a compliant tenure mix, subject to future viability and delivery timescales. The applicant considered that the provision of any contribution towards affordable housing would exceed what the scheme was required to provide, owing to the financial viability position submitted.
- 4.4.2 In assessing the principles and details of the viability submission, a number of areas of disagreement with the applicant's established position were identified by RBC Valuations. As such, the original offer by the applicant, as outlined above, was not agreed as making an appropriate contribution towards affordable housing to meet the needs of Reading Borough. RBC Valuations advised the applicant that it would be reasonable and necessary, in the context of the RBC assessment of the viability context, for a minimum of 4 on-site affordable housing units (equating to a 13.79% on-site provision). The remainder of the Policy H3 30% requirement was suggested by RBC Valuations to be provided via a suitable Deferred Affordable Housing Contribution Mechanism (with parameters which differed from those suggested by the applicant specified by officers), as secured via s106 legal agreement.

- 4.4.3 On the basis of these discussions the applicant altered its original affordable housing offer, introducing the provision of 4x1-bed shared ownership units on-site at first floor level. Factored into this offer was a proviso that should there be no credible interest in the on-site units, a s106 legal agreement secured cascade mechanism would permit converting the on-site provision into an equivalent financial payment of £165,000. In that scenario the shared ownership units would revert to market sale units. Responses were provided seeking for alternative inputs to any Deferred Affordable Housing Contribution Mechanism, not agreeing with those specified by RBC Valuations.
- 4.4.4 In response to the revised offer by the applicant, RBC Valuations advised that whilst the inclusion of 4 on-site affordable units was broadly welcomed and considered reasonable in the circumstances of viability, the financial contribution as part of the cascade secured within the legal agreement was considered to have been significantly undervalued by the applicant. Furthermore, there were continued disagreements regarding the parameters of any Deferred Affordable Housing Contribution Mechanism.
- 4.4.5 The applicant subsequently submitted responses which, in summary, continued to seek to justify the previously proposed £165,000 cascade payment and that the RBC Valuations suggested Deferred Affordable Housing Contribution Mechanism could not be agreed. Officers rebutted the response by the applicant and simply advised that, given the on-site provision of affordable housing was below the 30% policy requirement, the scheme would not be able to progress positively without a Deferred Affordable Housing Contribution Mechanism being secured. Furthermore, the applicant was advised that any cascade payment for the proposed 4 on-site units should total £292,672, rather than the £165,000 offered. At this juncture the applicant advised that the scheme would not receive funding (and therefore not proceed) if the late-stage review detailed by officers was secured. Discussions thereafter occurred regarding various different scenarios, with view to arriving at a mutually agreeable position. These negotiations cumulated in the applicant subsequently revising the proposed affordable housing offer to the following:
- The provision of 8 on-site shared ownership affordable housing units (6x1-bed at first floor level - including 1 wheelchair unit - and 2x2-bed - one each at ground and first floor level. This amounts to a 27.59% on site provision.
 - A payment-in-lieu commuted sum towards affordable housing of £58,400 (which is the equivalent of a 0.7 units / 2.41% contribution towards affordable housing, as agreed with RBC Valuations)
 - The provision of a cascade mechanism should the affordable housing not be disposed of (to first a Housing Association (HA) or Registered Provider (RP), or then the Council) the affordable housing contribution transfers to a commuted sum financial contribution of £585,344 (as agreed with RBC Valuations), with the on-site units then no longer required to be provided as on-site affordable units.
- 4.4.6 The proposed offer therefore amounts to 30% of the dwellings being in the form of affordable housing, with 27.59% (8) on-site units and 2.41% via a commuted 'top-up' financial contribution (0.7 units) of £58,400. A possible future scenario if the affordable units are not disposed of has also been agreed, amounting to a financial contribution of £585,344. Given the proposed offer, there is no requirement for a Deferred Affordable Housing Contribution Mechanism, as in either case, the scheme is fully policy compliant.

4.4.7 Set within the context of local policy requirements and the originally proposed affordable housing offer by the applicant, the subsequently negotiated position is considered to be a substantial offer by the applicant. The proposed offer exceeds the viability position evidence presented by the applicant, with the applicant evidently recognising the strong local policy requirements for on-site affordable housing in the Borough. Even if no HA, RP or the Council takes on the on-site units, the cascade mechanism securing a financial contribution of £585,344, together with the upfront payment-in-lieu of £58,400, would exceed the original offer or that proposed during the application prior to the now proposed offer. As such, in this particular instance, the proposals are considered to exceed what is considered to be an appropriate contribution towards affordable housing from an RBC Valuations perspective. The fully policy compliant level of affordable housing is therefore supported and welcomed.

5) RBC Housing

4.5.1 As a starting point, for any proposal seeking to create 29 residential units, the 30% Policy H3 requirement for affordable housing equates to 8.7 residential units. In practice, this would comprise 8 on-site units, with a financial contribution making up the remaining 0.7 of a unit requirement. Of the 8 on-site units, at least 5 would be required to be rented and no more than 3 shared ownership to comply with the Affordable Housing SPD tenure mix requirements. Set within this context, it is strongly supported that the overall provision of affordable housing, as proposed during the course of the application, amounts to the full 30% requirement. This comprises 8 on-site units, with the 0.7 shortfall topped up via an appropriate (as per guidance from RBC Valuations, as per section 4.4 above) financial contribution of £58,400. The proposal will therefore provide an appropriate headline figure contribution towards affordable housing to meet the needs of the Borough.

4.5.2 In terms of the specific nature of the on-site provision itself, RBC Housing is disappointed that the proposed tenure offered is entirely shared ownership, given the Affordable Housing SPD requires a tenure split of at least 62% rented and no more than 38% shared ownership. However, it is acknowledged that the provision of rented units in the scheme would worsen the viability position. Furthermore, it is accepted that there would be practical challenges incorporating rented units into the scheme, given the general preference to avoid service charges associated with the block and differing management requirements, meaning in practice rented units would typically expect to be separately accessed from the remainder of the units. In addition, it is acknowledged and considered that this site providing solely shared ownership units is likely to be a more attractive proposition for a HA or RP in terms of site management than the development incorporating both rented and shared ownership units. This is solely considered the case when the total number of units involved is relatively low from the perspective of a HA or RP, as would be the case in this specific instance. As such, providing that all other matters are secured as proposed, it is considered that RBC Housing would be content to support solely shared ownership units given the particular circumstances of this case.

4.5.3 In terms of the mix of unit sizes proposed, it is welcomed that a combination of 1 and 2-bed units are proposed, with the greater number of 1-beds (6) than 2 beds (2) aligning with figure 4.6 within Policy H2, where within the overall affordable tenure the greatest requirement is for 1 bed units. The inclusion of 1 of the 1-bed units being a wheelchair unit is welcomed too. Given only a single 3-bed unit is proposed in the scheme as a whole, it is accepted that the largest unit should be for market sale, given that the greatest need for market housing are 3-bed units.

Accordingly, the unit sizes of the shared ownership units is broadly welcomed in aligning with the Policy H2 needs.

- 4.5.4 It is essential for the 8 on-site affordable housing units and commuted sum of £58,400 to be secured via legal agreement, together with a cascade should a HA or RP not be found to take on the units. The cascade would require the applicant to fully evidence its attempts to identify a partner, with the Council then providing assistance in this process or for the Council to purchase the affordable housing units. Should this not occur then the affordable housing contribution shall transfer to a financial contribution towards affordable housing elsewhere in the Borough, which RBC Valuations have negotiated as being £585,344 (see section 4.4 above). Given the above, it is confirmed that no deferred affordable housing contribution mechanism is considered to be required in this case.

6) GS Ecology (RBC Ecology consultants)

- 4.6.1 GS Ecology advise that the bat survey report has been undertaken to an appropriate standard and concludes that the building is unlikely to host roosting bats. In addition, the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal concludes that once conditions are put in place to protect nesting birds and mammals during construction, the proposals are unlikely to affect protected species or priority habitats. As such, since the proposals are unlikely to affect bats or other protected species, there are no objections to this application on ecological grounds.

- 4.6.2 Furthermore, in relation to the proposed works, a biodiversity net gain calculation has been undertaken and concludes the development will result in more than 10% net gain in habitat units. A number of biodiversity enhancements are proposed, including a biodiverse roof and limited planting on the roof terrace and around areas of hardstanding. It therefore seems reasonable to assume that the proposals will result in a net gain for biodiversity, although a greater than presently shown quantity of trees and planting would nevertheless be welcomed. Accordingly, in addition to the landscaping details to be secured via condition (see Natural Environment Officer comments below at section 4.7), a separate condition should be secured to ensure wildlife enhancements, in particular swifts, are provided within the new development. This aligns with paragraph 180 of the NPPF, which states that “opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design”. Further compliance conditions are also recommended to protect nesting birds during partial site clearance works and wildlife during the construction phase of development. Subject to these conditions there are no objections to this application on ecological grounds.

7) RBC Planning Natural Environment

- 4.7.1 Given the site is within a low canopy cover area (as per the RBC Tree Strategy) and an air quality management area, it is a location where sufficient greening is of importance as part of any development.

- 4.7.2 It is recognised that the landscaping includes several trees within the ground floor parking courtyard, additional planting at ground floor level to the rear of the main building, a communal roof terrace and a biodiverse roof. This is all positive and will increase green provision compared to existing. The green wall elements provided on the Caversham and Northfield Road elevations under the previous application are no longer included. It is acknowledged that the partial retention of the original building accounts for this, although it no longer being incorporated is regrettable. This could have potentially contributed to a landscape-led SuDS approach, which

the proposal also disappointingly lacks. However, in the context of the existing site the proposals are considered appropriate in principle from a landscaping perspective, with there being no objections subject to conditions securing full hard and soft landscaping and boundary treatment details.

8) RBC Waste Services

4.8.1 Initial comments on the proposals raised concerns in relation to an inadequate on-site provision of bins for the number of residential units proposed. Concerns were also raised in relation to the collection distances being in excess of the 10m requirement. The applicant submitted revised plans showing an increased number of bins and collections taking place from the on-site car park, thereby addressing the original concerns raised. As such, both the quantum of bins and the collection arrangements is now acceptable to RBC Waste Services.

9) RBC Access Officer

4.9.1 The RBC Access Officer raised a series of initial queries and comments on the proposals from an access perspective, which the applicant duly responded to. In summary queries were raised in relation to:

- the gradient of the external ramps within the car park leading to the building;
- wheelchair user dwellings not being on the ground floor (they are proposed at first and fifth floor level);
- the lack of a shelter or car port for the two wheelchair user car parking spaces proposed
- queries over how accessible the amenity spaces are for wheelchair users
- comment that the rooftop terrace should include a range of seating types, suitable for wheelchair users

4.9.2 The applicant provided clarification regarding the ramp gradients (1:15), which the Access Officer confirmed were welcomed and satisfactory. The applicant sufficiently demonstrated that it was practically challenging to provide a ground floor wheelchair unit, with the two units provided accessed via the two lifts proposed. The Access Officer does not object to the proposals on this basis. The applicant has explained that the provision of a parking shelter was discounted on space grounds, which would negatively impact on the layout and amount of soft landscaping possible. The Access Officer is disappointed in this regard. In terms of the amenity space for wheelchair users, the applicant has explained that the proposed fifth floor unit includes a balcony, with the first floor unit not having a dedicated space, but would have access to the communal rooftop terrace proposed. The Access Officer welcomes that all occupiers have scope to access amenity spaces and welcomes the applicant stating that seats with and without arms and at different heights can be secured via condition (Planning Officer note: this would be secured within the hard and soft landscaping details, as per the Natural Environment Officer comments at section 4.7 above).

10) RBC Leisure

4.10.1 As with all town centre developments, and this is no exception, there is very limited open space on site for residents, with 70m² equating to less than 3m² per unit. The proposal does not provide meaningful recreational open space and the delivery of adequate on site open space is not achievable.

4.10.2 RBC Leisure therefore seek an off-site financial contribution in order to mitigate the additional pressure on local parks and recreation facilities as a direct consequence of this development. This is in accordance with the Local Plan, Policy EN9 which states that *“All new development should make provision for appropriate open space based on the needs of the development. This can be achieved through on or off-site provision, contributions toward provision or improvement of existing leisure or recreational facilities.”* Policy CC9 sets out the objectives of securing infrastructure, services, resources and amenities to ensure that developments are both sustainable and that they contribute to the proper planning of the area. It also provides the basis for justifying infrastructure provision as part of development proposals.

4.10.3 The added pressure from an increase in the number of residents moving into new developments increases the wear and tear on the existing infrastructure. It is considered that a contribution of £2,100 per unit is appropriate and is fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind. It is also directly related to the development. This S106 funding, which equates to £60,900 and which is in addition to CIL funding, would be used to continue to improve and extend facilities within the Thames Parks (including Caversham Court Gardens and Allotments) and Great Knollys Street Recreation Ground, which are in close proximity and would serve the development.

11) RBC Lead Local Flood Authority

4.11.1 The proposed drainage scheme significantly reduces surface water run-off. As such, there are no SuDS based objections subject to planning conditions. The first condition would be pre-commencement, securing a fully detailed SuDS strategy (as insufficient details have been received at this juncture). The second condition would effectively ensure the details in the first condition are completed prior to first occupation.

12) Reading’s Economy & Destination Agency (REDA) (formerly Reading UK CIC)

4.12.1 REDA note this important mixed use redevelopment near to the town centre will include 297sqm of Retail Class E (a) space, which is welcomed to help ensure commercial use of property along Caversham Road, one of the town’s most important transport hubs. In addition it will provide new residential space in easy reach of the centre.

4.12.2 Due to the extent of the redevelopment REDA would expect the applicant to enter into an Employment and Skills Plan, as required by the Supplementary Planning Document dated April 2013. Alternatively the applicant may prefer to make financial contributions in lieu of a plan to deliver training and recruitment programmes which benefit local residents.

13) Environment Agency (EA)

4.13.1 The EA replied advising that the planning application is for development the EA does not wish to be consulted on.

14) Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service

4.14.1 Comment that whilst there is no duty placed on the Fire Authority to comment and that comments should not be taken as formal approval, the plans have been briefly examined and the following is noted:

- Access for fire-fighting, particularly vehicular access, must comply with Part B5 of the Building Regulations guidance.
- Structural fire precautions and all means of escape provision will have to satisfy Building Regulation requirement.

15) Delva Patman Redler Chartered Surveyors (DPR) (Light consultants for RBC)

4.15.1 DPR undertook an independent review of the daylight, sunlight and overshadowing components of the development (report by Calford Seaden) on behalf of the local planning authority. A summary of DPR's conclusions on the assessment by the applicant are:

- 73% of the 66 proposed habitable residential rooms will satisfy or exceed the minimum recommended daylight illuminance targets;
- 90% of the 29 units tested (those with a window facing within 90 degrees of due south) will satisfy or exceed the recommended sunlight exposure targets.

4.15.2 DPR advises that the main causes of the poorer daylight results are mainly due to windows beneath balconies having a more limited view of sky, or units having rooms set behind semi-enclosed recessed balconies (e.g. units fronting onto Caversham Road). DPR points out that the balconies do, however, provide private amenity space for the dwelling above. DPR considers that overall, the development appears to provide a satisfactory level of adherence to daylight guidelines. With specific reference to the daylight results, DPR qualify this by detailing that *“Whilst this is a satisfactory level of adherence for a development in this location, the adoption of light finishes [white-painted rooms, no furniture, etc.] mean these are best-case results. If the developer delivers units with darker finishes, the number of rooms achieving the minimum target illuminance would be lower and fewer rooms would achieve the recommendations”*.

4.15.3 In terms of the impact on existing/future neighbouring occupiers, the assessment has appropriately considered Monmouth Court (to the west) and the (at the time of writing) current planning application at 80 Caversham Road (see relevant history section above for details). DPR concludes that the daylight and sunlight results indicate that the proposed development will not have a material effect on Monmouth Court or the proposed scheme at 80 Caversham Road.

4.15.4 The review also raised three main points of clarification, in relation to: whether balcony balustrades were included in the calculations; the parameters behind the average daylight factor and daylight illuminance assessment, and; queries over the provision of clear window location plans showing neighbouring windows assessed. All three matters were clarified by the applicant, with DPR subsequently being satisfied in all regards and concluding that:

“The assessment has been undertaken in accordance with the 2022 published guidelines and reasonable parameters have been used to evaluate the daylight and sunlight levels to the proposed habitable units.

The additional information provided addresses the clarifications raised during the initial review, and the scheme will only have a negligible effect on the neighbouring properties in daylight and sunlight terms”.

16) Element Energy (Energy consultants for RBC)

- 4.16.1 Element Energy undertook an independent review of the sustainability and energy components of the development on behalf of the local planning authority. The proposed strategy by the applicant can be summarised as:
- A communal heat distribution network, using a centralised air-source heat pump - led approach to supply the residential part of the development.
 - The provision of on-site renewables in the form of rooftop solar photovoltaics
 - The inclusion of high energy efficient building fabric and building services to reduce carbon emissions and energy demand through good practice passive and energy efficiency measures
 - In total, the combination of measures is anticipated by the applicant to achieve an 89.4% reduction in CO2 emissions, in comparison to a Building Regulations Part L compliant baseline.
 - Air-to-air heat pump technology shall supply space heating and hot water to the retail non-residential development, utilising a variable refrigerant flow (VRF) system
 - The non-residential element of the development is designed to achieve a BREEAM “Very Good” accreditation.
- 4.16.2 Element Energy’s original conclusion specified that the scheme was not policy compliant, for the following overarching reasons:
- A communal heat distribution network that is compatible for connection with a future Reading-wide district heating network hasn’t been provided.
 - Lack of evidence (technical analysis) to support why ground source heat pump (GSHP systems have been discounted and air source systems (ASHP) have been selected.
 - The BREEAM pre-assessment, whilst exceeding the 55% threshold for BREEAM “Very Good”, only provides a buffer of 0.8%, below the accepted threshold of a 3%-5% buffer as expected by BREEAM to allow for design changes and potential constraints identified during the construction stage.
- 4.16.3 Element Energy made a series of recommendations as to how the applicant could potentially address the various issues raised. The applicant duly submitted further information in December 2022 and January 2023, with this being re-reviewed by Element Energy. The follow up review confirmed that many of the matters originally raised had facilitated an adequate response by the applicant (e.g. improved BREEAM pre-assessment scores were suitably evidenced). Remaining concerns remained, predominantly concerning the suitability of the evidence for discounting closed loop GSHP, given SPD guidance prefers GSHP over ASHP systems. Upon further discussions it was agreed between the technical consultants that this could be further explored at the detailed design stage.
- 4.16.4 Accordingly, Element Energy subsequently confirmed that the proposals are policy compliant, providing a series of planning conditions and a s106 legal agreement securing a carbon offsetting financial contribution. In particular, the first energy strategy condition will include a specific commitment for the applicant to further investigate the provision of a ‘closed loop’ ground source heat pump system at the site. This will be in the form of a feasibility report, with consideration for space heating and hot water supply strategies that minimise peak load and thus centralised heat supply system capacity, with view to a closed loop ground source heat pump system being provided instead of the presently proposed air-source heat pumps. With the conditions and legal obligation secured Element Energy confirmed contentment with the proposals from a sustainability and energy perspective.

17) Reading Design Review Panel (DRP)

4.17.1 The proposals were considered by the Reading DRP on 22nd September 2022 (during the course of this application). A summary of the subsequent DRP written comments are:

- “The design [has] evolved [in the context of the area and previous proposals] by (i) suggesting that elements above the retained facade should be metal framed with east facing winter gardens to provide external space and acoustic buffers to the interiors, (ii) that a red brick tower should sit behind the retained building, (iii) that buff brick ‘intermediate’ elements should be inserted between the grey metal winter gardens and the red brick tower. This ‘mixed’ approach was questioned by the panel (elements in [brackets] added for clarification by officers).
- There was no evidence presented of how the scheme addresses issues of sustainable design and carbon/energy/circular construction initiatives.
- There was no consideration of the wider issues of the natural environment on the site and its biodiversity.
- Diagrams showing sun angles and improvement in the daylight available to the rear of the site were questioned by the Panel.
- The visualisations did not properly describe the differences between the retained brickwork and new brick. The panel insist that these differences will be apparent and should make a significant contribution to how the detailing of the final building will be designed.
- The introduction of ‘mixed’ materials throughout the tower building should be reconsidered and a simpler pallet used. Grey metal at higher levels above roofs, new red brick below carefully distinguished from the retained sections.
- DRP urge the applicant to adopt a bolder design, simplifying the materials choice and increasing the height if necessary to achieve more sustainable design and construction goals and making the clear distinction between both the scale and architecture of the new and retained parts.
- The Panel sympathised with the applicant over how the design evolution has compromised this redevelopment.

18) RBC Education, Crime Prevention Design Advisor at Thames Valley Police, Thames Water, SGN (formerly Scotia Gas Networks) and SSE (formerly Scottish and Southern Energy)

4.18.1 No responses have been received from these consultees. If any responses are subsequently received they will be set out in any update report.

ii) Public consultation

4.19.1 Notification letters were sent to nearby occupiers on 23/08/2022, with the statutory period expiring on 13/09/2022. Site notices were displayed at the site from 24/08/2022, expiring on 14/09/2022. A press notice was published on 01/09/2022, expiring on 22/09/2022.

4.19.2 One objection has been received from a resident at an Addison Road address, with the issues raised being summarised as follows:

- Height - the proposed tower block is still higher than any other building on this side of Caversham Road, particularly the fire station.

- Precedent - Concern the proposal would set a precedent between the railway embankment and the Caversham Bridge roundabout, especially given the potential redevelopment of the Carters site (*Officer note: each application is required to be considered on its own merits*).
- Opposes any building higher than the existing Shurgard building, owing to the low-rise character to the west and overshadowing of properties in Northfield and Swansea Roads. Reference to the 2008 Tall Buildings Strategy stating tall structures should not be developed here due to the nearby small scale residential areas, which development should instead respond to.

4.19.3 As part of the objection the following comments have also been made:

- heritage concerns about the original plans (*Officer note: i.e. the refused and dismissed at appeal scheme*) have largely been addressed.

4.19.4 The changes to the scheme since the original consultation were not considered of a nature or extent to warrant formal public re-consultation.

iii) Local Groups

20) Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC)

4.20.1 Reading CAAC objects to the application, summarised as:

- The proposal does not address all the criticisms of the dismissed appeal.
- The impact on the streetscene towards the railway bridge, including Caversham Fire Station remains negative.
 - The Inspector's criticism that the original proposal would be taller than the surroundings on the west side of Caversham Road and Northfield Road has partly been addressed by the reduction in height to a maximum of six storeys.
 - The Inspector's criticism that the blank southern wall with window outlines provided limited relief and interest remains, whilst noting the now proposed wall is not as tall. This will be particularly dominant on the street scene when approaching the site from the town centre along Caversham Road.
 - The proposal results in the removal of about 50% of the frontage to Caversham Road. More of the maltings should be retained. The proposal will result in the loss of the maltings closest to the railway line, possibly the oldest, so only one of the three will remain. Clearly this has a significant impact on the heritage asset itself, the setting of the office buildings to the rear and harm the group value of the site as a whole.
 - The proposed dormers in the roof facing Northfield Road are completely out of keeping with a maltings building and undermine its significance
- The impact on the residential properties at Barry Place has been completely ignored and should be assessed.

4.20.2 The CAAC, whilst objecting to the proposals in overall terms, also comments as follows:

- The impact on Northfield Road has been improved in this application and is well documented within the submission.
- The CAAC welcome the retention and re-use of the shell of one of the maltings, feature doorway on the ground floor and many of the windows particularly at first floor level.

- The future of the Smallbone ghost sign (on the Northfield Road) elevation has not been specified. The CAAC requests this to be retained as it records one of the uses of the building after it ceased to be a maltings. *(Officer comment: on the demolition plans submitted this façade is not specified as being demolished)*

21) Bell Tower Community Association

4.21.1 Bell Tower Community Association was formally consulted and no response has been received.

22) Caversham & District Residents' Association (CADRA)

4.22.1 CADRA objects to the proposals, commenting in full as follows:

“While this application seeks to retain a part of the Locally Listed building of significant historical interest, it removes 50%, makes out of keeping alterations and provides new build at 6 storeys which would dominate and detract from the maltings. The view onto Caversham Road is overly dominating, with loss of about half of the original frontage. The proposed dormers in the roof facing Northfield Road are out of keeping with a maltings building and undermine its significance. While some improvements are welcome we urge that the application should be refused in its current form”.

5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 5.1 Section 16(2) and 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special interest which it possesses.
- 5.2 Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority in the exercise of its functions to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.
- 5.3 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', which means 'approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay' (NPPF paragraph 11).
- 5.4 For this Local Planning Authority the development plan is the Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019). The relevant national / local policies / guidance are:
- 5.5 **National**
National Planning Policy Framework (2021)
The following NPPF chapters are the most relevant (others apply to a lesser extent):
- 2. Achieving sustainable development
 - 4. Decision-making
 - 5. Delivering a sufficient supply of homes

- 6. Building a strong, competitive economy
- 7. Ensuring the vitality of town centres
- 8. Promoting healthy and safe communities
- 9. Promoting sustainable transport
- 11. Making effective use of land
- 12. Achieving well-designed places
- 14. Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
- 15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- 16. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

National Planning Policy Guidance (2014 onwards)

5.6 The relevant Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019) policies are:

- CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction
- CC3: Adaptation to Climate Change
- CC4: Decentralised Energy
- CC5: Waste Minimisation and Storage
- CC6: Accessibility and the Intensity of Development
- CC7: Design and the Public Realm
- CC8: Safeguarding Amenity
- CC9: Securing Infrastructure
- EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
- EN4: Locally Important Heritage Assets
- EN5: Protection of Significant Views with Heritage Interest
- EN6: New Development in a Historic Context
- EN9: Provision of Open Space
- EN10: Access to Open Space
- EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network
- EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodland
- EN15: Air Quality
- EN16: Pollution and Water Resources
- EN17: Noise Generating Equipment
- EN18: Flooding and Drainage
- EM3: Loss of Employment Land
- H1: Provision of Housing
- H2: Density and Mix
- H3: Affordable Housing
- H5: Standards for New Housing
- H10: Private and Communal Outdoor Space
- TR1: Achieving the Transport Strategy
- TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
- TR4: Cycle Routes and Facilities
- TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging
- RL1: Network and Hierarchy of Centres
- RL2: Scale and Location of Retail, Leisure and Culture Development
- OU5: Shopfronts and Cash Machines
- CR1: Definition of Central Reading
- CR2: Design in Central Reading
- CR3: Public Realm in Central Reading
- CR6: Living in Central Reading
- CR11: Station/River Major Opportunity Area

5.7 Reading Borough Council Supplementary Planning Documents

Topics

Affordable Housing (2021)
Design Guide to Shopfronts (2022)
Employment, Skills and Training (2013)
Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)
Planning Obligations under Section 106 (2015)
Sustainable Design and Construction (2019)

Sites

Reading Station Area Framework (2010)

5.8 Other relevant documentation

DCLG Technical housing standards - nationally described space standard (2015)
BRE Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight - A guide to good practice (BR 209 2022 edition)
Reading Borough Council Tree Strategy (March 2021)
Reading Biodiversity Action Plan (March 2021)
Reading Open Spaces Strategy (March 2007)
Reading Open Spaces Strategy Update Note (January 2018)
The National Design Guide (2019)
The National Model Design Code (July 2021)
Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking (Historic England, 2015a)
Historic England Advice Note 7 (2nd edition) Local Heritage Listing: Identifying and Conserving Local Heritage (Historic England, 2021)
Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance (Historic England, 2008)
Guide to the Conservation of Historic Buildings (British Standards Publication BS 7913:2013, 2015)

6. APPRAISAL

The main issues are considered to be:

- 6.1 Land use considerations, including provision of affordable housing
- 6.2 Design and Heritage matters - including demolition, height scale and massing, design and appearance including detailed design, and effect on designated heritage assets
- 6.3 Quality of accommodation for future occupiers
- 6.4 Amenity impacts for nearby occupiers
- 6.5 Transport and Highways
- 6.6 Landscaping and ecology
- 6.7 Sustainability and energy
- 6.8 Flooding and SuDS
- 6.9 Other matters - S106, pre-commencement conditions & Equality

1) Land use considerations, including provision of affordable housing

Loss of existing use

- 6.1.1 In land use terms the starting point for the assessment of these proposals is to establish whether the loss of the existing lawful use of the building proposed to be partly demolished is appropriate. The existing retail warehouse use is considered to fall within the Class E use (most closely aligned to Class E(a) - display or sale of

goods), as per the 2020 amendments to the Use Classes Order. No Central Reading policy specifically protects retail uses outside of primary frontages (which the site is not within).

- 6.1.2 Officers are also mindful of NPPF paragraph 123, which states LPAs should support proposals to use retail land for homes in areas of high housing demand (discussed separately below, but in summary this is evident in Reading), provided this would not undermine key economic sections (which it is considered it would not) or the vitality and viability of town centres (which it is considered it would not within the context of the regional centre of Reading).
- 6.1.3 Moreover, the proposal would not result in the complete loss of retail use at the site, with the proposal actually involving replacement retail floorspace. Therefore the proposals involve the reduction in retail floorspace at the site, from 1,264.9sqm to 297sqm (a total reduction of 967.9sqm). The appropriateness of the proposed use is separately discussed below, but from a land use perspective there are no in-principle land use issues concerning the reduction in retail floorspace at the site.

Principle of residential use

- 6.1.4 The supporting text to Policy H1 confirms that there is a pressing need for additional housing in Reading and the surrounding area, which helps explain the policy requirement for on average 689 homes per annum in Reading Borough. Furthermore, Reading is a very tightly defined urban area, sites for new development are limited and there is a heavy reliance on previously development land. The proposed development, providing 29 residential units on brownfield land, would therefore contribute towards meeting this pressing need. For balance, it is also relevant to note that the December 2022 published Annual Monitoring Report (covering the period from 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022) confirmed that housing delivery was strong both in general terms and in terms of delivering affordable housing, with Reading having a five year housing land supply. Nevertheless, the principle of providing residential units at the site, according with Policy H1, is considered to be established.

Principle of retail use

- 6.1.5 The application proposes the retention/reprovision of 297sqm of retail floorspace (Use Class E(a)) at part ground floor level. The site is located within the Central Area boundary of Reading, but is not located within the identified Primary Shopping Area within the Central Area, where Policy CR1 states retail development will take place. However, as outlined above, this proposal is seeking the reconfiguration and adaption of an existing retail use at the site, thereby meaning that flexibility can be applied in terms of the retail floorspace being provided outside of the Primary Shopping Area. Moreover, paragraph 5.2.5 of the Local Plan states a key theme which underpins the Central Reading strategy “*is of a mix of uses across the central area, both vertically and horizontally*”. In this instance, the provision of a non-residential component within the scheme, in principle terms is considered to align with the general thrust of Central Reading policy and a retail use would also provide an active frontage along the street, assisting natural surveillance in the area.
- 6.1.6 It is noted that the applicant has specifically sought Class E(a) (retail) use at the site. The Class E use class has 11 separate parts, with it considered reasonable and necessary for a condition to secure the floorspace solely for Class E(a) use, as the

other Class E uses have not been assessed as part of this application and could have very different amenity and transport implications as the proposed use. Along similar lines, given the wide potential for different uses being permitted in the future under permitted development rights, a further condition shall prevent the conversion of non-residential floorspace to residential without separate permission from the local planning authority.

Residential Mix

- 6.1.9 The proposed dwelling mix is 23 x 1-bedroom units, 5 x 2-bedroom units and 1 x 3-bedroom unit, as detailed in figure 5 within section 2 above. This equates to 79.31% 1-bed units and 3.45% 3-bed units. Although a mix of 1, 2 and 3-bed units are provided, the proposals are evidently and significantly at odds with the guide within Policy CR6, which states a maximum of 40% 1-bed and a minimum of 5% 3-bed units should be provided.
- 6.1.10 However, the policy also references flexibility by stating the above guide should be followed, *“unless it can be clearly demonstrated that this would render a development unviable”*. The applicant is seeking to advance the proposal on this basis and has provided a series of viability-based information, both as part of the general viability position relating to affordable housing, and specific mix-based viability information as a result of concerns being raised by officers in this regard.
- 6.1.11 In short, the viability information provided by the applicant does evidence that altering the mix in respect of reducing the number of 1-bed units or increasing the number of 3-bed units would result in an overall reduction in number of units and, moreover, a reduction in the capital value per square foot within the scheme. The impact of amending the proposed scheme mix would be a worsening of the scheme viability position, effectively resulting in the significant reduction or even removal of the on-site affordable housing and financial contribution proposed, or potentially going as far as calling into question the deliverability of the scheme as a whole. The applicant also suggests that the central location and relatively small size of the site are other factors to support a deviation from the guide, but officers do not consider these factors to be of any particular merit in this case given that Policy CR6 is a central Reading specific policy already.
- 6.1.12 Consequently, it is the viability-based information provides a sufficient basis for taking an alternative approach to the normal mix guide within Policy CR6 in this specific instance. The proposed mix of dwellings would be secured via condition, as per the recommendation at the outset of this report. Nevertheless, the proposed mix is still viewed by officers as disappointing in itself and is considered to be a shortfall of the proposal when applying an overall planning balance to the scheme. That overall balance will be weighed and discussed at section 7 below.

Affordable housing

- 6.1.13 During the course of the application, the amount of affordable housing has increased from the originally proposed nil on-site provision to 8 x shared ownership units (6x1-bed units at first floor level and 2x2-bed units - one each at ground and first floor), representing a 27.59% on-site affordable housing contribution. Furthermore, a financial contribution of £58,400, accounting for the 0.7 of a unit / 2.41% is also proposed, meaning in overall terms the provision adheres to the 30% requirement specified within Policy H3. The on-site units and financial contribution would be secured in full via the recommended s106 legal agreement.

- 6.1.14 Set within a challenging viability position, as explained within the RBC Valuations comments at section 4.4 above, the policy compliant provision of affordable housing is considered to be an extremely positive outcome, going beyond a level of provision which can reasonably be provided. This has been possible in this specific instance as the applicant has specified difficulties with its funder in terms of agreeing to the Council's required deferred affordable housing contribution mechanism, which is typically required where the provision of affordable housing is below the policy compliant level. As such, in order to preclude the requirement for a deferred mechanism, the applicant appears to have chosen to increase the on-site provision to a policy compliant level, despite the viability evidence submitted. The result of these extensive negotiations is a policy compliant provision of on-site affordable housing, supplemented with the necessary financial contribution.
- 6.1.15 In this context, officers consider that flexibility can be applied in terms of the specific tenure split of the affordable housing component not according with the SPD requirements. As detailed within the RBC Housing comments at section 4.5 above, in this specific instance the provision of solely shared ownership units (therefore not including any rented units) is considered to be appropriate. In short, this is ultimately recognised as a result of scheme viability, which Policy H3 itself acknowledges. Put simply, any change in the package of affordable housing measures proposed (e.g. incorporating rented units on-site as well as shared ownership) would have a negative impact on the delivery of the scheme as a whole, perhaps even calling into question it occurring at all. In summary, officers advise that the proposed shared ownership offer should form an important positive component of the overall planning balance, which will be discussed further at the end of this Appraisal.
- 6.1.16 As with any on-site provision, a cascade mechanism is proposed to be included within the s106 legal agreement. In practice this ensures that if any of the on-site affordable housing units are not disposed of to a HA or RP (as very much anticipated), then a fallback position would be for the Council to assist in identifying a provider or purchasing the units. If relevant requirements are met to evidence that nobody is prepared to manage the affordable units, the on-site provision requirement would instead transfer to a financial contribution towards affordable housing elsewhere in the Borough, to the negotiated sum of £585,344.
- 6.1.17 In addition, a further affordable housing related clause is included within the s106 legal agreement in relation to the Council safeguarding its affordable housing position in the future. More specifically, it is contended that should the application site subsequently be extended/alterd to create further residential units (e.g. conversion of the commercial ground floor or offices within the buildings fronting Northfield Road) or residential units as part of this proposed subdivided (e.g. a 2-bed unit becoming 2x1-bed units), then contributions to affordable housing would apply on a cumulative basis, rather than a standalone application basis. This is necessary due to Policy H3 requiring different levels of affordable housing depending on the number of units (thereby avoiding a succession of applications each having different affordable housing requirements, which if all submitted as one could generate a larger requirement. It is considered reasonable and necessary for this to be secured in this instance to ensure the site makes an appropriate contribution towards affordable housing to meet the needs of Reading. Such a clause has been included on other schemes in the Borough in recent years, including being accepted in an appeal scenario.

2) Design and Heritage matters - including demolition, height, scale and massing, design and appearance including detailed design, and effect on designated heritage assets

Demolition

- 6.2.1 Initially the proposed demolition works are considered, or more specifically the extent of demolition proposed in this instance. The proposals involve the retention of 'The Brewery' and 'The Malthouse' office buildings on the western side of the site and a significant proportion of the current building on the junction of Caversham Road and Northfield Road, barring the non-original ground floor shopfront and the southern half of the Caversham Road fronting building. The extent of demolition has already been summarised in section 2 above (visualised at figure 4), with this also shown in the context of the demolition plans submitted at section 4.2 (figure 12) within the CUDO observations. Furthermore, all of relevant visuals are combined at Appendix 2 at the end of this report.
- 6.2.2 In the previously dismissed at appeal proposals it was sought to demolish the entirety of the building on the eastern side of the site fronting Caversham Road and Northfield Road. In dismissing the appeal, the Inspector concluded at paragraph 28, as already detailed in section 3 above that *"the building has significant significance as a non-designated heritage asset and its loss would harm the historic environment"*. Taking this on board and seeking to address the concerns of the Inspector the proposals differ in seeking the partial retention / partial demolition of the building on the east side of the site. As the CUDO comments at section 4.2 above, the applicant explored retaining the whole building and the façade of the southern building fronting Caversham Road. However, this was discounted for practical and design-based reasons, which the Council's CUDO accepts. Furthermore, the retention of the characterful building on the corner of Caversham Road and Northfield Road is considered to retain the most significant part of the existing building (in the context of these historically being two separate buildings), in a genuine attempt to address previous concerns and bring forward a heritage and design-led approach in these proposals, whilst simultaneously achieving a financially viable proposal.
- 6.2.3 Given the application site buildings are locally listed, the proposals need to be considered against Policies EN1 and EN4. Policy EN1 seeks to ensure that assets on the Local List are protected and where possible enhanced. More specifically, there are two main tests within Policy EN4, namely that (1) the benefits of the development significantly outweigh the asset's significance in instances such as this where harm would occur and (2) that the development conserves, architectural, archaeological significance, which may include the appearance, character and setting of the asset. In terms of test 1, this requires a wider assessment of the application as a whole, which can only be detailed within the planning balance section of this report. As such, this is duly discussed separately at section 7. However, it is initially referenced, acknowledged and fully accepted that some harm to the locally listed buildings would occur, both individually and as part of the collective group value, as the proposals involve partial demolition, and furthermore the setting of the remaining buildings would change owing to the proposed development. Notwithstanding test 1 for the moment, in terms of test 2, the Council's CUDO comments at section 4.2 point to it being considered that the proposals do sufficiently conserve the architectural and historical significant of the asset, with the most important element of the existing building retained and incorporated into the proposed redevelopment proposal, with the rationale discounting the retention of the entire building being robust and acceptable to

officers. As such, test 2 of Policy EN4 is considered to have been met, with test 1 returned to at section 7 of this report.

6.2.4 As well as the local policy context, it is also relevant to note that the corresponding national policy position too, albeit this is not considered as stringent as the local policy context referenced above. Paragraph 203 of the NPPF requires a balanced judgement when weighing applications (such as this) that directly affect non-designed heritage assets (which locally listed buildings are), with regard required to the scale of any harm/loss and the significance of the heritage asset. In this case the CUDO considers that the scale of harm is less than significant, as detailed in section 4.2 above. In line with the Inspector's previous comments, it is echoed that the buildings have "significant significance". It is within this context that the required balanced judgement will be considered at section 7 of this report.

6.2.5 It is relevant to note at this juncture that any approval, as recommended, would include recording of all buildings at the site, in line with Historic England Level 2 recording. This dovetails with NPPF paragraph 205 and Policy EN4 and has duly been recommended by the CUDO. Moreover, it is also considered necessary to include a separate condition specifying that the partial demolition recommended shall not be undertaken before a contract for the carrying out of the works of redevelopment of the site has been made (with details submitted to demonstrate this to officers for approval to at least cover the demolition and shell and core stages of development - with the definition clarified through an informative). This is considered necessary given the potential risk of partial implementation of any permission, involving demolition works only, would cause a harmful impact in the street and townscape terms, while it would also prevent the unnecessary (in that context) partial loss of the locally listed building. Such an approach also follows recommendations detailed at paragraph 204 of the NPPF.

Height, scale and massing

6.2.6 Turning to consider the height, scale and massing of the proposed development, as identified at section 2 above, the scheme seeks a part 2 (and roofspace accommodation) storey building at the northern end of the site, rising to part 5 and part 6 storeys further south and fronting onto Caversham Road. It is initially noted that the proposed scale and massing significantly differs from that proposed as part of the previous dismissed at appeal scheme. At that time a part 5, part 7 proposal was sought (see figures 7 & 8 within section 3 above), which the Inspector criticised as appearing "*unduly tall*", "*dominating and out of scale*". The 5 storey element towards Northfield Road was also considered to appear out of context (see section 3 for more details).

6.2.7 The now proposed scheme has sought to positively respond to the Inspector's comments, with the overall height of the tallest element reduced by a storey (further reduced by the proposed flat roof design). Most significantly however, the retention of the 2-storey warehouse at the northern end of the site is considered to importantly signal a meaningful reduction in the bulk and massing, as well as the perception of bulk and massing across the site too. The comparative position is seen in figure 14 below, with additional visuals shown at Appendix 7 too. As such, the current proposals are considered to represent an extensive shift in approach by the applicant in this regard.



Figure 14 - Proposed scale and massing, with the comparative dismissed at appeal scheme outlined - please note that the proposed materials shown differ to those now proposed)

6.2.8 However, ultimately the proposed scale and massing needs to be assessed afresh on its own merits, against development plan policies. This assessment can be considered within the context of Caversham Road and then Northfield Road. Latterly, the transition between remaining and proposed component parts of the site need to be considered too. It is recognised that the site is located in a transitional area between low-rise residential terraces to the west and the larger scale commercial uses around Reading Station to the east (both as existing and possibly emerging, as per applications/appeals at sites to the east - see section 3 above for details).



Proposed Caversham Road Elevation

Figure 15 - Existing and proposed Caversham Road streetscene elevations - see Appendix 4 for slightly larger versions of the same plans

6.2.9 With this context in mind, it is acknowledged that along Caversham Road the proposals would represent a change in the scale and massing along the west side of the road. The openness of the site, when approaching from both the north and south means it could be considered to be sensitive to change. However, such a change is not considered to be harmful in this case and instead it is considered to sufficiently maintain and enhance the character and appearance of the area. While the prevailing scale of buildings along the west side of Caversham Road is acknowledged to be 2-3 storeys, and the overall proposed height at the tallest point being 6 storeys would be greater than the prevailing context, this greater height applies to only part of the frontage. Meaningful elements of this scale are set back from the Caversham Road frontage too, thanks to the retained corner warehouse which assists in assimilating the proposed scale into the streetscene. As a consequence, when considering the existing and proposed Caversham Road streetscenes (see figure 15 above), these demonstrate an overall height and scale which is not considered harmfully taller than the existing Shurgard warehouse to the north. The appropriateness of the proposed scale and massing is also assisted

by the detailed design approach, which is discussed separately in the subsequent sub-section of this assessment. It is also pertinent that the Council's CUDO raises no concerns with the proposed scale and massing (see section 4.2), with this also being the informed viewpoint of the Reading Design Review Panel (see section 4.17) too. In short, it is considered that the proposed massing assimilate satisfactorily into the streetscene.

6.2.10 Along Northfield Road, the retention of the corner warehouse means these proposals are a fundamentally different scheme to that previously dismissed at appeal. The scale and massing are considerably reduced and in themselves provide a suitable basis for stepping up in height to the 5 and 6 storeys proposed. These components being offset from the street frontage mitigate the potential harm and create a suitable transition at this point.

6.2.11 When the proposals are considered in an east to west context, as seen below in figure 16, whilst the proposals would represent a change when compared with existing, again this is not considered harmful. The width of the proposed car parking area and, in particular the set-back nature of the new-build elements, provide a suitable transition between the retained warehouse / new build inset buildings and the 2-3 storey retained 'The Brewery' and 'The Malthouse' buildings and the 3-storey Monmouth Court further to the west. The Inspector previously considered 5 storeys to be out of context along Northfield Road, but the setback of the now proposed height is considered to successfully mitigate the previous harm identified.



Figure 16 - Existing and proposed Northfield Road streetscene elevations - see Appendix 4 for slightly larger versions of the same plans

6.2.12 To the east the width of Caversham Road mitigates any harmful impacts in the change in scale with the existing (vacant) Royal Mail buildings, with this character subject to possible change in the future if the resolved to be granted / awaiting completion of legal agreement scheme at 80 Caversham Road (Ref 182252 - see section 3 above) is implemented with 8-storey buildings along the street elevation as proposed. In that possible future context, the proposals would reaffirm the existing transitional nature of the site.

6.2.13 In respect of the transition within the site between the retained 2-storey warehouse element and the part-5, part-6 storey new build element, the retention of the roof form (albeit reconfigured with the introduction of the dormers and rooflights) means that the two separate elements can be easily identified and understood in townscape terms, whilst simultaneously assisting in breaking up the mass. In addition, the detailed design (as discussed separately in the sub-section below) also helps illustrate the appropriateness of this relationship, which is important given the prominent corner plot, as shown below in figure 17 and Appendix 6.



Figure 17 - Proposed computer generated image from Caversham Road looking south-west showing the junction with Northfield Road

6.2.14 In respect of height, scale and massing matters, it is also relevant to reference that, in dismissing the previous appeal at the site, the Inspector raised concerns with the blank seven storey wall on the southern elevation, with this considered to offer very limited relief and made the building appear austere and overly dominant. Officers consider that this has been largely addressed in the now proposed scheme (as shown in figure 18 below), through a combination of a reduction in one storey, the provision of winter gardens fronting Caversham Road and the provision of lintel detailing within the detailed design. Although the provision of windows throughout this elevation would have addressed the Inspector's concerns in full, officers accept that this is not possible in this instance as the applicant is separately required, under Policy CR2f, not to prevent or cause unreasonable burdens on the future development of adjacent development sites. As such, there is an inherent conflict between ensuring the building does not appear overly dominant, whilst not compromising future neighbouring development.



Figure 18 - Dismissed at appeal south elevation (left) and as now proposed (right)

6.2.15 In overall terms the proposed height, scale and massing of the proposals is considered appropriate and is supported by officers on its own merits. In addition, the scheme is also considered to satisfactorily address the comments raised by the Inspector in dismissing the previous proposals at the site.

Design and appearance including detailed design

- 6.2.16 The proposals are considered to comply with the principles of both design-based Policies CR7 and CC2. Firstly, the proposed layout essentially follows the existing, thereby respecting the grid layout structure in the central area and utilising the street frontages as far as possible.
- 6.2.17 The scheme has evolved during the course of the application, following specialist design input from Reading DRP (see section 4.17). The DRP's primary concern related to the original inclusion of numerous proposed materials, with it suggested that a simplified palette should be used. The applicant duly considered this and has amended the proposals to remove the originally proposed buff brick (see Appendix 8) replaced with a red brick. This is considered to be a positive amendment to the scheme, demonstrating a more modest design response to maintain the emphasis on the retained warehouse building instead of drawing the eye to the new build component.



Figure 19 - Proposed Caversham Road (left) and Northfield Road elevations

- 6.2.18 The predominant proposed material of red brick is considered appropriate in providing continuity with the retained warehouse at the site. Linking back to policy EN4, the proposed brickwork would draw upon heritage elements of the previous/retained design, although as the supporting commentary explains, it is not proposed to replicate the existing brickwork. It is instead intended for the new brickwork to be darker than existing in order to clearly distinguish between the retained and proposed components. This is supported to avoid creating a pastiche, with the subtle change in brickwork colour providing both a welcomed contrast and simultaneously a link back to the original. It is considered that the proposed approach would work well, leading to a coherent design response and ultimately creating an attractive finished appearance at the site, demonstrating a heritage-led design approach. In particular, the connection and relationship between the existing retained warehouse, 'Malthouse' and 'Brewery' buildings at the site and the proposed building has been carefully considered and the design response is considered to be appropriate. As with all sensitive sites in the Borough, to ensure design quality, it is considered to be of fundamental importance for precise details of all external materials to be secured via condition, with this including the sample panels being installed on site prior to approval to demonstrate an appropriate relationship between the retained and proposed materials.
- 6.2.19 The proposals also pay special attention to the ground floor shopfront and entrances, with this presently being an element in particular need for improvement at the existing site. The proposed shopfront and ground level design include a number of welcomed features, such as stone framing, glazed green

bricks (as per the existing building) effectively acting as the stallrisers in the proposed shopfront design and blue brick banding above (see Appendix 6 for more visual details). The shopfronts will provide an active frontage, which will also assist with natural surveillance and reduce the fear of crime, with a condition ensuring the shopfront windows are clear of vinyls or shutters. In overall terms the shopfronts are welcomed in principle, with specific material details recommended to be secured via condition. The anticipated high-quality detailing to the shopfront also assists in creating a human scale for the development, thereby assisting the height, scale and massing justification referenced above.

6.2.20 On the upper floors there is considered to be scope to introduce a contrasting material to the brickwork, with a lightweight steel frame with fins serving winter gardens on the Caversham Road frontage, with the setback stair also being framed in this manner to provide a visual link back to an industrial past. The continuation of red brick however is also important on the upper floors in more closely linking the new build elements to the retained warehouse. This is particular the case when viewed from Northfield Road (see figure 20 below), where solely brickwork is proposed on the north (aside from the setback staircore not visible in figure 20) and the west (rear courtyard) elevations, with the courtyard elevation showing no decrease in design quality, as required owing to its visibility in the streetscape and the need for an overall high quality design response to be achieved.



Figure 20 - CGI from Northfield Road looking south-east
(outline of proposed massing of 80 Caversham Road shown in the background - ref 182252)

6.2.21 It is acknowledged that local groups (see section 4.20 and 4.22 above) raise specific concerns in relation to the introduction of dormers within the roofscape of the retained warehouse building fronting Northfield Road. Whilst these are acknowledged not to be particularly characterful of the historic use, when considered within the context of the proposals as a whole they are considered a relatively minor and modest addition and not one which significantly dilutes the character or appearance of the building. Their size is considered to align with the function proposed (serving living and bedrooms within residential units) and would not overly dominate the roofscape at this point (see figure 20 above). They also help in the transition between the original and new components of the scheme and are therefore considered to be satisfactory.

6.2.22 In dismissing the previous appeal proposal the Inspector raised concerns with some elements of the detailed design, such as the top two floors having elongated

windows and eye-catching window mullions and the narrow footprint leading to a pronouncedly vertical orientated building. The now proposed scheme represents a contrasting design response to the site which no longer includes the specific features specifically referenced by the Inspector. In particular, the retention of the warehouse on the Caversham/Northfield Road junction alters the emphasis of the design response, with a more restrained and respectful of the past design approach proposed too.

Effect on designated heritage assets

6.2.23 In terms of the effect of the proposals on designated heritage assets (i.e. statutory listed buildings or conservation areas for example, and specifically excluding non-designated heritage assets such as locally listed buildings, which are discussed separately within this assessment), the proposals are considered too distant from any for there to be an impact. More specifically, mindful of Policy EN5 where the site is within the view of acknowledged historical significance from McIlroy Park, the proposed scale, massing and design approach is not considered to harm this view.

3) Quality of accommodation for future occupiers

Residential

6.3.1 The internal layout of the proposed units are arranged so as to create a suitable standard of living accommodation for future occupiers. The majority of the units are regularly shaped and sized, with all bedrooms and overall flat sizes complying with the nationally-described space standards, despite Policy H5 specifying this does not apply within Central Area locations such as this. Some initial concerns were raised in relation to the internal layout of Unit 202 at second floor level, as it is located within the roofspace of the existing building on the corner of Northfield Road and Caversham Road. It was originally proposed that both bedrooms would be served solely by rooflights, but following officer feedback the unit has been altered to a 1-bed unit, with all habitable rooms being served by conventional windows/terraces. No single aspect north-facing units are proposed (which are sought to be avoided where possible owing to a lack of direct sunlight), with the majority of units being dual aspect in nature, which is welcomed. No single-aspect south-facing units are proposed either, reducing the potential for units to suffer from overheating.

6.3.2 The proposed vehicular and cycle parking is considered acceptable, subject to compliance conditions and the proposed car club being secured via s106 legal agreement, as detailed within the Transport comments at section 4.1 above. Future occupiers will also benefit from the cycle link proposed by the applicant on Northfield Road, which is considered a benefit of the scheme. Refuse storage facilities are also considered appropriate and will be secured via a compliance condition. Therefore from a transport perspective the proposals include tangible benefits.

6.3.3 All units barring two include individual external amenity space, either as external balconies or winter gardens fronting Caversham Road. This is welcomed in providing future residents with the opportunity for a proportion of external space within the units. Furthermore, a shared rooftop terrace is also proposed at fifth floor level, with the applicant outlining that this would be for all future occupiers to use. Accordingly, the proposals provide a selection of on-site amenity spaces. However, as per the RBC Leisure observations at section 4.10 above, the proposal

does not provide meaningful recreational open space and the delivery of adequate on site open space is not achievable. The scheme is therefore required to make an off-site financial contribution towards improving and extending facilities within the nearby Thames Parks (including Caversham Court Gardens and Allotments) and Great Knollys Street Recreation Ground. The financial contribution amounts to £60,900 and will be secured via s106 legal agreement.

- 6.3.4 In relation to the other Policy H5 requirements, the Council's Access officer provided input on the accessible/adaptable/wheelchair user elements of the proposals, as summarised at section 4.9 above. Following some clarifications the Access officer is largely content with the proposals. Within the Design and Access Statement the applicant has outlined that 2 units (and including one shared ownership unit) will be wheelchair user dwellings in with M4(3) of the Building Regulations, and provided initial plans as to how this can be achieved. However, it is considered necessary and reasonable to secure full details via condition, which will ensure these are provided in practice and retained as such thereafter. In terms of all non-M4(3) units being accessible and adaptable in line with M4(2) of the Building Regulations, the applicant has not provided sufficient detail at application stage, so this will be combined into the above referenced condition in order to ensure the proposals comply with both Policies H5e and H5f. The water and energy components of Policy H5 are separately discussed in the sustainability and energy section below.
- 6.3.5 In terms of overlooking between the proposed units (as per Policy CC8), this would be possible between the proposed balcony/wintergarden spaces between some individual units. While a form of boundary treatment is denoted on the floor plan, the detail as to whether this constitutes a privacy screen has not been demonstrated. As such, this detail will be secured via a pre-occupation condition to protect the amenity of future occupiers.
- 6.3.6 With regard to daylight, sunlight and overshadowing matters for future occupiers, Delva Patman Redler undertook an independent review of the report submitted (see section 4.15 above). Whilst not all of the proposed units would satisfy the BRE guidance in terms of daylight and sunlight, this is largely a result of the proposed balconies. There is consequently an inherent conflict between providing private amenity space for future occupiers, but this compromising to an extent the daylight and sunlight levels experienced within the units. DPR considers, based on their experiences, that in overall terms the development appears to provide a satisfactory level of adherence to daylight guidelines. Given the urban nature of the site, the benefit of rooms being set off Caversham Road slightly and the provision of private amenity space, it is considered that some shortfalls for future occupiers in terms of daylight and sunlight can be tolerated in the scheme, with the majority of units adhering to the guidelines.
- 6.3.7 Turning to consider noise-based matters, a number of conditions recommended by Environmental Protection (see section 4.3) will ensure that future residents will not be significantly harmed in this regard. For example, the further noise assessment will ensure noise from Caversham Road will be mitigated, while the opening and servicing hours of the ground floor commercial unit will be restricted to protect amenity on the upper floors. Other Environmental Protection based conditions, such as in relation to air quality and contaminated land, would also protect the amenity of future occupiers too. In respect of all other Policy CC8 considerations the proposals are not considered to cause unacceptable living conditions for the new residential properties, with conditions securing further details in relation to external lighting and security for example.

6.3.8 In terms of fire safety, the proposal does not constitute a ‘gateway 1 building’, as although over 18m in height, no storeys include accommodation over 18m (the top floor is 16.7m). There is consequently no basis for requiring the submission of a fire statement as part of the application or consulting the Health & Safety Executive on the application. However, mindful of the sensitivities around this matter and the undeniable need to protect the future amenity of occupiers (and the general area), a pre-commencement (barring demolition) condition is recommended in this regard. This will require the applicant to submit a fire statement which details a strategy with suitable measures, which would then be required to be provided for prior to first occupation and then maintained as such thereafter. With this condition secured it is considered that amenity would be protected. In overall terms, subject to a series of conditions, the residential accommodation would be of a suitable standard.

Commercial uses

6.3.9 Considering first the proposed ground floor retail unit, the layout includes an expansive frontage onto Caversham Road, which continues around onto Northfield Road too. This will assist in attracting potential occupiers to the space in the future. The loading and servicing arrangements are proposed from Northfield Road, which is considered appropriate from a Transport Planning perspective. It is noted that this would require changes to a Traffic Regulation Order, which are dealt with under separate legislation to the Planning Act, but this does not prevent this planning application being determined. Suitable dedicated cycle and waste storage facilities are proposed to serve the retail unit and will be secured as such via condition. The proposed operating and servicing hours conditions are considered to strike an appropriate balance between being flexible enough to attract a wide variety of potential occupiers, without harming future residential amenity. In overall terms a suitable standard of accommodation is envisaged for future occupiers.

6.3.10 The existing office uses within ‘The Brewery’ and ‘The Malthouse’ buildings at the site would be able to function alongside the proposed development at the remainder of the site. Put another way, the proposed development at the site is not considered to unduly compromise the continued office use at the site, with noise and disturbance during partial demolition and building works managed through the demolition and construction method statement condition measures. In terms of overlooking and daylight/sunlight, the proposal would result in a worsening impact, but not harmfully so given the office use. The provision of 4 parking spaces is considered appropriate for the office use, noting that this is less than the offices will have experienced in practice since the closure of Drews in 2018. As such, a suitable standard of office accommodation would continue.

4) Amenity impacts for nearby occupiers

6.4.1 Considering first privacy and overlooking matters, the proposed dwellings are considered too distant from any existing or possible future residential units to result in a detrimental impact on the living environment of neighbours. The width of Caversham Road mitigates the possible future impact of this adjacent site to the east, while the non-provision of windows on the south elevation of the proposed building sufficiently future proofs the impact on possible future residential occupiers to the south should these sites come forward in due course. The existence and retention in office use of ‘The Brewery’ and ‘The Malthouse’ buildings on the western side of the site provides a visual barrier (as well as a

considerable physical distance) between the proposed building and the nearest residential properties to the west at Monmouth Court on Northfield Road. The generous width of Northfield Road means no significant overlooking issues would occur should the Shurgard site be redeveloped for residential in the future.

- 6.4.2 In terms of daylight, sunlight and overshadowing, the independent review by Delva Patman Redler (see section 4.15 above) confirms that the proposed development will not have a material effect on Monmouth Court or the proposed scheme at 80 Caversham Road.
- 6.4.3 With regard to visual dominance, overbearing and outlook implications, it is acknowledged that the proposals will result in an altered relationship for the existing low-rise residential areas to the west when compared with the existing experience. However, the location of the new taller element is limited to the south-east corner of the site, furthest away from the low-rise terraces to the west. Furthermore, the proposals need to be considered within the context of the anticipated scale and massing likely to emerge in time on the allocated site to the east (within a major opportunity area for the town). The proposed development would represent a transition down in scale from that likely in the future to the east. Moreover, on its own merits, the extent of visual dominance, overbearing and outlook implications for existing occupiers to the west caused by the proposed development is not considered to be of significant enough harm to warrant a sustainable reason for refusal of this application.
- 6.4.4 In relation to noise and disturbance matters, including vibrations and dust, fumes and smells, a series of conditions seek in part of in full to protect the amenity of nearby occupiers and users of the area from harm which could occur from the proposed development. This ranges from matters relating to opening and servicing hours, the restrictions on use of flat roof areas, a security strategy, a plant noise assessment and securing the hours by which demolition and construction works can take place. Collectively these conditions shall ensure no detrimental impacts from noise and disturbance would be likely to occur. In terms of the impacts from artificial lighting, the balcony railings and winter garden spaces will reduce this to an extent from within the proposed dwellings, while externally the intended lighting details within the parking area will be secured via condition.
- 6.4.5 In terms of crime and safety, despite being consulted no comments have been received from the Crime Prevention Design Advisor at Thames Valley Police (see section 4.18 above). It is noted that in the dismissed at appeal proposals the CPDA was satisfied subject to a condition being included to secure full and further details of the intended strategy. In the circumstances, it is considered necessary for submission of and approval of security strategy to be secured via condition. Whilst primarily for the benefit of future occupiers and users of the development, this will also assist the wider area too.
- 6.4.6 Whilst it is acknowledged that the CAAC (see section 4.20 above) considers that the impact on the residential properties at Barry Place (to the south-west) should be assessed, officers consider that these properties are too distant from the site, at a minimum 61m, for there to be a harmful impact.

5) Transport and Highways

- 6.5.1 In this regard the proposals are considered appropriate subject to conditions and s106 legal agreement requirements, as detailed at section 4.1 above. Furthermore, the quality of accommodation and amenity sections above have also

discussed a number of transport-based matters, such as parking, servicing and the construction phase. It is however considered pertinent to reiterate that the proposed scheme includes cycle route improvements along Northfield Road. This is welcomed and would assist connectivity to the northern entrance of Reading Station, alongside the anticipated works associated with the 80 Caversham Road scheme (see relevant history above). Such improvements would help promote sustainable transport in the Borough, with this being secured via s278/s106 legal agreement. The provision of a car club scheme is another welcomed element of the scheme from a transport perspective, with this again secured via s106 legal agreement.

6) Landscaping and ecology

6.6.1 In terms of landscaping the existing site lacks any form of soft landscaping, meaning that the introduction of a series of trees and planting at ground level, within the parking courtyard is welcomed as a positive addition. In addition, the landscaped communal roof terrace and biodiverse roof are welcome additions too. Mindful that the site is within a low tree canopy cover area and an air quality management area the proposals will increase this provision, as detailed in the Natural Environment officer comments at section 4.7 above. Whilst somewhat disappointingly the previously proposed green wall is no longer proposed, this is largely a result of the retention of part of the existing warehouse. In this instance officers conclude that the retention of the existing building at this point outweighs the possible inclusion of a green wall, given the range and nature of other soft landscaping works proposed at a site which is presently devoid of soft landscaping. In the context of an appropriate in principle scheme, details of the hard and soft landscaping will be secured via condition, as will boundary treatment details. This aligns with the Natural Environment officer comments at section 4.7 above.

6.6.2 In respect of ecology based matters, the LPA's ecology consultants GS Ecology firstly confirm (as per section 4.6 above) that species will be protected through the details submitted and those recommended to be secured via condition. Furthermore, it is confirmed that the proposed development incorporates a number of wildlife enhancing features to achieve a significant biodiversity net gain. A condition will secure full details of the measures to ensure the proposals are appropriate in ecology terms.

7) Sustainability and energy

6.7.1 As per section 4.16 of this report, Element Energy independently reviewed the sustainability and energy parts of the proposals. The submissions by the applicant indicate that the residential proposals, whilst not achieving zero carbon homes, would achieve an 89.4% reduction in carbon emissions, which is significantly above the SPD referenced minimum 35% improvement in regulated emissions over the Target Emissions Rate in the 2013 Building Regulations. This includes on-site decentralised energy provision, in the form of rooftop photovoltaics. Element Energy's original review raised a series of points which required further input from the applicant. The majority of these were satisfactorily addressed in due course, barring the justification for not bringing forward a closed loop GSHP system over the proposed ASHP system. It is considered that this specific matter can be further explored further through details secured via planning condition.

6.7.2 The final energy strategy, to be secured via two separate conditions (as per section 4.16 and the recommendation section of this report), will be likely to also facilitate a carbon offsetting financial contribution. This is owing to the scheme

not being zero carbon, albeit as outlined above the shortfall is minimal, meaning in practice the financial contribution would be likely to be modest. The applicant anticipates it to amount to £6,001, but the actual amount will be ascertained through the final energy strategy secured through the conditions. The carbon offsetting financial contribution will be secured via s106 legal agreement.

- 6.7.3 In terms of the non-residential part of the proposal, following revisions during the application, Element Energy confirmed contention with the BREEAM pre-assessment identifying that the scheme would achieve the required “Very Good” rating. Two planning conditions are recommended to secure the BREEAM “Very Good” rating in practice. The first relates to securing an Interim BREEAM “Very Good” rating Certificate at the pre-commencement, barring partial demolition stage. The second will secure a Final BREEAM “Very Good” rating Certificate prior to the first occupation of the unit. These conditions are necessary to ensure the development is carried out in accordance with sustainable building standards, adhering to both Policy CC2 and the guidance within the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD.
- 6.7.4 In respect of all sustainability and energy based matters it is therefore concluded that the proposals are independently verified as being appropriate and policy compliant, subject to the recommended conditions and obligation relating to carbon offsetting.

8) Flooding and SuDS

- 6.8.1 Given the application site is located within Flood Zone 2 and is not an allocated site for development, the applicant has duly submitted a supporting sequential test assessment. This builds on the separate assessment submitted and considered satisfactory at the time of the previously dismissed at appeal proposal. In this instance, on its own merits, it is considered that the sequential test has been satisfied by the information and evidence provided by the applicant. In short, this sufficiently demonstrates that there are no reasonably available sites with a lower probability of flooding that would be appropriate for the type of development proposed.
- 6.8.2 With the sequential test passed, the next consideration is the exception test. In line with the NPPG the proposed uses would fall into the ‘more vulnerable’ (residential) and ‘less vulnerable’ (shop) categories. ‘Table 2: Flood risk vulnerability and flood zone ‘incompatibility’’ of the NPPG (Paragraph: 079 Reference ID: 7-079-20220825 Revision date: 25 08 2022) confirms that the exception test is not required in flood zone 2. Whilst the report submitted by the applicant also states this, the applicant has nevertheless gone onto assess the proposals against the exception test. Officers do not consider that to be necessary, given there is no requirement to do so.
- 6.8.3 In addition, the applicant has submitted a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) and Surface Water Drainage Strategy. The provision of all but one of the residential units above ground floor level assists in general terms, whilst the FRA also confirms that the ground floor residential unit will also have finished floor levels in excess of the required 300mm above the 1 in 100 year river plus 31% climate change allowance flood level (it will be a minimum of 310mm). A series of other mitigation measures are proposed within the FRA, such as residents signing up to flood warnings from the Environment Agency. It is considered that all of the proposed mitigation measures are suitable and appropriate, as secured via a

compliance condition, in order to satisfactorily reduce the risk of flooding to the proposed development in line with Policy EN18.

- 6.8.4 Turning to consider SuDS matters, the RBC Lead Local Flood Authority comments at section 4.11 above confirm satisfaction with the broadly intended approach to reduce surface run-off at the site. In this instance it is necessary for full details to be secured via condition, which will be duly secured.

9) Other matters - S106, pre-commencement conditions & Equality

- 6.9.1 S106 Legal Agreement: Previous sections of this assessment have already outlined that various elements will be secured via legal agreement, relating to affordable housing (and associated) matters, open space, highways works, the car club and carbon offsetting. In addition, there is a separate requirement to secure an Employment and Skills Plan (ESP) for both the Construction phase of the development, as per the REDA response at section 4.12 above. This is required in line with Policy CC9 and the adopted Employment, Skills and Training SPD. The applicant has not yet decided whether this will take the form of a contractor-led ESP to be progressed on site, or the payment of an equivalent financial contribution, which as per the SPD formula amounts to £6,621.83. The legal agreement will be worded flexibly to enable either eventuality.

- 6.9.2 It is considered that each and every obligation referenced within this report would comply with the NPPF and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) in that they would be: i) necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, ii) directly related to the development and iii) fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development. Similar heads of terms were considered in the previous appeal at the site, with the Inspector confirming these met the tests in the NPPF. In this instance the Heads of Terms have been agreed by the applicant and broadly follow those outlined by the applicant at the outset of the application (building on those discussed as part of the previously dismissed at appeal proposals). A S106 Legal Agreement is in the process of being prepared to secure these obligations, in the event of a positive resolution at the Planning Applications Committee meeting.

- 6.9.3 Pre-commencement conditions: the number of pre-commencement (any development, including demolition) has been limited, in line with national guidance. The detailed wording of the pre-commencement conditions, in relation to the recording of the existing buildings, the contract for redevelopment, the demolition and construction method statement and contaminated land were agreed via email reply from the agent on 16/01/2023. This approach is in line with the requirements of section 100ZA(5) of the Town and Country Planning Act.

- 6.9.4 **Equality:** 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, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation. It is considered that there is no indication or evidence that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular application.

7. CONCLUSION, INCLUDING THE OVERALL PLANNING BALANCE

- 7.1 The application is required to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise, as per Section 38(6) of the

Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

- 7.2 As a consequence the harmful impacts of the proposed development are required to be weighed against the benefits. On the basis of the assessment above the harmful impacts are considered to include the overprovision of 1-bedroom flats within the mix of residential units, although in referencing this it is also acknowledged that the Policy CR6 mix is a guide and includes a caveat that it should be followed unless it can be clearly demonstrated that a policy compliant mix would render the development unviable; such a case is considered to have been clearly demonstrated in this instance. Other harmful impacts include some deficiencies identified in respect of daylight and sunlight provision for future occupiers, the lack of rented units within the affordable housing tenure (although if this was provided it would worsen the viability position and call into question the negotiated provision) and the less than significant harm to the significance of the locally listed buildings at the site.
- 7.3 The harmful impacts of the development need to be weighed with the benefits of the proposals. The applicant has outlined a series of planning benefits as part of the documentation submitted in support of the proposals, with those of particular note summarised as follows:
- The delivery of 29 homes to positively contribute to housing supply in Reading.
 - All residential units meet the Nationally Described Space Standards, provide a mix of 1, 2 and 3-bed units within a highly accessible location and provide a shared external rooftop space, with most units also providing private amenity space, such as balconies.
 - Retaining and repairing a locally listed building, thereby securing the long term use of the asset as part of the story of Reading's Victorian Industrial heritage, with the building where works are proposed having been vacant for over 4 years.
 - The provision of a carefully designed solution which retains part of the locally listed building and proposes coherent design response in the transition between the retained and proposed elements.
 - The design of the newly proposed part of the building takes cues from the existing building, particularly with regards to the use of materials and detailing.
 - Provision of an enhanced retail space, with an active and a visually enhanced frontage along Caversham Road and the provision of an employment generating use within the building as part of a mixed use development.
 - The provision of a biodiverse roof and soft landscaping to assist biodiversity
- 7.4 The policy compliant level of affordable housing is another planning benefit, with RBC Valuations considering the offer to exceed what is considered to be an appropriate contribution in a viability context. Officers welcome and support the negotiated offer as being fully policy compliant. Set within the viability context it is therefore a planning benefit of the scheme.
- 7.5 Another notable benefit is the scheme making efficient use of a brownfield site in a highly accessible and sustainable location to facilities and services, such as the close proximity to Reading mainline railway station and bus stops. Other benefits of the scheme include the delivery of cycle works proposed on Northfield Road (to achieve sustainable travel aims of the Local Plan and LTP), the highly energy efficient nature of the proposals including rooftop photovoltaics and commitment to investigating ground source heat pump opportunities, and finally the economic benefits through the construction stage, including to local labour through the employment skills and training plan, and beyond with the non-residential use proposed.

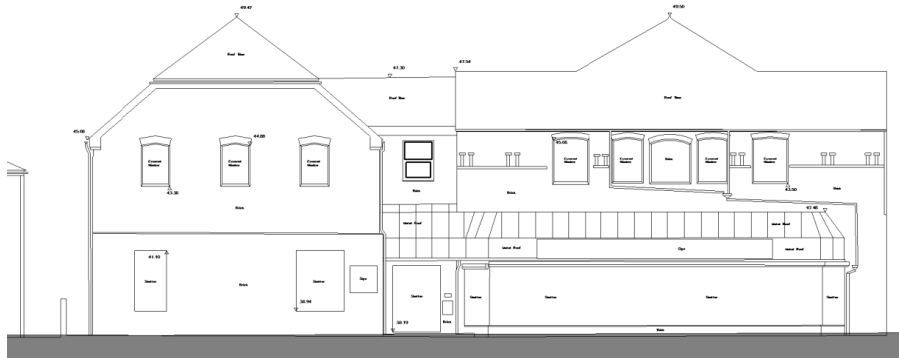
- 7.6 As a consequence of the above, officers advise that the conflicts with the development plan are considered to be outweighed by the above stated benefits of the proposals in this specific instance. It is considered that officers have applied a suitable planning balance when reaching this conclusion.
- 7.7 Therefore, when returning to the subject of test 1 of Policy EN4, as initially discussed at section 6.2 of this report (also linking back to the CUDO comments at section 4.2 of this report), it is concluded that it has been demonstrated that the benefits of the development significantly outweigh the level of harm to the significance of the locally listed buildings. This is both in terms of the individual buildings at the site and cumulatively in terms of the group value too. Accordingly, the proposals are considered to comply with Policy EN4 in full. Furthermore, in relation to the NPPF requirement (paragraph 203) for a balanced judgement in weighing an application where there is an effect on non-designated heritage assets, further to sections 4.2 and 6.2 of this report, it is considered that the benefits of the scheme outweigh the scale of harm and significance of the asset in this case, as evidenced above. Therefore, the proposals are considered to be compliant with paragraph 203 of the NPPF.
- 7.8 In overall terms the proposals are considered to be acceptable within the context of national and local planning policies, as detailed in the appraisal above. As such, full planning permission is recommended for approval, subject to the conditions and completion of the S106 Legal Agreement outlined at the outset of this report.

Case Officer: Jonathan Markwell

Appendices:

- 1) Existing elevations and plans
- 2) Demolition plans, elevations and visuals
- 3) Proposed floor plans
- 4) Proposed elevations, including existing and proposed streetscene comparisons and proposed CGIs
- 5) Proposed sections
- 6) Proposed materials
- 7) Changes to the proposed massing in comparison with the dismissed at appeal scheme
- 8) Proposed materials sought at the outset of this application - superseded during the course of the application in November 2022
- 9) Refused and dismissed at appeal elevations (part 5, part 7 storeys)
- 10) Comparison of the existing, CGI as proposed (materials have changed) and CGI of the as dismissed at appeal scheme
- 11) Appeal decision APP/E0345/W/20/3263270
- 12) Existing site photographs
- 13) Aerial views of the application site and surrounding area looking south (Google maps)

1) Existing elevations and plans



Existing Caversham Road (above) and Northfield Road (below) elevations



Existing south (above) and west courtyard elevations



Existing ground (above) and first and roof (below) plans

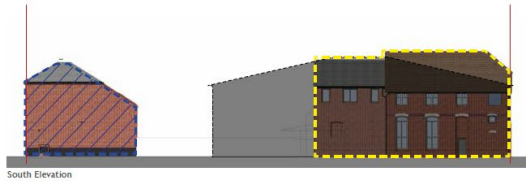


2) Demolition plans, elevations and visuals

DEMOLITION STRATEGY

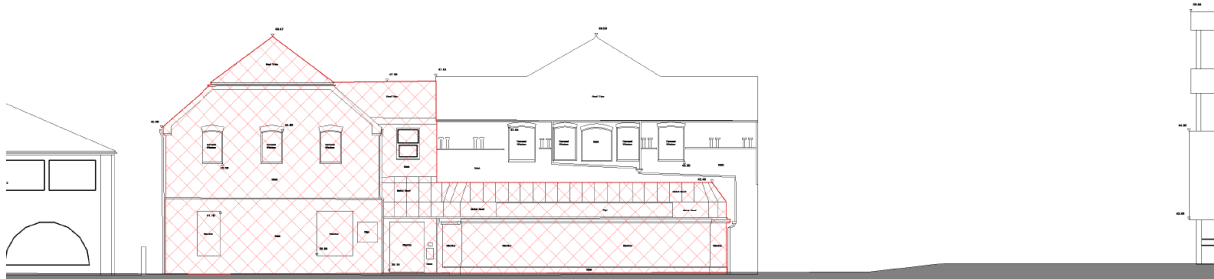
The proposal includes demolition of the southern building facing Caversham Road and part of the corner building facing Caversham Road and Northfield Road. This is highlighted in yellow on the elevations below and the plan opposite.

The existing unoriginal shopfront will be replaced with a new, sympathetic intervention that responds sensitively to the existing building and provides a modern frontage that is suitable for commercial use (pink).



- Key**
- To be demolished
 - To be retained
 - Ground floor facade to be replaced

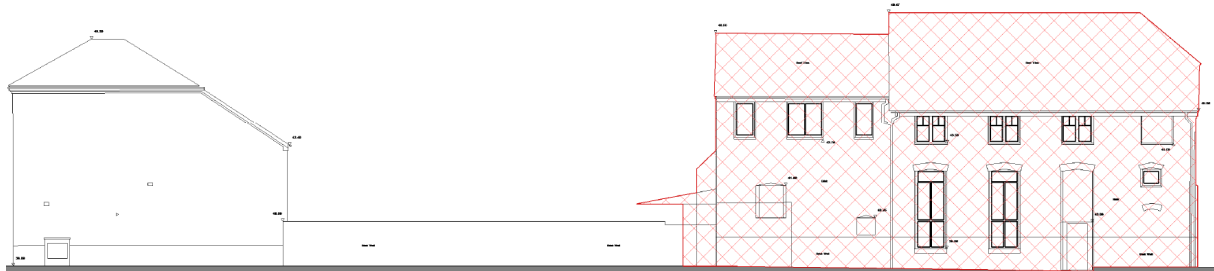
Extract from DAS summarising the extent of demolition and retention works proposed



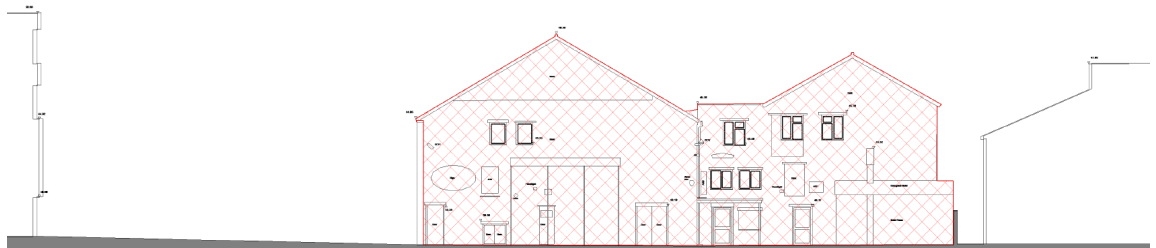
Caversham Road elevation - demolition shown in red



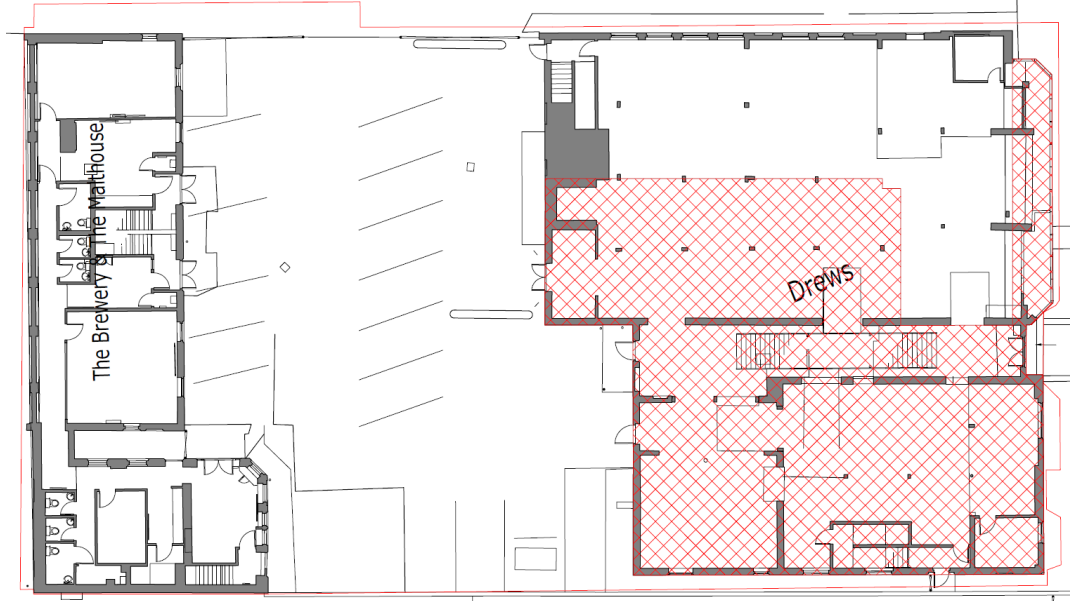
Northfield Road elevation - demolition shown in red



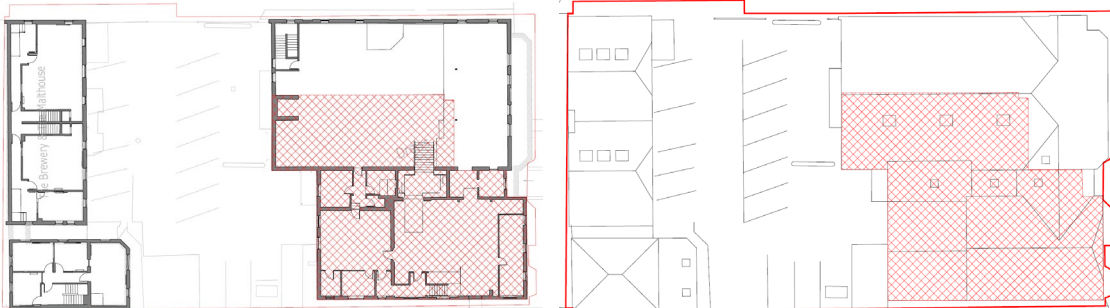
South elevation - demolition shown in red



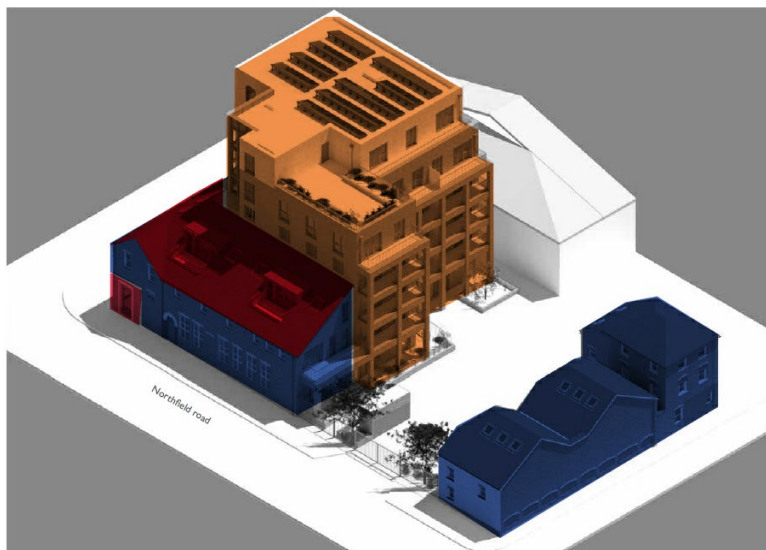
West elevation of building fronting Caversham Road - demolition shown in red



Demolition plans - ground floor (above), first and roof plans (below)



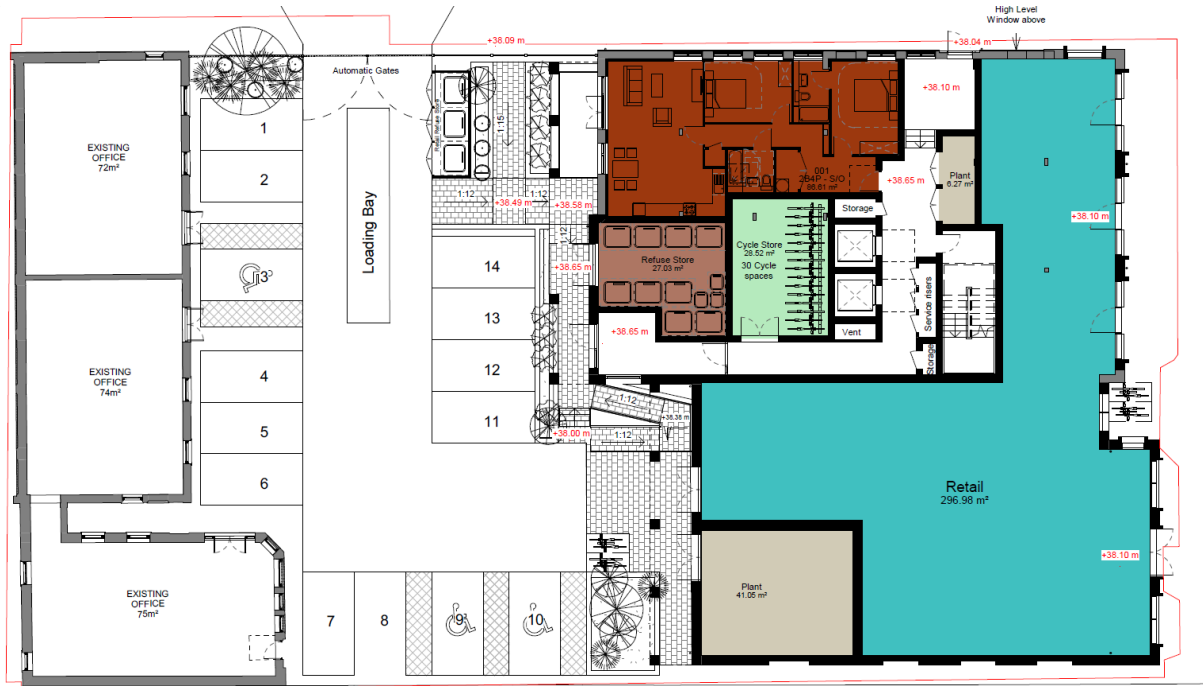
This diagrams highlights which parts of the proposal are new, retained or restored.



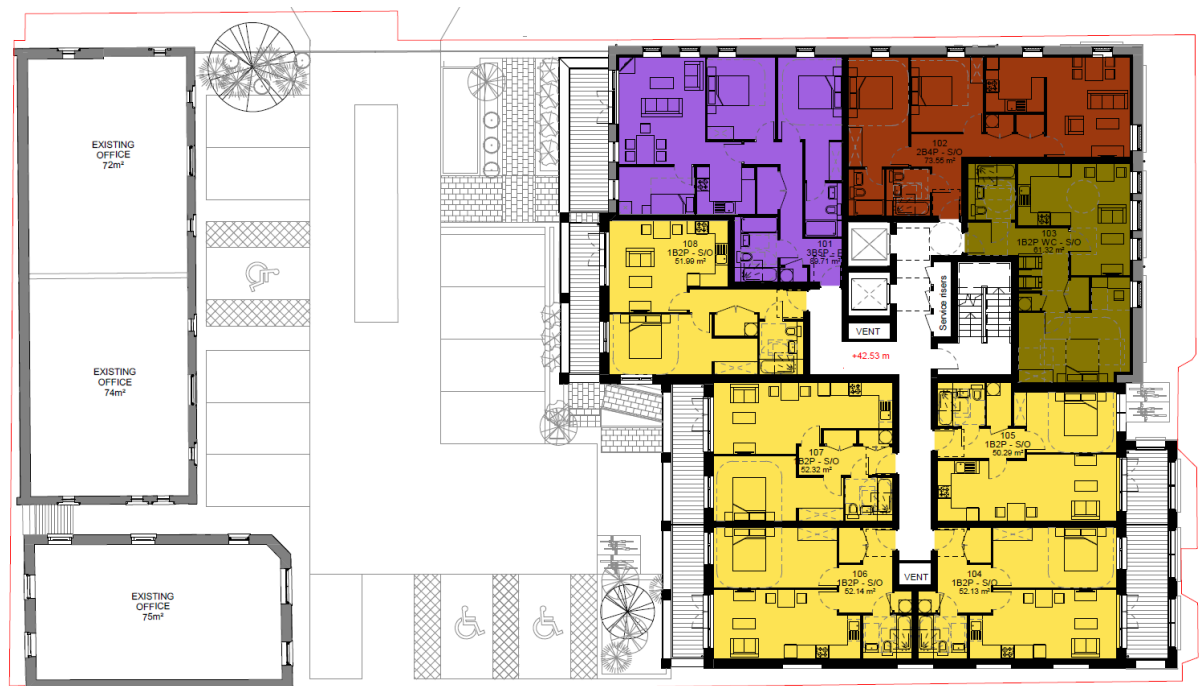
- Key**
- New build
 - Retained
 - Restored

CGI showing the proposals and extent of retention and restoration works

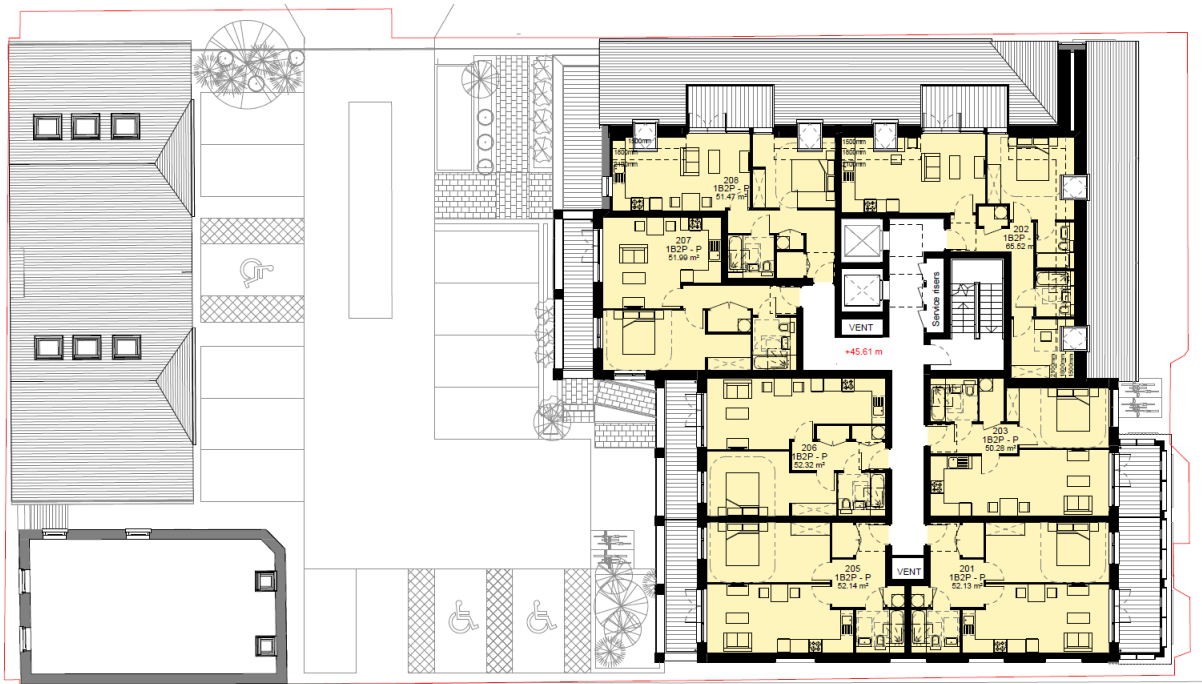
3) Proposed floor plans



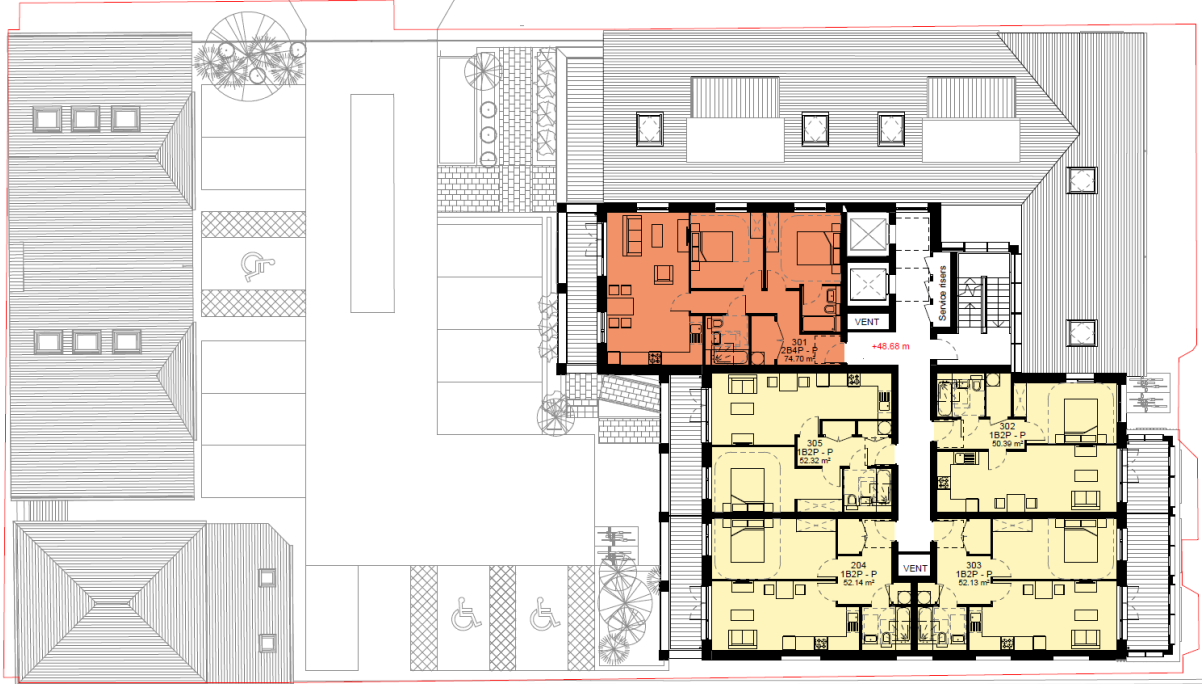
Proposed ground floor plan - retail, 1x2-bed shared ownership affordable housing unit, retained offices, access, parking, waste and landscaping



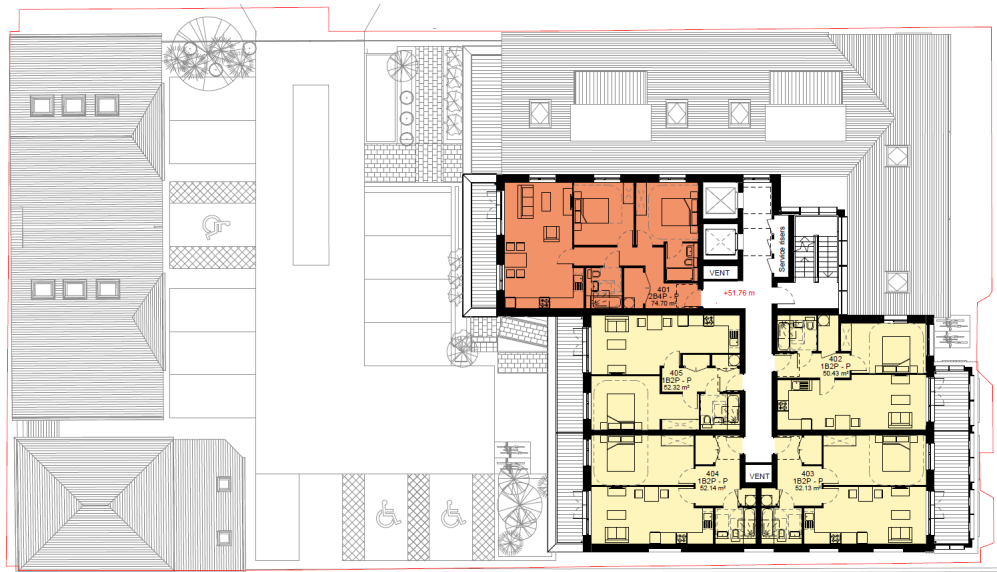
Proposed first floor plan - 6x1-bed and 1x2-bed shared ownership affordable housing units, 1x3-bed market housing unit and existing offices



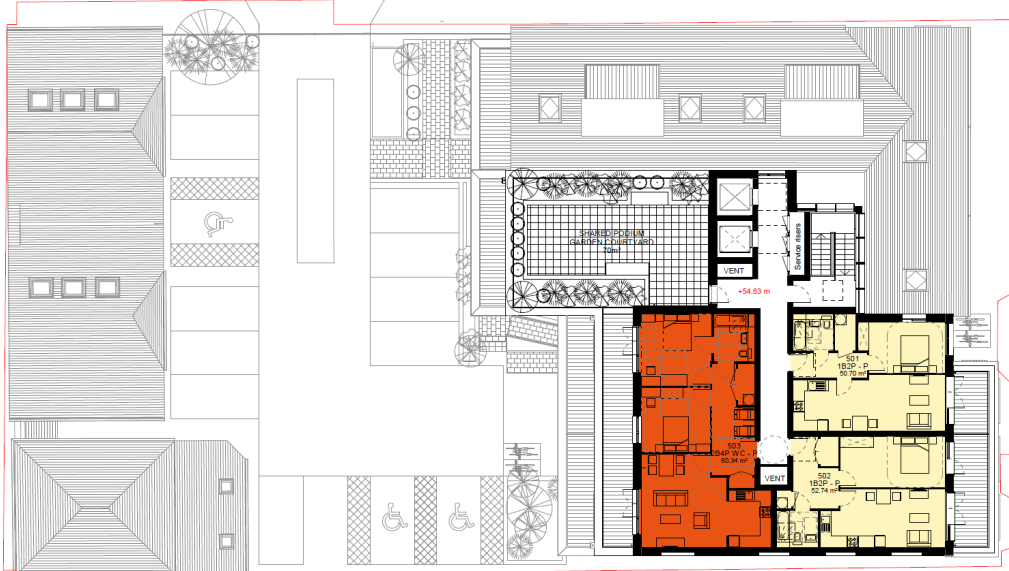
Proposed second floor plan - 7x1-bed market housing units and existing offices



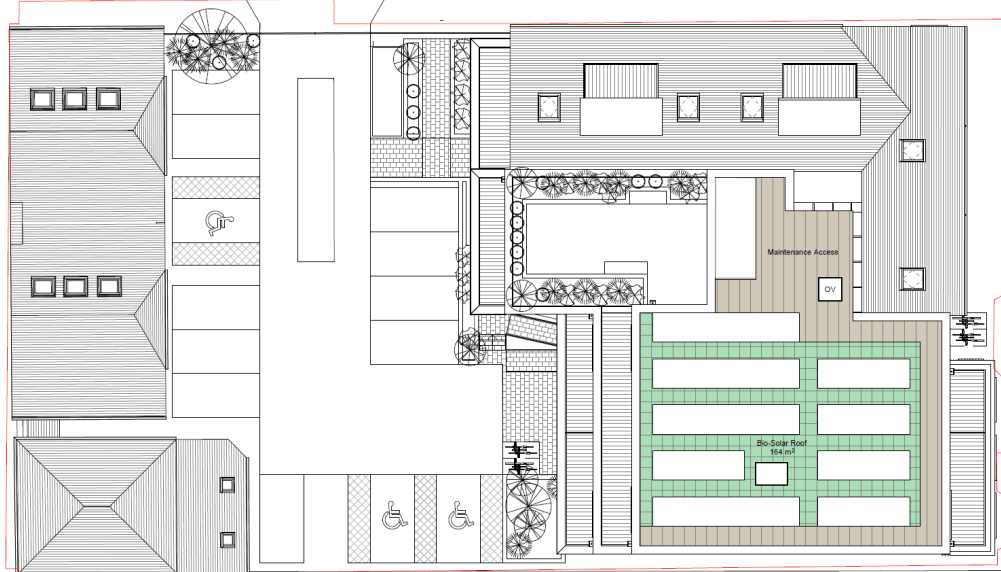
Proposed third floor plan - 4x1 and 1x2-bed market housing units



Proposed fourth floor plan - 4x1 and 1x2-bed market housing units



Proposed fifth floor plan - 2x1 and 1x2-bed market housing units and shared courtyard



Proposed roof plan - Photovoltaics and biodiverse roof

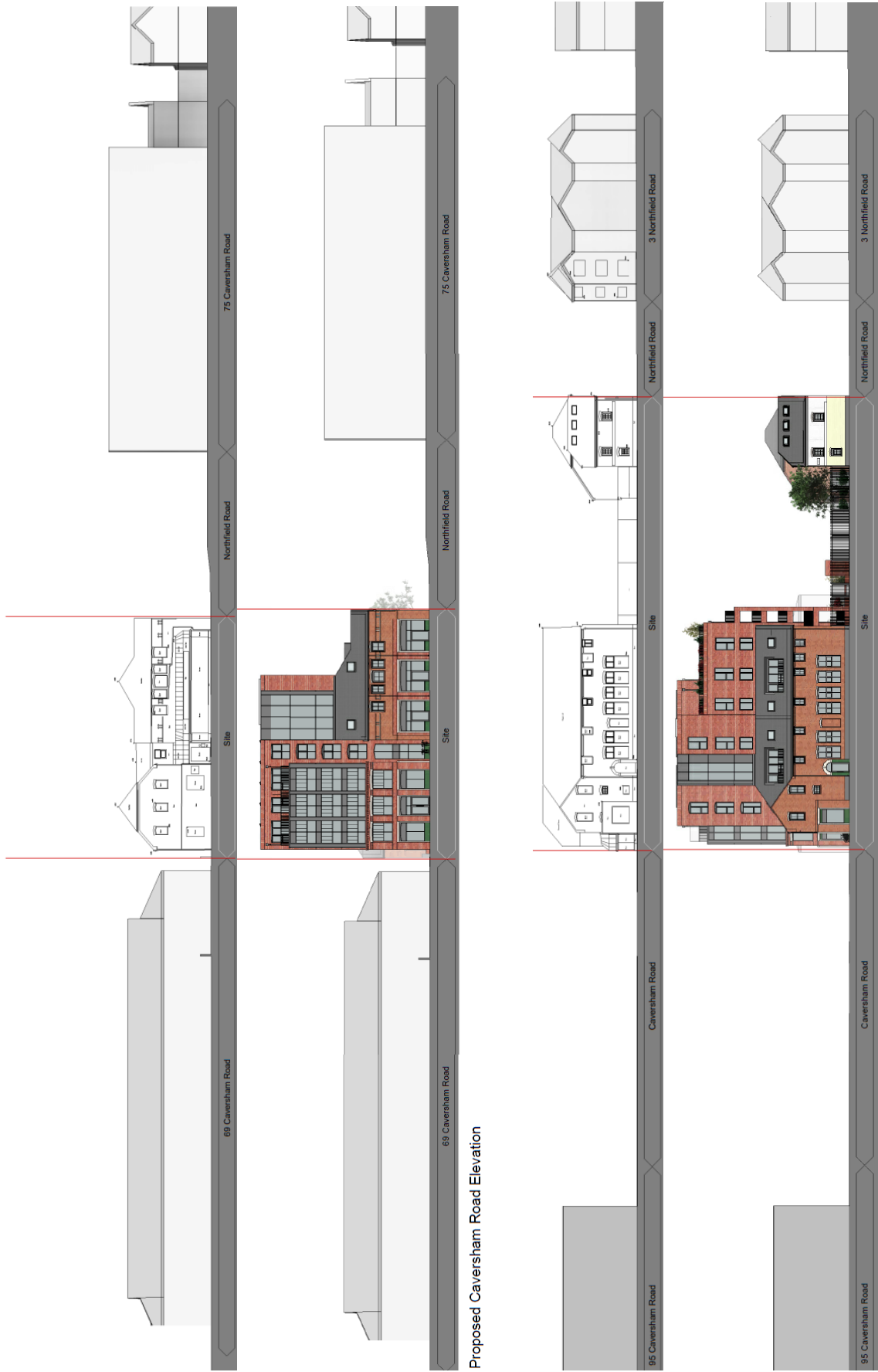
4) Proposed elevations, including existing and proposed streetscene comparisons and proposed CGIs



Proposed Caversham Road elevation



Proposed Northfield Road elevation



Existing and Proposed Caversham Road and Northfield Road street elevations



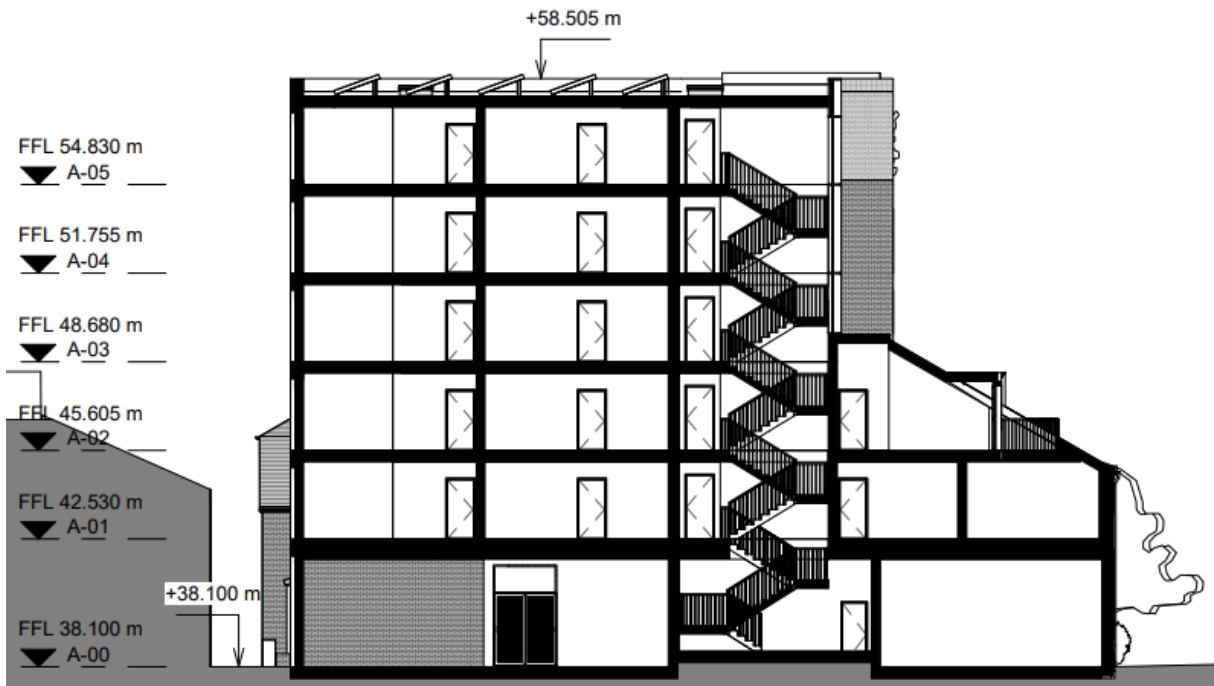
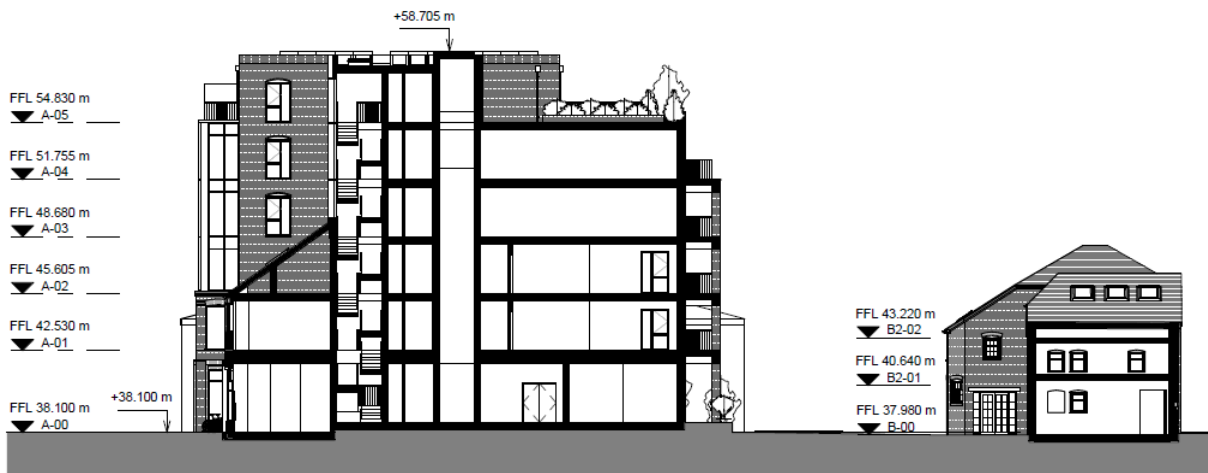
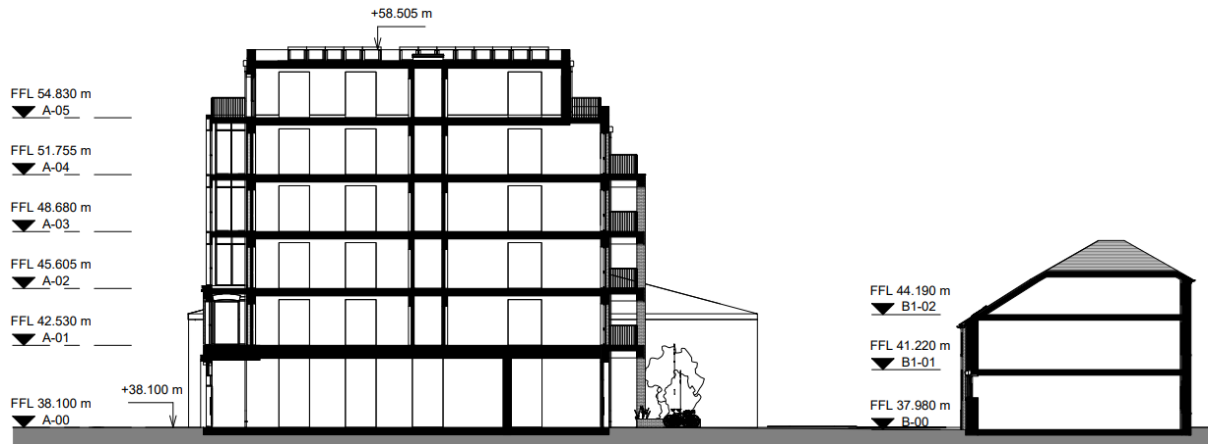
Proposed south and west elevations



CGI from Caversham Road looking south-west showing the junction with Northfield Road



CGI from Northfield Road looking south-east
 (outline of proposed massing of 80 Caversham Road shown in the background - ref 182252)
 5) Proposed sections



6) Proposed Materials Proposed materiality

Red Brick

The former malthouse was built using an orange/red brick in English cross bond. The predominant material in the new extension is red brick. This brick is proposed to be darker than the existing one to provide a clear distinction between the retained and new elements. More detail on the brick choice will be provided at the detailed design stage, however the Wienerberger Chartham Multi brick would be a suitable choice. Common bond is proposed for the new brick as this reflects the new construction and provides a distinct contrast with the English cross bond used on the former malthouse.

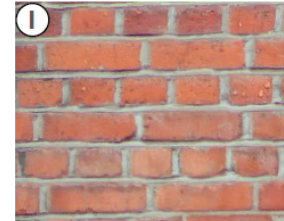
Glazed brick

The existing building uses green glazed brick to frame the former entrance. The scheme proposes to use green glazed brick within the shop front design.

Buff Brick

The existing building utilises buff soldier course headers. The use of buff brick has been proposed to frame the new shop fronts to provide a visual link to the existing detailing.

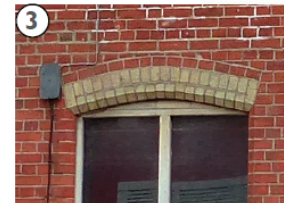
Existing materials to be retained



Orange/red brick in English cross bond



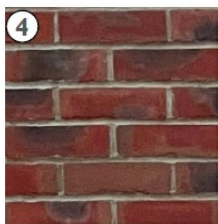
Blue brick banding



Arch buff soldier course headers



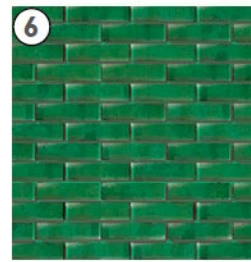
Proposed new materials



Red brick in common bond



Buff brick soldier course



Green glazed brick



Wienerberger Chartham Multi brick with a precedent image of the brick in use above at the Springfield Hospital in Tooting, London.



Existing green glazed brick used

Caversham Road proposed materials

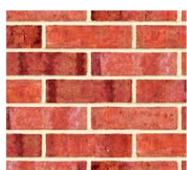


The 3D image opposite illustrates the set back between new extension and existing building.



3D bay image

- New insertion
- Remains as existing



1. Red brick



2. Brick verandas



3. Metal railing



4. Dormer detail with terrace



5. Swift bricks

Extract of proposed Northfield Road / western courtyard elevation materials

7) Changes to the proposed massing in comparison with the dismissed at appeal scheme



Caversham Road (please note that the proposed materials differ to those now proposed)



Northfield Road (above) and south & west courtyard (below) elevations



8) Proposed materials sought at the outset of this application - superseded during the course of the application in November 2022, but shown here for information



9) Refused and dismissed at appeal elevations (part 5, part 7 storeys)



Dismissed at appeal Caversham Road (above) and Northfield Road (below) elevations



10) Comparison of the existing, CGI as proposed (materials have changed) and CGI of the as dismissed at appeal scheme



Existing view from Caversham Road



Proposed massing (buff brick now red brick)



Dismissed at appeal massing



Existing view from Northfield Road



Proposed massing (buff brick now red brick)



Dismissed at appeal massing

11) Appeal decision APP/E0345/W/20/3263270



Appeal Decision

Hearing Held on 24 March 2021

Site visit made on 31 March 2021

by **J P Longmuir BA (Hons) DipUD MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14 May 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/E0345/W/20/3263270

71-73 Caversham Road, Reading, RG1 8JA

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by S2 Caversham Ltd against the decision of Reading Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 191792, dated 5 November 2019, was refused by notice dated 16 October 2020.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of former retail warehouse and erection of a mixed-use building comprising 44 residential units consisting of x5 affordable units, 194sqm of retail floorspace (Use Class A1) at ground floor and associated car parking, cycle parking and landscaping.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The description of development above is taken from the appeal form which tallies with the decision notice.
3. The third reason on the Council's decision notice related to the absence of a Section 106 agreement. However, this was jointly drafted during the appeal process and the wording was finalised at the Hearing, where upon the Council withdrew their objections.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are:
 - the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area and;
 - the effect of the proposal on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset.

Reasons

The effect on character and appearance

5. Caversham Road is a busy and wide main artery through north west Reading, which leads to the town centre. There are wide footpaths along both sides of the road indicating it is a main pedestrian thoroughfare.

<https://www.gov.uk/planning-inspectorate>

6. The site is within a discernible suburban part of Reading, which is west of Caversham Road. To the east is an area of modern commercial buildings on former railway sidings which back onto Reading station and the appeal site is prominent from the train. Northfield Road joins the west side of Caversham Road and the appeal site is on the corner.
7. The appeal site is part of the frontage buildings on the east side of Caversham Road and is segregated from the town centre by a railway viaduct. The frontage has low rise brick warehouse style buildings and an art deco fire station. Continuing northwards, after the Northfield Road junction, the tallest building is a modern storage facility of 3 floors, and thereafter northwards towards Caversham, the architecture is typified by Victorian buildings, two to two and a half storey in height, closely fronting the road.
8. The site is on a prominent corner with Northfield Road, which soon after the appeal site is a residential area. Except for Monmouth Court, an undistinguished modern redevelopment, and the side of the above storage building, Northfield Road is characterised by two storey uniform Victorian terraced houses with elaborate detailing, and small front gardens. The Victorian style is continued west of Northfield Road into the surrounding streets.
9. The appeal site includes two groups of buildings segregated by tarmacked car parking and access. The rear group of buildings are brick, at a height of two and a half storey. These would be retained in their current use as offices, whereas the frontage building would be demolished and replaced with a building of 7 storeys with pitched roofs fronting Caversham Road, dropping to a 5 storey flat roof to the rear.
10. The new building would be substantially taller than the surroundings, particularly in relation to the west side of Caversham Road and Northfield Road where it would appear unduly tall, diverting attention from the street level to a new higher skyline. It would appear dominating and out of scale, more appropriate to an urban centre rather than a suburban location.
11. The perceived height of the building would also be emphasised by its narrow footprint. This would lead to a pronouncedly vertical orientated building.
12. The proposal would drop to 5 storeys towards Northfield Road. However even at that height it would appear out of context. Additionally, the seventh storey element behind would be visible from parts of Northfield Road.
13. The elevations show a distinct ground floor level which would help break up the perception of the height. However, the top two floors would have elongated windows, which would accentuate the perception of height as the eye would follow their long length. Moreover, this effect would be emphasised by window mullions which would be eye-catching details at the highest point.
14. The elevations show that the southern wall of the seven- storey element would be blank. Whilst window outlines would be provided by some reveals, these would offer only very limited relief and interest to the otherwise large and high expanse of walling. Consequently, the building would appear austere and overly dominant when seen from the south.
15. The east side of Caversham Road is allocated for major re-development which is likely to involve some high replacement buildings. This site is the subject of a current application but has yet to be determined. In any event this area has a

different character being composed of large, modern commercial buildings whereas the west side has more traditional style buildings. Caversham Road forms a wide and assertive segregating boundary. This is confirmed by the Council's policy work for the area. Their analysis in the 'Townscape and Planning Constraints', copied in the Icen Heritage and Townscape Assessment, denotes the east side of the Caversham Road as a tall buildings cluster but not the west side. The 2009 Reading Central Area Action Plan shows the rear of the appeal site as a 'transition zone of low residential', whilst major development is only foreseen to the east side of Caversham Road.

16. I therefore conclude that the proposal would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the area.
17. Policy CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan requires high design quality which maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area. The detailed criteria require a positive response to local context and the policy also makes reference to height and scale. Policy EN4 of the above Plan requires that the replacement building draws upon the historical qualities of the previous building. Paragraph 127 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) requires proposals are sympathetic to local character and history. The proposal would be in conflict with these policies.

Non-designated heritage asset

18. The proposal would result in the loss of the frontage buildings, which the Council has recently identified as a non-designated heritage asset, following a submission by the local community. Historic England's Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance 2008 advises on the components of significance: evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal.
19. The existing building has decorative brickwork, a low height with pitched roofs in various materials and notable window openings. It looks like a Victorian warehouse.
20. The site is a landmark due to its corner position, the openness of the street and alignment of Caversham Road. The massing of the buildings is broken into several linked elements which attract the eye, particularly a gable which projects northwards towards the view from Caversham Road. Distinctively large windows on the ground floor address Northfield Road and also suggest an industrial intent.
21. It is evident that the buildings were built between 1871 and 1877 and were designed and built as maltings for the well-known businessman and maltster Dowson. It supplied Simmonds one of the main brewers in Reading who lacked the capacity at the time and capitalised on the demand for barley following the repeal of its taxation.
22. The buildings were only in maltings use for 30 years but brewing was important to Reading, contributing to its social and economic development. Hence the buildings are helpful to show the town's growth and its links to the surrounding countryside which supplied the barley.
23. There have been some alterations to the original buildings. These include a ground floor shop window style projection with a sheet roof, but it is in muted materials and subservient to the front elevation. Some of the windows have been replaced but their openings and the surrounds are intact. Indeed, the

pattern of openings is notable. The roof covering to one part has been replaced by sheeting but that does not detract from a functional industrial appearance and emphasises the broken massing of the roofscape. Part of the rear of one building and the kiln have been lost but the overall shape, form and massing are very evident and readily suggest Victorian industrial buildings. The original use as maltings can be appreciated.

24. The proposal does allow the retention of the rear buildings. However, their setting would be dramatically changed by being adjacent to tall buildings, with no historic connection. Whilst the design is intended to make references to the original buildings' architectural features, the benefit would be denuded by the height of the new building.
25. Architecturally there are similarities between both sets of existing buildings in their height, scale, form, broken massing and distinctive rooflines featuring half hips and full hips. The detailing is similar with cills, arches /window openings, and some painted walls. Furthermore, historically the buildings were part of the same malting operation. Their architectural and historical value is largely as a whole, and the proposal would harm their group value.
26. The historic maps indicate that the building pre-dates much of the residential development on Northfield Road. The repetitive terraces are indicative of workers homes and the industrial buildings at the maltings do not appear out of place. Whilst the building on the corner of Swansea Road/ Northfield Road is permitted for redevelopment, there is a feeling of cohesion and connectivity between the appeal building and the Victorian surroundings.
27. Reference was made by all parties to the brewery buildings elsewhere which show Reading's past, in particular Simmonds at Fobney Street. However, this converted building has an overly fenestrated projecting balcony on its most prominent (eastern) elevation. It is also closely enveloped within an overtly residential looking cul-de-sac. I did not find that this setting evoked much sense of Reading's industrial heritage. In contrast the appeal site is very prominent and has a Victorian industrial appearance.
28. The existing building reflects the values of the Historic England Guidance, in particular, for its historic significance as an identifiable Victorian warehouse, built for the brewing industry and, aesthetic significance for its massing, form and in part detailing, as a landmark on a prominent corner. I therefore conclude that the building has significant significance as a non-designated heritage asset and its loss would harm the historic environment.
29. Policy EN4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan specifically addresses non designated heritage assets. It highlights the need to conserve architectural, archaeological or historical significance which may include the appearance, character and setting of the asset. It states that permission may be granted where the harm or loss are significantly outweighed by the benefits of the development. Policy EN1 of the same Plan covers the historic environment and includes non-designated assets. It seeks to avoid harm in the first instance and if not whether there is clear and convincing justification. Paragraph 197 of the Framework requires that the significance of the non-designated heritage asset is taken into account and a balanced judgement is required. The proposal would be in conflict with these policies.

Other matters

30. I note the submission of the legal agreement, which accords with the Council's requirements to mitigate the impact of a development of this type. It also meets the tests in paragraph 56 of the Framework. The Council at the Hearing stated that this resolved their concerns about the lack of provision for affordable housing, pedestrian/cycle facilities, car club and a skills training scheme. I concur that the submission would satisfy the concerns in the third reason for refusal.

Planning Balance

31. The proposal would provide an economic boost in its construction and indeed the section 106 agreement provides the opportunity of employment skills training. The 44 dwellings would also contribute to housing land supply, although the Council when asked at the Hearing stated that it was meeting its housing land supply requirements, nonetheless that is a minimum target. The proposal would provide 5 affordable dwellings within the development and provide a contribution for provision elsewhere which the Council confirmed could be readily used on their developments. The proposal would make use of a brownfield site, in a location extremely accessible to facilities and services. CIL/recreation payments would be a benefit but to some extent would mitigate the needs of residents rather than be a gain. The proposal would re-create an active frontage which would help vitality and surveillance. However, the carbon emissions saved by the energy efficiency of the new building would be likely to be counter balanced with the loss of the existing. A green wall is proposed but this would be small and have very limited benefit. Cycle priority works at the junction of Northfield Road/Caversham Road are also proposed.

32. However, individually or cumulatively, these benefits do not outweigh the significant harm the proposal would have on the character and appearance of the area and the significance of a non-designated heritage asset.

Conclusion

33. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

John Longmuir

INSPECTOR

LIST OF APPEARANCES

THE APPELLANTS

Sam Berg	Director of S2 Estates
Tom Vernon BA(Hons) Dip TP MRTPI	Director at Quod
Daniel Rech (BA)Hons Dip TP MRTPI	Senior Planner at Quod
Laurie Handcock MA MSC IHBC MCIfA	Director Icen Projects
Dominic Chapman BA(Hons) BArch RIBA	Partner JTP Architects

THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY

Jonathan Markwell BSc(Hons) MSc LRTPI Principal Planning Officer

Bruce Edgar FRSA, IHBC, M.Phil, M.PIA, MICOMOS B.Arch Conservation and Urban Design Officer

INTERESTED PARTIES

Mary Neale MCIFA

Bell Tower Community Association

Evelyn Williams BA(Hons) ACA MBA

Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee

Cllr Tony Page

Reading Borough Council

Cllr Karen Rowland

Reading Borough Council

12) Existing site photographs



From Caversham Road





Northfield Road

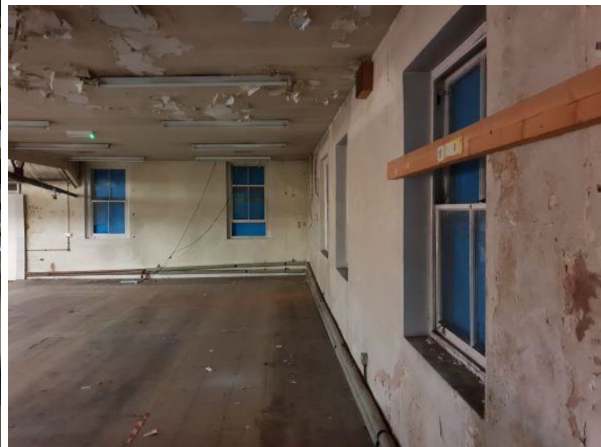


Below: west courtyard elevation

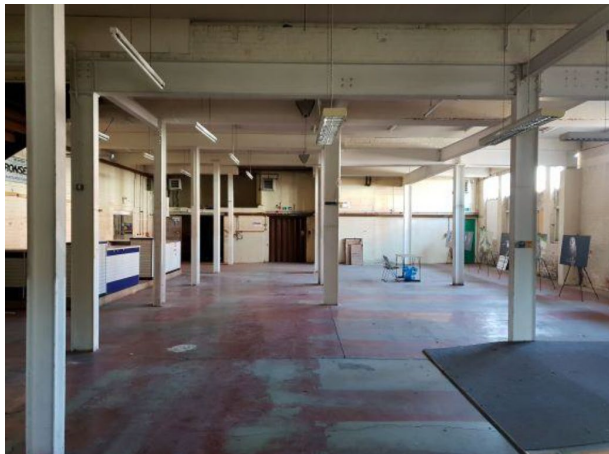




Above: Northfield Road and 'The Brewery' and 'The Malthouse' office buildings



Interior photographs from February 2021 (e.g. above right shows that the first floor eastern end timber framed double hung windows remain)



13) Aerial views of the application site & surrounding area looking south (Google maps)





Looking north



Looking east



Looking west

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