

## COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES  
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL  
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020

**Ward:** Minster

**App No:** 190848/REG3

**Address:** 72 Brunswick Street

**Proposal:** Extension of existing apartment building, conversion of redundant laundry, bin store and cycle storage space to create a one-bedroom apartment and provision of new communal refuse and cycle storage facilities. Resubmission of application 181853

**Applicant:** Reading Borough Council

**Date validated:** 24 May 2019

**Target Date:** 19 July 2019

**Extended deadline:** 29 May 2020

### RECOMMENDATION:

**Delegate to Head of Planning, Development and Regulatory Services to:**

i) GRANT Full Planning Permission, subject to a Unilateral Undertaking, securing the use of the flat for affordable housing purposes or an off-site financial contribution, being entered into by 29 May 2020, unless a later date is agreed.

Conditions to include:

#### Standard

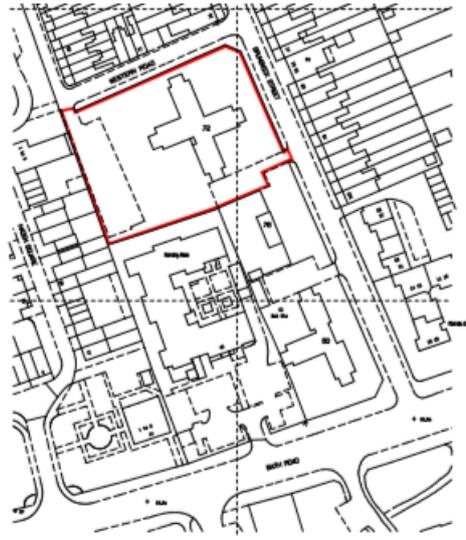
1. Time limit for implementation (3 years)
2. Use of materials (to match existing)
3. Approved plans, including tree protection plan
4. To be used for affordable housing purposes only.
5. Provision/retention of new cycle/bin storage
6. Provision/retention of amended laundry facilities

Informatives to include:

1. Positive and Proactive Statement
2. Terms and conditions
3. Need for Building Regulations approval

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 72 Brunswick Street is an apartment block located on the western side of Brunswick Street. The application site is approximately 60 metres north from the corner of Brunswick Street and Bath Road. Opposite the site, across the road, is the boundary to Downshire Square Conservation Area.
- 1.2 The apartment block has the shape of a plus sign (+). The apartment block is three storeys tall, and the section of this building which is the subject of this application is located on the ground floor on the north-east side of the apartment block (top-right of the '+').



LOCATION PLAN (1:1250)

- 1.3 This previous application 181853 was withdrawn before a positive decision notice was issued. It was withdrawn because the Committee had resolved to grant on the basis that the accommodation, which was below our normal internal space standards, was for occupation for a temporary basis only; as was stated within the design and access statement. This temporary use is no longer proposed and an extension to the property has been included to resolve the internal space concern.

## 2. PROPOSALS

- 2.1 Originally the application sought full planning permission for the conversion of the communal bin store, cycle store and laundry room to a new one-bedroom apartment. The bin stores and cycle stores were proposed to be replaced by creating new external storage facilities for these; however the laundry room would not be replaced.
- 2.2 From consultation response, it became clear that the laundry rooms of the apartment blocks were not “redundant” as stated in the planning application; and therefore through negotiation, new plans were provided.
- 2.3 The amended proposal now provides one small communal laundry room in each apartment block, as well as providing external cycle and bin storage facilities.
- 2.4 The existing layout of the area to be converted consists of three rooms and has two individual accesses. The cycle storage room has its own access, which is accessed from the west, and the bin store and laundry room are accessed from the east. The proposed conversion will include the demolition of the internal wall which separates the cycle storage room from the other rooms in both proposals; and then blocking up one of the doorways. A small extension is proposed to the east to provide additional floorspace to the proposed flat.
- 2.5 Diagrams relating to the proposal can be viewed at the end of this report.

## Assessed Plans

Plan Type	Description	Drawing Number	Date Received
All Plans	Existing & Proposed	16/037/01 Rev D	24 May-19

### Information submitted with the application includes:

- Cover letter
- Plans
  - Location Plan
  - Block Plan (existing & proposed)
  - Elevations (existing & proposed)
  - Floor plans (existing & proposed)
- Design and Access Statement
- CIL form

### 3. PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 App No.181853 - Conversion of redundant bin store, laundry and cycle storage area to create a one-bedroom apartment, new refuse and cycle storage facilities and soft landscaping. Approved at Committee subject to unilateral undertaking but was **withdrawn** on 6 February 2019 because the applicant decided that they did not want it to be used as temporary accommodation.

### 4. CONSULTATIONS

- 4.1 Statutory:  
None

- 4.2 Non-statutory:

4.2.1 **RBC - Transport Development**

*The site is in a highly sustainable location with strong public transport links. A number of regular bus services operate along Bath Road and Tilehurst Road connecting the area with Reading Town Centre.*

*The Council has a Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011) which outlines the required parking provision for various uses in support of Policy CS24. The site is located in Zone 2, where the required parking provision for a one-bedroom apartment is 1no. parking space per unit.*

*No new car parking spaces form part of this proposal. The Design and Access statement states the proposed accommodation will often be used as temporary accommodation. As such, vehicular ownership among future occupants is likely to be very low (if not nil). As such, the actual demand on parking facilities in the surrounding area is unlikely to materially increase.*

*The Council's adopted standards states that a lower parking provision is acceptable providing it will not lead to highway safety issues as a result. Therefore, a survey of the existing car parking conditions in vicinity of the site has been submitted.*

*The car parking surveys indicate that the surrounding residential streets are heavily parked up during evenings and weekends. However, during the survey periods, the potential demand for one additional parking space*

*could be accommodated within the surrounding area. In view of this, the additional demand for parking from the proposed one-bedroom apartment is unlikely to result in an unacceptable impact on highway safety.*

*It is clear that the former store provided cycle parking for the flats. The proposal will see the re-provision of cycle storage lockers near the parking area although the number of lockers will not accommodate the whole site. Therefore, the number of storage lockers should be increased to 8 to meet the demand for the site. Alternatively, Sheffield stands can be provided within a lockable covered store which may be a more cost effective option. However, I am happy to deal with these details by condition.*

*The proposed apartment will share bin storage facilities with the existing residents which is acceptable.*

*In view of the above, there are no transport objections to this application subject to [a] condition.*

4.2.2 **The Waste Operations Team** were consulted on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2019. No response was received, however their comments on the previously submitted application are as follows:

*“181853 - 72 Brunswick Street*

- There...[are] already bin enclosures in place, so this has already gone ahead. The addition of one flat could affect the amount of bins that is needed, so the addition of one more store unit may be necessary to house 2 smaller bins.”*

4.3 Public consultation:

The following addresses were consulted by letter:

- 33 Brunswick Street
- 9 Reservoir Crescent
- All of the flats contained within 72 Brunswick Street

4.3.1 No letters of representation have been received.

## **5. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE**

5.1 National Planning Policy Framework 2019.

5.2 Reading Borough Local Plan 2019:

- CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- CC2: Sustainable Construction and Design
- CC3: Adaptation to Climate Change
- CC6: Accessibility and Intensity of Development
- CC7: Design and the Public Realm
- CC8: Safeguarding Amenity
- H2: Density and Mix
- H3: Affordable Housing-
- H5: Standards for New Housing
- H6: Accommodation for Vulnerable People
- H8: Residential Conversions
- EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
- EN2: Areas of Archaeological Significance

EN4: Locally Important Heritage Assets  
EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network  
TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging

- 5.3 RBC Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents  
“A Design Guide to House Extensions” (2003)  
“Parking Standards and Design” (2011)  
“Residential Conversions” (2013)

## 6. APPRAISAL

- (i) Legal context
- 6.1 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.
- (ii) Main Issues
- 6.2 The main issues are considered to be:
- (i) Principle of Development
  - (ii) Design and impact on the character of the surrounding area
  - (iii) Impact on amenity
  - (iv) Impact upon heritage assets
  - (v) Parking
  - (vi) Affordable Housing
  - (vii) Other Matters
- (i) Principle of Development
- 6.3 The application site lies within the settlement boundary of Reading where the principle of sustainable development/re-development is acceptable, subject to compliance with other relevant policies of the development plan.
- 6.4 Whilst Policy H8 relates to the conversion of existing residential dwellings to apartments, some of its provisions could be applied in this instance. The policy specifically states that proposals for residential conversions will be considered acceptable assuming that the proposed conversion would not have an adverse impact on a variety of factors, including:
- Amenity
  - Character of the surrounding area
  - Intensification
  - Privacy
  - External amenity space
  - On-site parking
  - Bin storage
- 6.5 The National Planning Policy Framework (2019) seeks that all housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 68(c) of the NPPF (2019) states Local Planning Authorities should: “support the development of windfall sites through their policies and decisions - giving great weight to the benefits of using suitable sites within existing settlements for homes”. The Council’s Development Plan equally supports this approach to

residential development subject to compliance with other specific policies concerning the existing use of the site.

- 6.6 The proposal would provide an additional dwelling to the Borough's housing stock. The principle of which aligns with the broad objectives of Policy H1 (Provision of Housing) in assisting meeting annual housing targets; as well as Policy H3 (Affordable Housing). The application site is also situated within a residential area, whereby its location and accessibility is considered to accord with Policy CC6 (Accessibility and the Intensity of Development).
  - 6.7 It should be noted that the previous application had a Committee decision to grant on the basis of a S106 to ensure the flat was only used for temporary periods of time due to its cramped nature.
  - 6.8 As mentioned above, this current application proposes a small extension in order to provide additional floor space for the proposed flat to enable it to meet adopted internal space standards. This therefore allows for the flat to be inhabited on a full-time basis by an occupant. The intention is for the flat to be used solely for people on the Council's Housing Register.
  - 6.9 The principle of the development of the site is therefore acceptable subject to the compliance with any other relevant policy requirements.
- (ii) Design and impact on the character of the surrounding area
- 6.10 The proposal proposes to add a small single storey extension to the current building. It is considered that this extension will not significantly change the external appearance of the apartment block, and all the materials will match the existing apartment block. As such there will not be a detrimental impact upon the surrounding character of the area or the street scene from a design perspective.
  - 6.11 The proposal involves the installation of an external bin storage facility and an external cycle storage facility. The bin store will have an overall height of 1.816 metres, and an overall base depth of 1.33 metres (the roof depth will be 1.4 metres). The overall width of the four unit bin store will be 6.2 metres, which contains four 1.45 metres wide doors. Each door can open 175° and requires a clearance of 1.465 metres. It should be noted that the bin store is already in place.
  - 6.12 The cycle storage units are designed by a company known as 'Velo-Safe'. A bank formed of 7 Velo-Safe Lockers, in an alternating formation so that the triangular shapes interlink with one another will give a front width of 3.9 metres, and a rear width of 3.38 metres. The length will remain 1.9 metres. Both proposals will have seven of these Velo-Safe Lockers.
  - 6.13 These storage facilities for both bins and bicycles are considered to be positioned in reasonable locations and will not have an overbearing impact upon the surrounding area.



Proposed cycle storage lockers.



Bin storage

(iii) Impact on amenity

6.14 The proposal will provide soft landscaping along the northern elevation, which will create a buffer zone from the property and will help to ensure the privacy and amenity of future occupants is protected. This is especially important as the proposed flat is located on the ground floor. The provision of this soft landscaping is looked upon favourably and should be sufficient to overcome any privacy concerns.

6.15 There will not be an adverse impact upon the amenity of neighbouring properties due to overlooking, overshadowing or harm to outlook as a result of the proposed development.

6.16 The previously submitted application raised concerns about the removal of the laundry room, as this was still used by residents.

6.17 This current proposal seeks to re-provide a communal laundry room for residents of the flats, which is considered necessary due to the number of objections received on the previous application specifically relating to the removal of the laundry room. As such this is looked upon favourably.

6.18 Policy CC8 relates to ‘safeguarding amenity’ and states, “*Development will not cause a significant detrimental impact to the living environment of existing or new residential properties, in terms of:*

- *Privacy and overlooking;*
- *Access to sunlight and daylight;*
- *Visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development;*
- *Artificial lighting;*
- *Vibration;*
- *Dust and fumes;*
- *Smell; or*
- *Crime and safety”.*

Policy CC8 can be read in conjunction with Policies H8 and H9. The proposed scheme is considered to safeguard the amenity of future and existing residents.

6.19 Policy H8 seeks to ensure that proposals to convert properties into self-contained flats create no unacceptable adverse impacts to other residential properties such as noise and disturbance, which could arise from element like the number and layout of units proposed and the proximity to other

properties. Further to this, bin and cycle storage should be of an appropriate size and standard for the units proposed and should be located at ground floor level with easy access.

6.20 In addition to this, the minimum gross internal floor areas and storage (m<sup>2</sup>) space standards are:

Number of bedrooms(b )	Number of bed spaces (persons )	1 storey dwellings	2 storey dwellings	3 storey dwellings	Built-in storage
1b	1p	39 (37) <sup>1</sup>			1.0
	2p	50	58		1.5

The proposed flat will have a gross internal floor area of 37.4m<sup>2</sup> and will provide a shower room. The bedroom will be 10.16 square metres, which is also compliant with the Nationally Described Space Standards. As such the proposed flat is considered to be acceptable.

6.21 The proposed scheme complies with Policies CC8, H8 and H9 of the Local Plan (November 2019). There will not be a detrimental impact upon the amenities of neighbouring properties, nor the occupier of the proposed flat.

(iv) Impact upon heritage assets

6.22 Section 16(2) 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.

6.23 Policy EN1 of the Local Plan requires that historic features and areas of historic importance and other elements of the historic environment (including their settings) are to be protected and where appropriate enhanced.

This includes:

- Listed Buildings;
- Conservation Areas;
- Other features with local or national designation, such as sites and features of archaeological importance, and historic parks and gardens.

<sup>1</sup> Notes:

1. Built-in storage areas are included within the overall GIAs and include an allowance of 0.5m<sup>2</sup> for fixed services or equipment such as a hot water cylinder, boiler or heat exchanger.
2. GIAs for one storey dwellings include enough space for one bathroom and one additional WC (or shower room) in dwellings with 5 or more bedspaces. GIAs for two and three storey dwellings include enough space for one bathroom and one additional WC (or shower room). Additional sanitary facilities may be included without increasing the GIA provided that all aspects of the space standard have been met.
3. Where a 1b1p has a shower room instead of a bathroom, the floor area may be reduced from 39m<sup>2</sup> to 37m<sup>2</sup>, as shown bracketed.
4. Furnished layouts are not required to demonstrate compliance

Planning permission should only be granted where development has no adverse impact on historic assets and their settings. All proposals will be expected to protect and where appropriate enhance the character and appearance of the area in which they are located.

6.24 The application site is not located within a conservation area, nor is it listed; however, the site does lie relatively close to the Downshire Square Conservation Area and the Grade II listed building of the Water Tower at 42 Bath Road.

6.25 Due to the location of the extension proposed and the minor external alterations, it is considered that there will not be any detrimental impact upon the views of the Conservation Area or the setting of the Listed Building and therefore no harm to heritage assets as a result of permitting this application. The application is therefore considered to comply with Policy EN1.

(v) Transport/Parking

6.26 As existing 72 Brunswick Street has an external area for the storage of four bins. As for cycle storage, as existing there is room in the cycle store room to lock six bicycles to the wall, however, while the room is capable of storing more than six bikes there is no facility to secure them directly to the wall. The proposed cycle storage 72 Brunswick Street will be located to the east of the proposed flat, and north of the existing (and proposed) external bin storage facilities. The cycle storage facilities will comprise of individual cycle lockers (Velo-Safe), which are formed from interlocking cone shapes. There are proposed to be seven of these cycle lockers.

6.27 The full comments from Reading Borough Council's Transport Officer can be viewed above in the 'consultations' section.

6.28 To summarise, there are no transportation concerns, with the addition of a condition to re-provide cycle parking.

6.29 The condition suggested, is for plans of the cycle stores. However, it is considered that the proposed Velo-Safe lockers are sufficient without plans needing to be submitted. As such this condition will not be put on, but a different condition will be added to ensure that seven Velo-Safe lockers are provided in the location shown on the proposed block plan.

(vi) Affordable Housing & CIL

6.30 Policy H3 applies when proposals will create a new dwelling and normally an off-site financial contribution is secured for site with less than 10 dwellings. In this case the applicant is Reading Borough Council with the intention to use the dwelling to provide additional affordable housing for local people. This would usually be secured via a Unilateral Undertaking as is recommended. An off-site contribution clause is recommended to cover the unlikely situation of the on-site provision not coming forward.

6.31 CIL would apply to the proposal, subject to the usual reliefs or exemptions set out in the CIL Regulations. The CIL charge would be £5,878.53

(vii) Other Matters

6.32 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.

6.33 There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups have or would 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.

*Disabled Access*

6.34 The proposed flat is at ground floor, and the door is wide enough (30 inches) for a wheelchair to enter. This is deemed acceptable.

*Energy*

6.35 The Design & Access statement says; “*Compliance with building control will ensure that the insulation and revised openings are in accordance with current energy efficiency guidelines and confirm that the development is in accordance with CS1 of the development plan*”. This is deemed acceptable.

## **7. PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSION**

7.1 The proposed development will involve a minor extension, which will not cause any detrimental harm to the character of the area or the street scene as a result of permitting planning permission. In addition to this, heritage assets in the local vicinity will not be impacted as a result of the proposal.

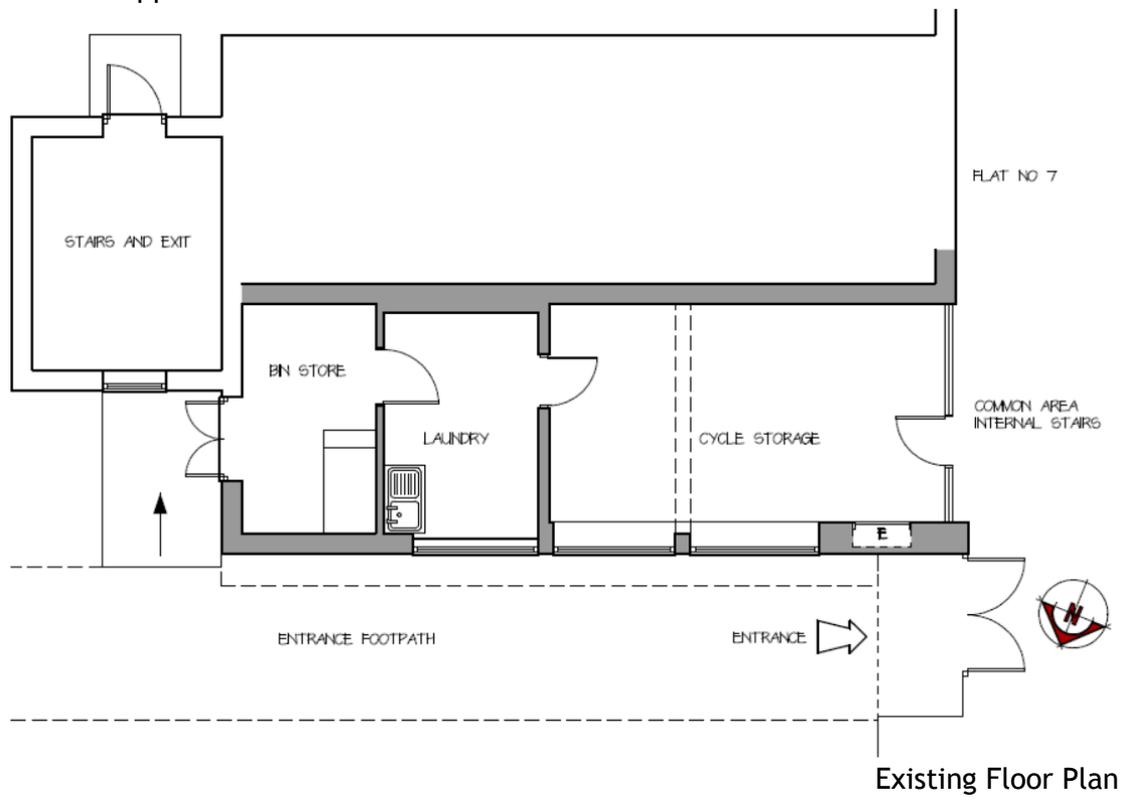
7.2 From an amenity perspective, the flat meets the standards set out in national guidance and will be used for the purposes of affordable housing. As such it is considered that any residents of the flats will not be negatively impacted as a result of living here.

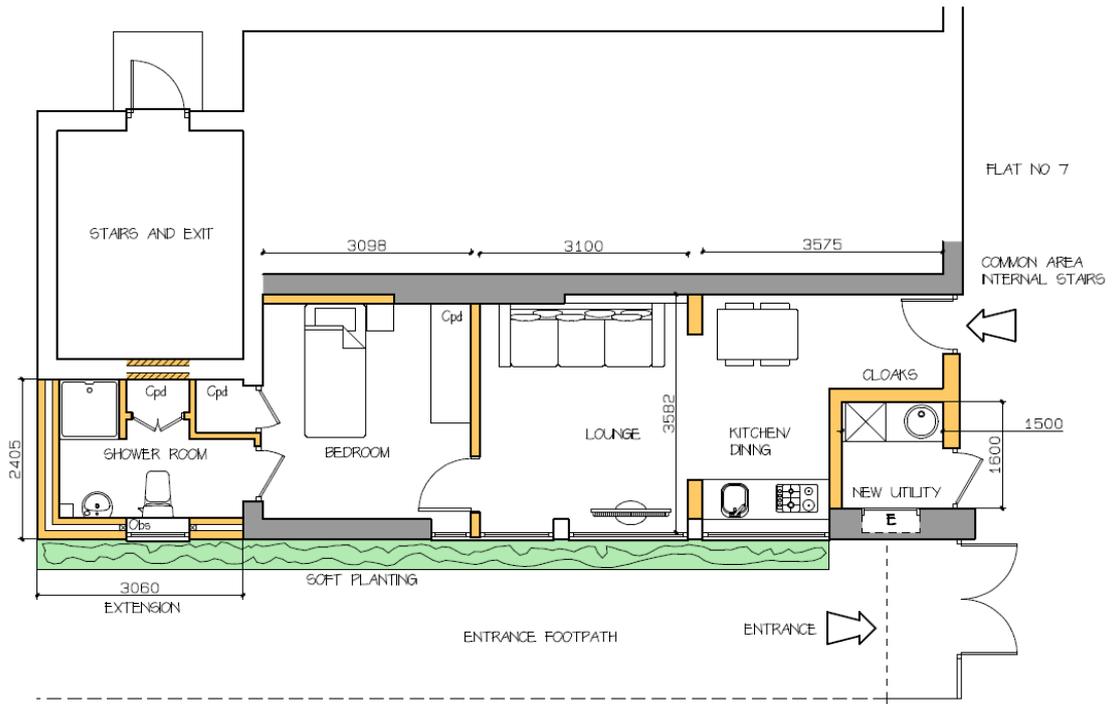
7.3 The proposed development is considered acceptable in planning terms and respects the Equality Act 2010. As such the Officer recommendation is to grant planning permission subject to conditions.

Case Officer: James Overall



Application site





Proposed Floor Plan



Existing Northern Elevation

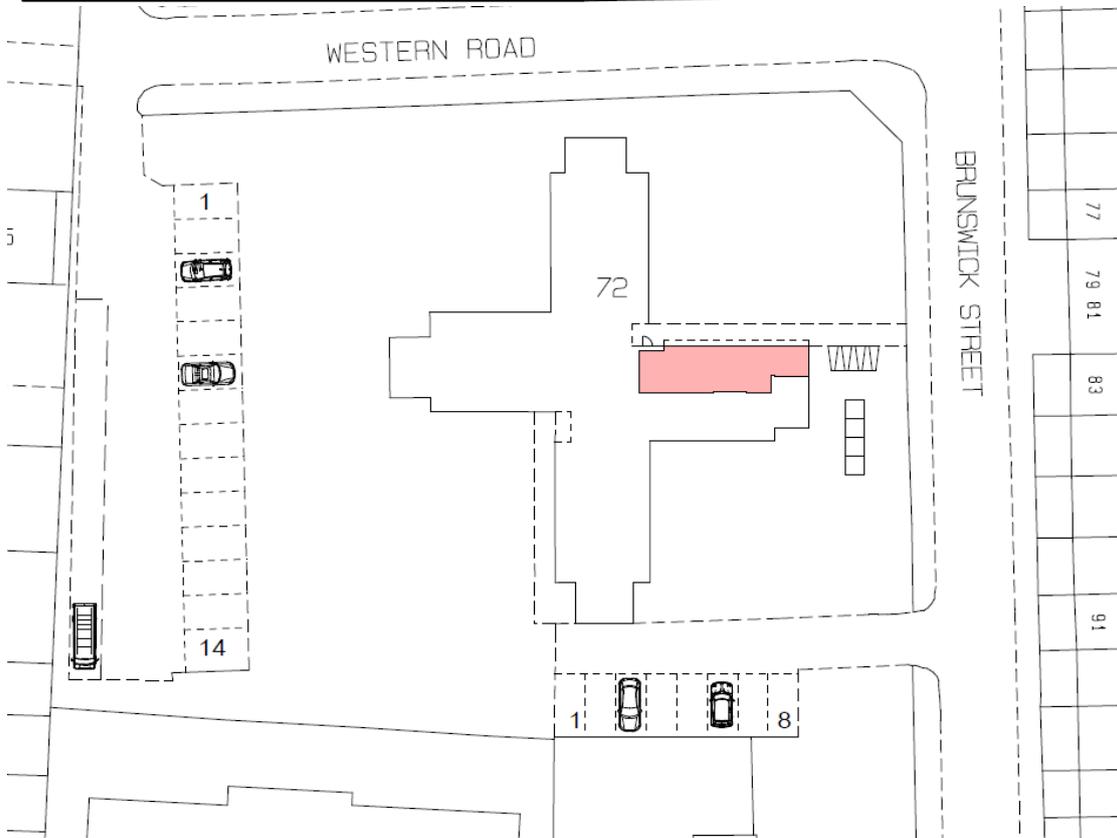


Proposed Northern Elevation

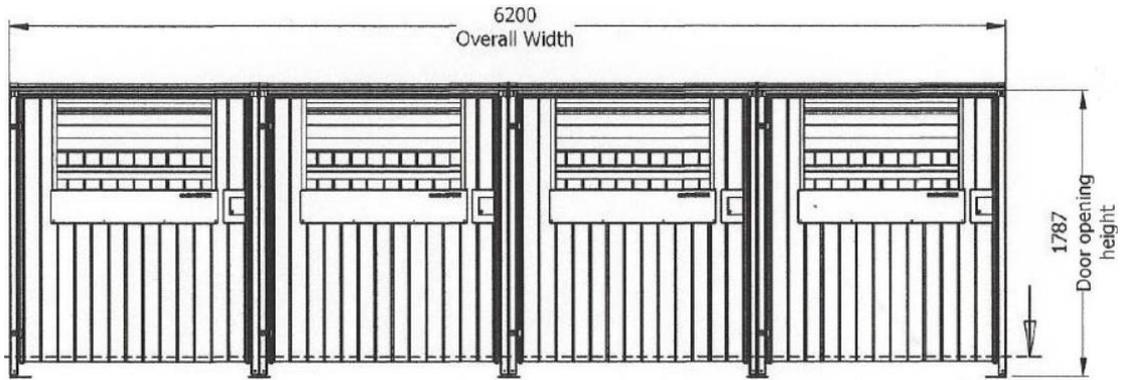


Existing Eastern Elevation

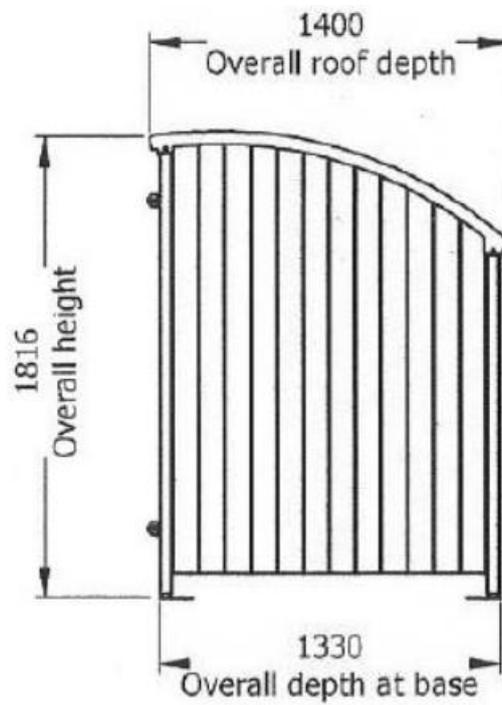
Proposed Eastern Elevation



Proposed Site Plan



Front elevation of proposed bin store



Side elevation of proposed bin store