

COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

ITEM NO. 8

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 5 December 2018

Ward: Abbey

App Nos.: 181652/REG3 & 181653/REG3

Address: Former Reading Family Centre, North Street/Weldale Street, Reading

Proposals:

181652/REG3: Outline - erection of a 2.5, 3.5 and 4.5 storey building comprising 47 apartments (including 30 per cent affordable housing) in a mix of one, two and three-bedroom units. Landscaping, cycle and car parking with associated works (all matters reserved except layout and means of access).

181653/REG3: Outline - erection of a 2.5, 3.5 and 4.5 storey building comprising 47 apartments for affordable housing in a mix of one, two and three-bedroom units. Landscaping, cycle & car parking with associated works (all matters reserved except layout and means of access).

Applicant: Lochailort Thames Quarter Ltd.

Date received: 10 October 2018

Major Application 13 week target decision date: 9 January 2019.

RECOMMENDATION

Subject to the completion of (a) satisfactory Section 106 legal agreement(s) (Heads of Terms for each application as set out below), delegate to the Head of Planning, Development and Regulatory Services (HPDRS) to GRANT planning permission by 9 January 2019, but otherwise the REFUSE planning permission, unless the HPDRS gives his approval to any extension of time to allow this/these agreements to be completed.

181652/REG3:

1. The development shall provide no more and no less than 47 units
2. Not less than 30% of the units hereby permitted shall be provided as social-rented affordable housing (unit split to be to LH Authority approval). All units to be provided/transferred to the Council/Registered Housing Provider no later than first occupation of any open market unit. All units to be used only as affordable housing in perpetuity.
3. Car club contribution (level to be advised)
4. Provision of a construction phase Employment and Skills Plan, or payment in lieu (level to be advised)

181653/REG3:

1. The development shall provide no more and no less than 47 units
2. Not less than 100% of the units hereby permitted shall be provided as social-rented affordable housing (unit split to be to LH Authority approval). All units to be provided/transferred to the Council/Registered Housing Provider no later than substantial completion of the development. All units to be used only as affordable housing in perpetuity.
3. Car club contribution (level to be advised)
4. Provision of a construction phase Employment and Skills Plan, or payment in lieu (level to be advised)

Conditions (pertinent to both applications) to include:

1. TL1 Three year time limit
2. Outline matters to be approved
3. Outline matters time limit
4. AP1 Approved plans
5. 3D Parameter plan controls: as shown on supplied plans
6. Submission of materials (including window noise suppression details)
7. Submission of a ventilation strategy (reason: for ventilation, given noise strategy requires closed windows to achieve suitable internal noise levels)
8. CO2 No commencement before submission of a Construction Method Statement
9. No commencement before submission and approval of a Security Strategy, implementation before first occupation
10. L1 Landscaping scheme, include native species, permeable paving
11. Landscaping: implementation (std)
12. Landscaping: maintenance/replacement within five years if failed
13. Contaminated land 1: site characterisation
14. Contaminated land 2: remediation report
15. Contaminated land 3: implementation
16. Contaminated land 4: unforeseen contamination
17. Constructed in accordance with noise report
18. SUDS 1
19. SUDS 2
20. NStd Provision of an electric vehicle charging point
21. DC1 Vehicle parking in accordance with approved plans
22. DC2 Vehicle access in accordance with approved plans
23. DC5 Cycle parking
24. DC5 Bin storage
25. DC7 Parking permits 1
26. DC8 Parking permits 2
27. Sustainability measures: written evidence that at least 50% of the dwellings/development to achieve at least a 19% improvement in the dwelling emission rate over the target emission rate, as per Part L of Building Regulations (2013).

Informatives (pertinent to both applications):

- Positive and proactive
- Terms and conditions
- Discharging conditions
- No parking permits
- S59 Highways Act

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The application site is rectangular and extends to 0.23 hectares and currently vacant, except for some informal parking occurring on an area of hardstanding, scrub and trees. The site sits on the North-West corner of the T-junction of Weldale Street with North Street and falls gently from South to North. It contains trees towards the Southern and Western boundaries (including a mature Norway Maple in the South-East corner), scrub and hardstanding. To the South of the site is Stratheden Place, a residential cul-de-sac of flats and houses. To the South-East is the Iceland/Wickes site, which has recently gained planning permission for a residential redevelopment. To the West is Burford Court, a three storey housing association scheme, which is set down into its site, such that it appears much lower

onto the frontage of Weldale Street. To the North of the site is an ambulance station. On the opposite side of North Street to the East are industrial units (Nos. 12-14 and 16. There is a current planning application for a residential redevelopment of No. 16, ref. 181290/FUL which is currently pending and is expected to reported to your January meeting).

- 1.2 The site has previously been in use as the Berkshire County Council social services facility and was more recently the temporary location for what is now the Civitas Academy, which has since re-located to a permanent site on Great Knollys Street. The site is allocated for residential purposes in the adopted RCAAP as site RC4b for residential development of 25-40 dwellings.

The red line area of these planning applications



2. PROPOSAL

- 2.1 Two very similar outline planning applications have been submitted. 181652 proposes a policy compliant level of affordable housing (i.e. 30% on-site) ('the 30% scheme') and 181653 is for 100% affordable housing ('the 100% scheme').
- 2.2 Both of these applications propose a varied height block of a maximum of 4½ storeys, with a 3½ storey element westwards of Weldale Street and then down to 2½ storeys to the site edges in a mix of one, two and three-bedroom units. Landscaping, cycle and car parking with associated works. The application is in Outline, with matters of Layout (siting) and Means of Access being applied for and therefore matters of Scale, Appearance and Landscaping would be reserved for later approval, were either scheme to be pursued.
- 2.3 These applications are approximately the same, although one would supply 30% affordable housing (i.e. a CS15 policy compliant level); and the other is for 100% affordable housing, which would normally indicate that it would be developed by a Registered Provider or Council-provided scheme.
- 2.4 The applications have been submitted in accordance with the s106 planning obligations on Lochailort, the then owner/developer of the Thames Quarter scheme (permission 162166/FUL to provide 315 dwellings, currently under construction by others on the former Cooper Reading BMW site, Kings Meadow Road). That

development contains no on-site affordable provision, however, the Section 106 agreement requires the submission of these applications in order to ascertain the value of the site and prove its capacity/suitability as a ‘surrogate’ affordable housing scheme. The amount of units the site can produce also has a bearing on the amount the developer must pay the Council for every unit in default of the 56 units which the Thames Quarter development is expected to provide by this surrogate site. In reality, neither of these schemes is likely to be built out, but an approval would allow the developer to discharge their requirements and for the site to be transferred to a Registered Provider who will design and build a suitable scheme, to meet the housing needs of the Borough.

Proposed site layout



2.5 These applications are being reported to your meeting because they are in the Major category. Members should also note that although these are outline applications, the Council also has an interest in these applications and therefore they have been noted as ‘REG3’ applications.

2.6 Supporting information with the applications includes:

- Design and Access Statement
- Planning Statement
- CGI views (indicative)
- Sections through the building and indicative floorplates
- Tree survey/site survey
- Indicative landscaping plans
- Noise statement
- Air quality statement
- Sustainability statement
- Geotechnical report of survey
- SUDS strategy
- CIL form

3. PLANNING HISTORY

3.1 A planning history search of the site for the last 30 years has produced the table below:

Application ref.	Description	Decision
880059/FUL	[various alterations to Reading Family Centre]	PERMISSION 8/2/1989
141626/REG3	A new temporary school of modular construction, single storey and flat roofed. New fencing and gates to site perimeter. New hardstanding for car and cycle parking, and pupil hard play.	PERMISSION 7/1/2015
150603/APPCON	Application for approval of details reserved by condition. (141626)	CONDITIONS DISCHARGED 8/6/2015

3.2 Following the removal of the temporary school, the site is considered to have a 'nil' planning use. These planning applications have been the subject of pre-application discussions with your officers for approximately one year.

4. CONSULTATIONS

RBC Transport Strategy: subject to the development contributing towards providing a car club, an electric vehicle charging point and various conditions (conditions set out in the Recommendation above), no objections are raised.

The **RBC Natural Environment Team (Tree Officer)** advises that tree issues were discussed at length during pre-application discussions and it was agreed that the felling of all trees, except the Norway Maple on the corner, would be acceptable due to various issues with the trees, providing that sufficient information on protecting the single tree and a mitigating planting scheme was submitted. However, her initial response is that the proposals are lacking. At the time of writing, the applicant is seeking to provide further information on these points, (see the Landscaping and Amenity section below for a full discussion).

The **RBC Ecologist** advises that this is an urban area and the site comprises hardstanding (in the centre of the site, where previously was a building), a car park at the eastern end, and a strip of trees along the south boundary and scrub. As such, it is considered unlikely that the proposals will affect bats or other protected species and there are therefore no objections on ecological grounds.

RBC Head of Asset Management (Valuers): has noted the submission of the applications in relation to the requirements of the s106 agreement of the Thames Quarter scheme.

RBC Housing Development Manager: no objections in principle. There is clearly limited detail as to how the 30% affordable application would work (in terms of split by property size or practically within the block) - both of which would need to be resolved as part of any S106. The 100% affordable proposal allows this to be the 'surrogate' affordable housing site for Thames Quarter. The eventual development of the site for affordable purposes may ultimately not look like this proposal, but would reflect the Borough's housing priorities.

The **RBC SUDS Manager** advises that the proposed SuDs scheme is acceptable in principle, subject to conditions.

RBC Environmental Protection has raised concerns for the noise environment, which stems from noise from the ambulance station, although closing the windows would allow for suitable noise mitigation, although a ventilation system would therefore be required by condition. Further conditions are requested for a CMS, standard hours of working and no bonfires. A response on the Geotechnical Report is awaited and will be reported to your meeting.

The **Thames Valley Police Crime Prevention Design Advisor (CPDA)** advises that this edge of town centre area and the way the layout is shown raises some detailed concerns about the development. See Design section of the Appraisal below.

The Reading **Design Review Panel** reviewed this scheme on two occasions (January 2018 and September 2018). Whilst the general massing and form was considered to be supportable, the Panel had concerns with some of the design detail. The Panel's thoughts are summarised in the Design section of the Appraisal below.

Public consultation

Four site notices were displayed around the perimeter of the site. One response has been received to date but any further responses that are received will be reported to your meeting.

One local resident has asked whether the established trees on the site shall be preserved.

5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

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

5.2 The application has been assessed against the following policies:

5.3 National

National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF (2018)
Planning Policy Guidance - PPG (2014 onwards)

5.4 Reading Borough Local Development Framework - Adopted Core Strategy (2008) (Altered 2015)

CS1 Sustainable Construction and Design
CS2 Waste Minimisation
CS3 Social Inclusion and Diversity
CS4 Accessibility and the Intensity of Development
CS5 Inclusive Access
CS7 Design and the Public Realm
CS9 Infrastructure, Services, Resources and Amenities
CS14 Provision of housing
CS15 Location, Accessibility, Density and Housing Mix
CS16 Affordable Housing
CS20 Implementation of the Reading Transport Strategy
CS22 Transport Assessments
CS23 Sustainable Travel and Travel Plans
CS24 Car / Cycle Parking
CS32 Impacts on Community Facilities
CS34 Pollution and Water Resources

- CS35 Flooding
- CS36 Biodiversity and Geology
- CS38 Trees, Hedges and Woodlands

5.5 Reading Central Area Action Plan (2009)

- RC4b Other opportunity sites: Reading Family Centre, North Street
- RC5 Design in the Centre
- RC9 Living in the Centre

5.6 Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012) (Altered 2015)

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

New Local Plan (Draft Reading Borough Local Plan): site is also identified as CR14b FORMER READING FAMILY CENTRE, NORTH STREET.

5.7 Reading Borough Council Supplementary Planning Documents

- Affordable Housing SPD (2013)
- Employment, Skills and Training SPD (2013)
- Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011)
- Revised SPD on Planning Obligations under Section 106 (2015)
- Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2011)

5.8 Other relevant documentation

- Reading Tree Strategy (2010)
- DCLG Technical housing standards - nationally described space standard (2015)

6. APPRAISAL

6.1 The main issues are considered to be:

- (i) Principle of a residential use
- (ii) Design (proposed and indicative)
- (iii) Landscaping and amenity spaces
- (iv) Layout, pattern of development and neighbour amenity
- (v) Amenity of the residential units
- (vi) Transport
- (vii) Affordable housing considerations
- (viii) Sustainability

(i) Principle of a residential use

6.2 Although the site has historically been in community-type uses over an extended period, these have now ceased and the temporary school has now been provided a

short distance away on its permanent site. The site is also allocated in both the RCAAP and the emerging local plan for residential redevelopment. These documents give broad unit delivery ranges, but officers identify no conflicts with the applications in terms of Policy CS31, Policy RC4b or emerging Policy CR14b. The sections below examine the proposal in terms of its acceptability in design terms.

(ii) Design (proposed and indicative)

- 6.3 As the Proposal section above explains, neither of these applications are likely to be realised; nevertheless it is important that a full and comprehensive planning assessment is made and if resolving to grant planning permission, the Committee must be satisfied that all aspects of these proposals are acceptable and this firstly needs to be in terms of unit numbers which can be accommodated; but also various details, to ensure that there is no 'slip' of these numbers. Any such slippage would affect the value of the site, which these applications are designed to gauge.
- 6.4 In these outline applications, matters of 'Layout' and 'Access' are being specifically applied for only. This means the building footprint, external layouts and the way in which the development is serviced by car access, cycle access and pedestrian access. Matters of Appearance, Scale and Landscaping would be reserved for later approval (if pursuing either scheme).
- 6.5 In terms of Layout, the building has an L-shaped footprint, with a concave/inward curve towards the junction of Weldale Street and North Street to allow the retention of the Maple tree. The frontal building line reflects that of Burford Court on Weldale Street and on North Street, the building is set back some eight metres, to allow for parking spaces, paths and landscaping. The blocks then extend along the road frontages. In general terms, this is considered to be an efficient and also logical layout, allowing front entrance and frontal defensible amenity space, but also a shared communal garden to the rear.
- 6.6 This site is on the edge of the town centre, with the high/dense Chatham Place development in close proximity and the future redevelopment of the former Iceland/Wickes site likely to result in a transformation of the area from one with a retail/commercial feel to a more intensive, urban, residential feel. The proposed block nearest Stratheden Place in the Iceland/Wickes development would be five storeys and flat-roofed, although then steps up further East to eight storeys. The designation of the application site as an RCAAP 'opportunity site' is a reflection of the need for this site to make its contribution to this urbanisation. The purpose of these applications is then to provide an appropriate scale of development.
- 6.7 The RCAAP allocation for site RC4b is between 25-40 units, but this is a guideline range only. In seeking to achieving this number of units (47), the applicant has been asked to provide a certain level of detail to demonstrate suitability of building massing and form.
- 6.8 The overall massing is taller towards the junction and then steps down towards the site edges West and North, to allow a suitable transition with Burford Court (which is lower) and the ambulance station (roughly equivalent to two storeys). On the North Street elevation, efforts have been made for the development to work with the site levels and although the floorplates are level, the northerly element appears to be at a lower level.
- 6.9 In terms of Scale, whilst this is not being specifically applied for in these outline applications, it is important that a suitable indication of a density/massing is provided. Indicative elevations are provided which show a building which has four storeys plus accommodation in the roof (with rooflights/dormers) at its highest

point towards the junction. Along Weldale Street, the massing drops to four storeys, then 3.5 storeys, then two storeys and finally, a large bin/bike store. On the north Street frontage, the massing drops to 3.5 storeys nearest the ambulance station.

- 6.10 A contemporary design solution is indicated, although of course, it would be for the Reserved Matter of Appearance to secure this. Nonetheless and despite the Design Panel's reservations about this approach, officers feel that the strong residential entrances, clear levels definitions and traditional materials are all appropriate to this rather transitional residential area. Whilst Burford Court and Stratheden Place are established residential brick developments, proposals are yet to materialise on the former Iceland/Wickes site and the realisation of any residential redevelopment on land to the North and East of the site may be some time away. Officers feel that the indicative design philosophy is strong enough, but equally, the building envelope could allow for a more traditional approach (possibly echoing the Victorian terraced streets further West), if that was considered more appropriate. The Design Panel's view was that although the overall design concept was supportable, in their view the design was blend of traditional and contemporary which in their view does not work. Your officers disagree and are content that such a design solution - subject to good-quality materials and design finish - has the ability produce a suitable building.
- 6.11 One aspect of the design which has concerned both your officers is the depth of the development and the shape of the roof. The development footprint extends deep within the site and this will be noticeable from the flank elevations. There is also a large expanse of 'crown' (flat-topped) roof. However, officers consider that given emerging developments and care with the eventual design - such as the appearance of regular hipped/pitched roofs in the indicative images - it will be possible to minimise the impact of these aspects of the development from public views and such a development would make good use of urban land. The Design Panel also commented that whilst what was being shown indicatively looked supportable, controls such as parameter plans would also provide certainty over the building form and officers agree that such controls are required. Conditions could be proposed and these should 'lock' the development in three planes: height, depth and width, in order to secure control over the eventual building envelope and comply with the adopted design policies.

(iii) Landscaping and amenity spaces

- 6.12 Landscaping is not being applied for and is shown indicatively, including a communal garden to the rear. However, the applications still need to be able to demonstrate a suitable situation can be achieved and the basis for a landscaping arrangement.
- 6.13 The site currently contains trees which are mostly sited along the southern boundary. Most of these are in the lower categories (C and D) although the Norway Maple on the Corner is considered to be a Category A/B tree and in the view of your officers and the Tree Officer, worthy of preservation and inclusion into any redevelopment scheme. However, officers are aware that this is a significant site feature and the Design Panel's advice was that this tree should be removed.
- 6.14 The applicant has however, taken your officers' advice and sought to include the Norway Maple in these proposals and although the Design Panel consider this to be a rather convoluted arrangement, has sought to provide the crescent towards the junction in order. This also provides a suitable setting for the tree and also a welcome semi-private residents' space within the development and to the benefit of the character of the area, which is currently quite hard-surfaced.

- 6.15 Given the location of the proposed siting of the block, it is unlikely that any other of the trees on site could be accommodated. Stratheden Place opposite contains a reasonable level of defensible space and as a point of principle, the landscaping of the development should aim to provide a similar arrangement, in order to mitigate what will be a sizeable residential block. It will therefore be important to show the principles of a workable landscaping arrangement. An indicative landscaping arrangement has been shown. This consists of a communal garden to the rear and to the West, and more formal/functional landscaped areas towards the road frontages.
- 6.16 At the time of writing, the applicant has submitted a Landscape Concept plan which shows updated survey/rooting information as well as indicative proposals for replacement/additional planting, which will help inform the landscaping Reserved Matters application. Also, for completeness an updated proposed site layout plan is attached, amended to omit the trees which are to be removed in order to avoid any confusion. An updated response from the Tree Officer is awaited on these recent submissions and will be reported to your meeting.

(iv) Layout, pattern of development and neighbour amenity

- 6.17 The Layout being applied for is proposing quite a bulky building footprint and it is important that the outlooks provided in these residential units would provide/maintain existing and future residential amenity levels to these units and adjoining areas.
- 6.18 To the west of the site is Burford Court, a three storey flatted development, which is unusual in that it has many Easterly outlooks at close proximity (4-5 metres of the boundary with the application site) and so in effect, it significantly borrows outlook from over the application site, at first and second floors. Notwithstanding this, the building footprint is showing window to window separation distances of some 16 metres, with the opportunity for landscaping and the bin/cycle store to provide further protection.
- 6.19 To the North of the site is the present ambulance station, which is in use. This is not an allocated site in either the RCAAP or the emerging local plan, but were it to come forward at a later date, it may be a suitable brownfield site for residential development. The Northerly outlooks of the block allow some 13 metres distance to the boundary, which is considered suitable in terms of providing a suitable outlook which would allow that land to potentially provide a reasonable residential relationship.
- 6.20 The land to the East, opposite on North Street is currently industrial in nature, although envisaged to come forward for residential development at some point as allocated in the RCAAP and the emerging Local Plan. The proposal is some 8 metres from the back of the pavement, meaning that a suitable street set-back would be produced, were there to be residential opposite.
- 6.21 To the South of the site is Stratheden Place. Residential outlooks from this 2.5 storey development are more towards its Western end and are typically four metres from the back of the footway. The development proposes a similar set-back and this will provide a suitable balance of development across the streetscene, with outlooks some 18 metres window to window, which is considered to be an acceptable relationship.
- 6.22 In summary, officers are satisfied that the Layout being applied for can deliver an acceptable level of privacy in accord with Policy DM4.

(v) Amenity of the residential units

- 6.23 In approving Layout only and not Scale, were the Committee to approve these applications, it would need to be satisfied that in doing so, the outline application approval would be capable of providing suitable internal accommodation for the envisaged 47 units. There are a number of areas where the application has sought to provide clarity of the approach.
- 6.24 The application is supplied with indicative floorplans. These show a suggested layout for accommodation across all floors of the development which indicates that a certain level of design detail has been undertaken. These show a range of unit shapes and sizes of flats over the floors and in the main, these indicate a good size and spread of units, with an indicative mix of 32% one-bed, 57% two-bed and 11% three-bed units, which complies with the targets in Policy RC9. A typical floorplan shows that unit sizes are compliant with the National Minimum Technical Standards: Nationally Described Space Standards.
- 6.25 One area of concern for the Design Panel was the style of the roof form and window openings and they were concerned for the outlooks and headroom in the roof-level accommodation. To address this, indicative sections have been produced to show that living spaces would be suitable. These units have a mix of rooflights and dormers, which would provide acceptable outlook.
- 6.26 A daylight/sunlight study has not been undertaken, but the development would seem to be able to provide the majority of units with good levels of natural light. The worst units for natural light levels are going to be on the inside of the curve of the crescent section of the block, but then the windows are north-westerly facing (rather than North only). The unit next to that, to the west, would have a northerly single aspect only, but the indicative plans show that treatments such as inclusion of a bay window can maximise further light penetration. Sizes of window openings could also be maximised/adjusted. Overall, there is clearly a balance between the ability of this site to deliver housing units in an efficient manner and the inevitability that this will mean that a limited number of units are less than ideal in terms of outlook and light levels; but your officers consider this balance to appear to be suitable in this instance and compliant with Policy DM4.
- 6.27 RBC Environmental Protection agrees that air quality for the flats is not of concern in this locality, but has raised concerns for the noise environment, which primarily stems from noise from the ambulance station, although the submitted noise report and subsequent information confirms that closing the windows would allow for suitable noise mitigation. However, in relying on this, a mechanical ventilation system would therefore be required and a condition is advised.
- 6.28 The CPDA has raised a number of points about the indicative design. Her points include concerns for linked cores and corridors, secure communal entrances, lack of detail on secure site boundaries, secure post systems, access controls, servicing issues. Officers are not aware that any of these could not be overcome at a later stage and recommend a condition for a security strategy in the usual way, to meet Policy CS7.
- 6.29 In summary, officers are content that 47 dwellings can be accommodated satisfactorily within the envelope of the building envisaged and a Reserved Matters application could deliver acceptable accommodation to satisfy adopted design policies and standards including CS7, RC4 and RC9.

(vi) Transport

- 6.30 The site is in an accessible location to the wets of Reading centre. In accordance with the adopted Parking SPD, the development would be required to provide 1 parking space per 1-2 bedroom dwelling and 1.5 space per 3 bedroom dwelling. The applications include a total of 8 parking spaces located on the eastern boundary of the site with all spaces facing directly out onto North Street. The proposed parking provision is therefore below the Council's requirements. However, the Council's adopted standards state that a lower provision is acceptable if the site is within a sustainable location and providing a lower provision of parking will not lead to highway safety issues as a result. Accordingly, a survey of the existing car parking restrictions in vicinity of the site has been submitted.
- 6.31 North Street and the surrounding road network all have parking restrictions preventing on-street parking. The Highway Authority agrees that the site is sustainable and accessible and there are adequate on-street parking controls, therefore a lower parking standard is considered appropriate. Future residents of the development would not be eligible for a Residents Parking Permit. The parking conditions and informative would be applied if this application is approved.
- 6.32 The Council's adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD states that developments of more than 10 residential units in the town centre area should 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. The applicant's Transport Statement does not provide any detail regarding the provision or access to a car club. Given that the development has a reduced parking provision, car clubs allow members access to cars and reduce the need to own a car themselves. Officers advise that a contribution is likely to be required and details of this and the amount will be set out in the Update Report. The applicant is amenable to this provision in principle.
- 6.33 The Council's current Local Transport Plan 3 Strategy 2011 - 2026 includes policies for investing in new infrastructure to improve connections throughout and beyond Reading which include a network of publicly-available Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points to encourage and enable low carbon or low energy travel choices for private and public transport. Policy TR5 of the emerging Local Plan also states that, "*Within communal car parks for residential or non-residential developments of at least 10 spaces, 10% of spaces should provide an active charging point.*" In view of this, the development must provide at least 1x Electric Vehicle (EV) charging point to promote the use of renewable electric vehicles at time of build and a condition is advised.
- 6.34 In terms of traffic generation, the trip rates for the approved Weldale Street (Iceland/Wickes) redevelopment has been used. The proposed development of 47 housing units is likely to generate some 7 two-way movements during the AM peak and some 5 two-way movements during the PM peak. The addition of this number of trips will have no material impact on the surrounding highway network and is considered acceptable.
- 6.35 The Highway Authority has sought confirmation of the adequacy of the bin store, but this is a detailed matter which could be left to a later application. The cycle parking provision shown indicatively is considered by officers' to perhaps be an over-provision (at one space/unit) but again, this can be left to later approval.
- 6.36 Subject to confirmation and securing the car club contribution, the development is suitable in transport terms and complies with adopted transport policies, including CS4, CS20, CS24 and DM12.

(vii) Affordable Housing considerations

- 6.37 The 30% affordable housing scheme (181652) is proposing a policy-compliant provision, therefore this application would produce an acceptable affordable housing of 14 on-site units, which would meet Policy CS16 and the Affordable Housing SPD. The 100% affordable scheme would also be policy compliant, but would also be capable of meeting the requirements as the surrogate site to the Thames Quarter scheme/permission. These aspects are a significant benefit of these applications and although they are unlikely to ultimately be delivered, they should nonetheless weigh positively in the planning judgement for these applications.

(viii) Sustainability

- 6.38 Members will be aware that although the Code for Sustainable Homes (CSH) no longer applies, a sustainability statement is required and has been submitted for consideration. This covers a variety of sustainability related matters and sets out the proposed strategy. A 'fabric-first' approach has been adopted, not relying on additional technical solutions (such as PV arrays) or user systems, both of which can alter the overall effectiveness of the systems, but rather focusing on maximising passive energy use and thermal insulation and reducing water consumption.
- 6.39 The applicant advises that the following conditions have been addressed through measures as described: Energy Efficiency and Energy Conservation; b) Water Conservation; c) Flood Risk; d) Adaptation to climate change; e) Surface Water; and f) Low Carbon Technologies.
- 6.40 By complying with Part F and Part L1A 2013, measures will be in place to mitigate the risk of overheating. The build specification used will reduce energy demand across the site, through the use of a good fabric specification and high efficiency services. Also measures will be taken to minimise water consumption by complying with Building Regulations Part G requirements and providing water butts to all dwellings.
- 6.41 The above approach is considered to be acceptable in principle, with the standard condition securing written evidence that at least 50% of the dwellings/development will achieve at least a 19% improvement in the dwelling emission rate over the target emission rate, as per Part L of the Building Regulations (2013).
- 6.42 Officers are content that the applicant has acceptably demonstrated that the applications accord with the principles of policies CS1, DM1 and DM2. In order to ensure that the measures stipulated within the Energy Strategy are actually implemented in practice, a compliance condition will be included on the decision notice (in addition to the sustainability condition).

Other matters

- 6.43 The proposed SuDs scheme is confirmed as being acceptable in principle subject to the conditions to meet Policy CS35.
- 6.44 The applicant's geotechnical report has highlighted the possibility of contaminants on the site and accordingly the Council's Environmental Protection Team is requesting the usual conditions to apply, in order to comply with Policy CS34.
- 6.45 No specific ecological measures have been advised by the Council's ecologist, however, native species to encourage natural habitats could be incorporated into the eventual landscaping scheme.

- 6.46 The 100% affordable scheme would qualify for social housing relief, meaning no CIL would be payable. The level for the 30% scheme will be checked and set out in the Update Report.
- 6.47 In determining this application the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, 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

- 7.1 These applications are required to demonstrate a suitable residential development which makes good use of this allocated housing site.
- 7.2 As a surrogate site for affordable housing - which is the site's likely eventual function - the applications have adequately demonstrated to your officers' satisfaction that either an affordable or open-market (30% policy compliant) development of 47 units can be delivered and this is a significant benefit provided by these applications.
- 7.3 The siting and building envelope for such a scheme is considered to be suitable, with any gaps in control to be supplemented by parameter plan conditions.
- 7.4 There were detailed design concerns from the Design Review Panel to this scheme but officers are content that a Reserved Matters application approving the Appearance of a development would produce a suitable development.

Case Officer: Richard Eatough

Plans: TBC

