

## UPDATE REPORT

BY THE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES  
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL  
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 12<sup>th</sup> January 2022

Ward: Abbey

App No: 211420/FUL

Address: 2 Howard Street, Reading

**Proposal:** Conversion of single dwelling (class C3) to Sui-Generis House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) for 9 persons, and conversion of the existing garage to bike and bin store, plus erection of two dormer windows and associated enabling internal works and minor external works (amended description)

**Applicant:** C/O Agent

**Minor Application: 8 week target decision date:** 9<sup>th</sup> November 2021

**Extended of time date:** 14th January 2022

### RECOMMENDATION:

**GRANT Planning Permission subject to conditions and informatives as per the main report**

#### 1. Clarification and corrections regarding the threshold calculation

- 1.1 Since the publication of the main report, officers would wish to provide further clarification in respect of the threshold calculation. Specifically, how the number of properties within the 50 metre radius calculation are arrived at, and the estimated number of properties currently within lawful HMO use within that radius.
- 1.2 It has been confirmed by the Council's Planning Policy Manager that when undertaking the calculation, it is the number of *residential* properties within the 50m radius that should be counted and not solely the number of buildings.
- 1.3 The calculation the 50m radius should include buildings or parts of buildings that fall within the radius and all dwellings contained within those buildings but should not include plots where the building within that plot falls outside the radius; i.e where only garden areas fall within the radius, as per paragraph 5.31 of the SPD. Any wholly non-residential buildings are not included within the calculation.
- 1.4 When counting the number of HMOs within the 50m radius, it is acknowledged that it is an estimate and not a definitive determination of all properties within the radius. However, the calculation is based on best available information. Paragraph 5.41 of the SPD states that, "*it is emphasised that it will not be possible to guarantee a 100% accurate count in all cases*". Further to this, in terms of where there is uncertainty about whether or not a property is an HMO, paragraph 5.41 of the SPD concludes "*Where there is significant doubt as to whether a property is an HMO, it will not be counted towards the threshold*".
- 1.5 With regard to the above, there is an error in paragraph 6.8 of the main agenda report. The total number of properties within the 50m radius, including the application site, was originally counted as 23. However, this was based on the

number of buildings within the measured circle. Following confirmation that the calculation should in fact be based upon the number of residential dwellings within the 50m vicinity, the baseline figure is actually calculated as 42.

- 1.6 It is also confirmed that the number of existing lawful HMO properties within the 50m radius is 5 and not 4 as stated in paragraph 6.8 of the main agenda report.
- 1.7 Given the above, the calculation has been undertaken again and paragraph 6.8 of the main agenda report is corrected as follows:

“The total number of properties within the 50m radius, including the application site, has been calculated as ~~twenty-three~~ **forty-one**. At the time of this assessment the total number of properties in HMO use, using the above sources of data, is estimated to be ~~four~~ **five** (excluding the application site) and therefore the overall percentage is calculated as ~~17.39%~~ **12.2%** which is below the threshold of a maximum of 25%. If the application site were to become an HMO this would push the percentage to ~~21.74%~~ **14.63%** and would remain below the threshold of a maximum of 25%. In this regard, the proposals are not considered unduly dilute or harm an existing mixed and sustainable community through the significant loss of single-family housing. Therefore, the principle of the conversion of the application property to a 9 person large Sui Generis HMO is therefore considered acceptable subject to meeting other policy requirements below.”

- 1.8 The above clarification does not materially change the assessment of the scheme as discussed within the main agenda report and the conclusions therefore remain as published.

## **2. Landscaping**

- 2.1 The proposed site plan shows indicative soft landscaping, including hedging to be provided at the front of the site. The applicant has confirmed in an email received 11<sup>th</sup> January 2022 that they are happy to provide mixed species hedging and other biodiversity and landscaping improvements to improve the overall biodiversity of the site. A mixed species hedge would allow for a net gain in biodiversity which is considered a benefit of the scheme. A pre-commencement condition requiring submission and approval of hard and soft landscaping is recommended in the main agenda report, which will secure this detail.

## **3. Conclusion**

- 3.1 The officer recommendation remains to grant planning permission subject to the conditions and informatives as outlined in the main report.

**Case Officer: Ethne Humphreys**