

COMMITTEE REPORT

**BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 1 June 2022**

Ward: Abbey

App No.: 220291/FUL

Address: 2 Howard Street, Reading

Proposal: Conversion of a single dwelling (Class C3) to a Sui-Generis House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) for 9 persons, and conversion of the existing garage to a cycle and garden store, plus erection of two dormer windows, bin storage and associated enabling internal works and minor external works (re-submission of 211420/FUL).

Applicant: Gravitas Property Limited

Minor Application: 8 week target decision date: 25th April 2022

Extended of time date: 8th June 2022

RECOMMENDATION

GRANT planning permission subject to conditions and informatives.

CONDITIONS TO INCLUDE:

1. TL1 - Full - time limit - three years;
2. Approved Drawings;
3. Pre-commencement submission and approval of materials for external works including window and door details;
4. Cycle Parking (as specified);
5. Bin Storage (details to be submitted);
6. Prior to first occupation HMO parking permits (notification to LPA);
7. Prior to first occupation HMO parking permits (notification to occupants);
8. Communal areas marked on the approved plans to be retained for communal use at all times;
9. The HMO use at ground, first and second floors hereby approved shall be restricted to nine single occupancy bedrooms;
10. The garage building shall be retained for storage, including cycle storage ancillary to the use of the dwelling as a large HMO and shall not be used for further residential living accommodation;
11. The area laid as garden shall be retained as private garden with existing vegetation to be retained and shall not be converted into parking areas or areas of hardstanding;
12. Prior to occupation an HMO management plan to be submitted and approved and thereafter complied with;
13. Pre-commencement submission and approval of details of hard and soft landscaping details, including details of the front hedge;
14. Removal of pd rights for extensions, including in roof, hardstanding and outbuildings;
15. Hours of construction;
16. No burning on site;
17. Conversion to comply with design principles regarding sustainability;
18. Obscure glazing to en-suite bathroom to Bedroom 4; and

19. Conversion in accordance with Acoustic Design Statement

INFORMATIVES TO INCLUDE:

- Terms and Conditions
- Building Regulations
- No entitlement to parking permits
- HMO Management Plan
- Housing Act
- Highways
- Additional information regarding bins
- Positive and Proactive
- Pre-commencement conditions agreed by agent
- Separate HMO licence required

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The application site is a two storey end of terrace property with basement and attic accommodation located on the west side of Howard Street. The plot is relatively large and the property has a rear conservatory and extension linking to a garage/workshop structure in the garden. There is a small lawn area at the front of the site, bound by hedging and palisade fencing, with gated access to the north of the building to the rear garden.
- 1.2 Whilst No.2 Howard Street is not listed, Nos. 4 and 4a, to the south are Grade II listed. No.101 Oxford Road, to the north of the site, is also Grade II listed.
- 1.3 The site is within the Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area and the subject property is identified as a Building of Townscape Merit within the Conservation Area Appraisal.
- 1.4 Paragraph 6.3.4 of the Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Conservation Area Appraisal (2020) notes the following in respect of No.2 Howard Street:
- “2 Howard Street dates from c.1850-70s and is an attractive single family home of substantial size with a well-tended front garden that lends itself positively to the street scene.”
- Paragraph 6.3.8 of the appraisal notes:
- “2 Howard Street, Circa 1850-1870. A fine, well-cared for single family home with intact detailing and interiors.”
- 1.5 The site is not within the Article 4 Direction Area, which restricts the permitted change of use from C3 dwellinghouse to C4 small House in Multiple Occupation (HMO).
- 1.6 The site is also within an Air Quality Management Area.
- 1.7 The application was called in to Planning Applications Committee by Councillor Page.

Location Plan



Aerial View



2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 2.1 The proposal is for the change of use from a C3 dwelling to a 9-person (9 bedroom) HMO and conversion of existing garage/workshop to a cycle store and garden store with bin storage, associated enabling internal works and minor external works.

- 2.2 The proposal includes replacing the existing flat roof rear dormer window with two smaller pitch roof dormer windows. It is also proposed to replace the conservatory with a single storey rear extension. The materials for the new elements would match those of the host property.
- 2.3 Each HMO bedroom would have an en-suite bathroom and there would be a kitchen/dining area and separate living area.
- 2.4 The following plans and supporting documents were submitted on 1st March 2022:

Drawing No: P100 - Site Location
Drawing No: P101 - Block Plan
Drawing No: P102 - Existing & Proposed Site Plans
Drawing No: P103 - Proposed Site Plan
Drawing No: P104 - Existing Basement & Ground Floor Plans
Drawing No: P105 - Existing First & Second Floor Plans
Drawing No: P106 - Proposed Basement & Ground Floor Plans
Drawing No: P107 - Proposed First & Second Floor Plans
Drawing No: P108 - Existing & Proposed Roof Plans
Drawing No: P109 - Existing Elevations
Drawing No: P110 - Proposed Elevations
Acoustic Design Statement
Internal Daylight Assessment
Design, Heritage and Access Statement

The following amended plans were submitted on 28th April 2022:

Drawing No: P103A - Proposed Site Plan
Drawing No: P111 - Proposed Bin Storage

The following amended plan was submitted on 18th May 2022:

Drawing No: P106 A - Proposed Basement & Ground Floor Plans

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 211420/FUL - 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). Refused by Planning Applications Committee on 12th January 2022.

This planning application was refused for the reason that the proposed location of the communal ground floor lounge, kitchen and dining room over two of the bedrooms was considered to be an inappropriate 'stacking' arrangement which would result in an unacceptable level of harm to residential amenity for occupants in these basement bedrooms. The committee report and update report for this application are attached at the end of this report.

- 3.2 Other nearby sites:

4 Howard Street

210568/FUL: Conversion of single dwelling (class C3) to Sui-Generis House in

multiple occupation (HMO) for 8 persons. Pending Consideration.

4a Howard Street

161375/FUL and 161376/LBC: Change of use from 8 bedroom house in multiple occupation (HMO) (Sui Generis) to 10 bedroom HMO (Sui Generis) to include internal changes, demolition of existing rear projection and erection of basement and single storey rear extensions. Permitted.

160550/FUL and 160551/LBC: Change of use from 8 bedroom house in multiple occupation (HMO) (Sui Generis) to 9 bedroom HMO (Sui Generis) to include internal changes, demolition of existing rear projection and erection of single storey rear extension. Permitted.

11/00489/FUL: Conversion of dwelling to 1 x 2 bed flat and 2 x 1 bed flats. Permitted.

11/00490/LBC: Listed Building Consent for internal and external alterations to convert one dwelling to 2 x 2 bed and 2 x 1 bed flats and erection of ground and basement rear extension. Permitted.

4. CONSULTATIONS

(i) **Statutory**

4.1 None.

(ii) **Non-statutory**

4.2 **Conservation and Urban Design Officer** - No comments received.

4.3 **Transport** - No objection subject to conditions and informatives, discussed below.

4.4 **Environmental Protection** - No objection subject to conditions relating to hours of work; no burning on site; and bin storage.

4.5 **Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC)** - Full comments are detailed at the end of this report but in conclusion, there are no objections in heritage terms to the exterior works, subject to minor conditions relating to choice of materials, using timber framed windows and doors, and reinstating the front hedge and fencing. The character and setting of the conservation area, have been considered in this latest scheme. The proposed works will not have a greater impact than already exists on the adjacent listed buildings.

4.6 **Waste Services Manager** - the capacity would be 1x240 litre general waste, at least 1x240 litre recycling and either 23 litre caddy or 180 litre food waste bin. The location of these within the property are not an issue as each bin would need to be presented on the highway for collection. There are additional responsibilities for HMO license holders regarding bins. If this capacity is not sufficient (for general waste) then additional measures may need to be put in place *[Officer Note: this additional information has been included as an informative and has also been forwarded to the applicants agent]*.

(iii) **Public/ local consultation and comments received**

4.7 4 Howard Street, 3, 5 and 7 Zinzan Street and 101, 103 and 105 Oxford Road were notified of the applications by letter. A site notice was also displayed at the application site.

4.8 No neighbour letters of representation have been received.

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) 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 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 16 - Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment

5.2 Section 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.

5.3 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.

5.4 Accordingly, the National Planning Policy Framework and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

National Planning Policy Framework 2021

National Planning Guidance 2014 onwards

Reading Borough Local Plan (Adopted November 2019)

CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction

CC3: Adaption to Climate Change

CC5: Waste Minimisation and Storage

CC7: Design and the Public Realm

CC8: Safeguarding Amenity

CC9: Securing Infrastructure

EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment

EN3: Enhancement of Conservation Areas

EN6: New Development in a Historic Context
EN15: Air Quality
EN16: Pollution and Water Resources
H5: Standards for New Housing
H8: Residential Conversions
H10: Private and Communal Outdoor Space
TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging

5.5 Supplementary Planning Documents

Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)
Residential Conversions (2013)
Affordable Housing SPD (2021)
Revised SPD on Planning Obligations under Section 106 (2019)
Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2019)

5.6 Other relevant documentation / guidance / legislation

Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area Appraisal 2020
Historic England Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 1: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management (Historic England, 2016)
Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking (Historic England, 2015a)
Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (Historic England, 2015b)
Principles of Conservation (Historic England, 2008)
Guide to the Conservation of Historic Buildings (British Standards Publication BS 7913:2013, 2015)
National Design Guide: Planning practice for beautiful, enduring and successful places (2019)

6. APPRAISAL

Introduction

- 6.1 For conversions to residential the main planning policy is: Policy H8 (Residential Conversions), which states that: *‘Proposals to convert buildings into self-contained flats or for multiple occupation will be assessed against the impact on the amenity and character of the surrounding area, particularly in terms of intensification of activity, loss of privacy, loss of external amenity space, the provision and location of adequate on-site car parking and the treatment of bin storage areas and other related servicing. Proposals to convert properties into self-contained flats or for multiple occupation will only be acceptable where:*

- *The proposal respects the physical character of the area in terms of scale, location, materials and design, the arrangement of doors, windows and other principal architectural features;*
- *The proposal would not, either individually or cumulatively, unduly dilute or harm an existing mixed and sustainable community through the significant loss of single family housing;*

- *There are no unacceptable adverse impacts to residents of the scheme or surrounding properties arising from noise and disturbance in terms of the number and layout of units proposed and the proximity to other properties;*
- *There is no inappropriate stacking and location of rooms between units;*
- *Bin and cycle storage is of an appropriate size and standard for the units proposed and should be located at ground floor level with easy access; and*
- *The resulting property or properties would provide adequate internal floorspace and headroom for residents.'*

Policy H8 continues:

'Additionally, in the case of sui generis houses in multiple occupation (HMOs):

- *The property to be converted measures more than 120 square metres gross;*
- *There is sufficient communal space.'*

- 6.2 Along with the relevant adopted local planning policies, the appraisal of the application has been assessed against the adopted Residential Conversions SPD (2013), which provides further detail for the adopted policies. Section A of the SPD, deals with the 'General Assessment of all Conversions' (i.e. from C3 dwellinghouses to flats or HMOs (both small C4 use and sui generis HMOs). Section B specifically covers the assessment of applications for HMOs within the area covered by the Article 4 Direction. Albeit not located within an area covered by the Article 4 Direction, this application has been considered against both sections.

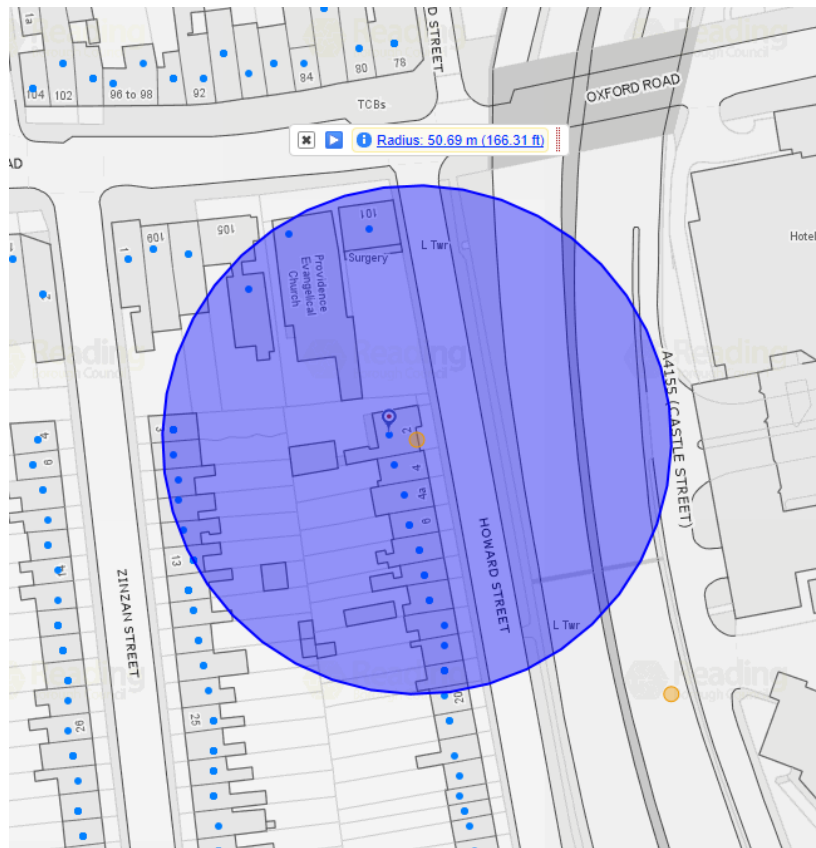
Main considerations:

The main issues to be considered are:

- i) Principle of development: Size requirements and whether the property results in unduly diluting or harming a mixed and sustainable community;
 - ii) The impact on amenity of existing and future residents of the property and neighbouring properties;
 - iii) Design considerations and impact on the Conservation Area and other heritage assets;
 - iv) Car/ Cycle Parking;
 - v) Bin Storage;
 - vi) Sustainability; and
 - vii) Other Matters
- (i) **Principle of development: Size requirements and whether the property result in unduly diluting or harming a mixed and sustainable community**
- 6.3 In terms of whether a property is suitable to be converted to a large HMO, Policy H8 (Residential Conversions) and the Residential Conversion SPD requires the property to have a gross floor area in excess of 120m² when measured externally. The property meets this requirement and therefore the conversion into a large HMO is acceptable in principle.
- 6.4 Further assessment as to whether a property is suitable for conversion is whether such a conversion would result in unduly diluting or harming a mixed

and sustainable community. This is assessed using the ‘tipping point’ calculation.

- 6.5 The SPD identifies that the *‘tipping point is when the concentration of HMOs becomes over dominant and the community is no longer considered to be mixed and sustainable.’* The SPD states that *“planning permission will not normally be granted where the proportion of HMOs will result in HMOs representing 25% or more of the residential properties within a circle of 50m radius measured from the application site”* (para. 5.43).
- 6.6 Further to this, it is noted that the site lies outside of the Borough’s Article 4 Direction area, wherein HMO developments are more strictly controlled. In this respect, Policy H8 only refers to use of the 25% threshold inside these areas. However, the SPD, (para 4.2) explains that this calculation is to be applied to changes of use from C3 dwellinghouses to large Sui Generis HMOs anywhere in the Borough. Specifically, in respect of large *sui generis* HMOs the policy guidance does refer to the need to comply with the 25% threshold both within and outside Article 4 areas. Taking this guidance but noting the absence of such requirements in the overarching Policy H8 it is considered that the 25% threshold represents a good ‘rule of thumb’ for testing whether the proposal would unduly dilute or harm an existing mixed and sustainable community and as such this calculation has been undertaken by officers.
- 6.7 The concentration of HMOs in the area surrounding the application site has previously been calculated under planning application 211420/FUL and has been calculated as a percentage of the total estimated number of existing HMOs (C4 or sui generis) against the total number of residential properties, i.e. those falling with C3, C4 or sui generis HMO use. Available data from Environmental Health, Council Tax, extant (unimplemented) permissions for HMOs, data on property websites, and data held by the Enforcement Team, has been used.



6.8 The total number of residential properties within the 50m radius, including the application site, has been calculated as 41. At the time of this assessment the total number of properties in HMO use, using the above sources of data, is estimated to be 5 (excluding the application site) and therefore the overall percentage is calculated as 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 14.63% and would remain below the threshold of a maximum of 25%. In this regard, the proposal is not considered to 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.

(ii) **The impact on amenity of existing and future residents of the property and neighbouring properties**

6.9 The Residential Conversions SPD sets out a number of checklist items which provide further detail related to adopted Policies CC8, H8 and H10 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

6.10 Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) 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.

6.11 Policy H8 (Residential Conversions) requires that there are no unacceptable adverse impacts to residents of the scheme or surrounding properties arising

from noise and disturbance in terms of the number and layout of units proposed and the proximity to other properties.

- 6.12 Policy H10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space) deals specifically with private and communal space and requires such space to allow for sitting out, children's play areas, home food production, green waste composting, refuse storage, drying space.

Impact on amenity of existing and future residents of the property

Room Sizes

- 6.13 The SPD states, *"Where the cooking facilities are provided in a separate room, each bedroom must be a minimum of:*
- *6.5 square metres if occupied by one person;*
 - *10.5 square metres if occupied by two persons"*.
- 6.14 The bedrooms are proposed for one person and there is a separate communal kitchen/dining area (and separate communal living area discussed below). The kitchen/dining area is shown as 23.9sqm and the smallest bedroom (no.3 on the ground floor) is 12.2sqm with the majority of bedrooms far larger than this and all have en-suite bathrooms. All the proposed bedrooms (and kitchen area) are acceptable in terms of size and occupancy of the HMO will be restricted by condition.

Communal Space

- 6.15 The SPD identifies that the amount of communal space that is considered appropriate in a large HMO would be dependent on the number and size of bedrooms. The standard set out is for one communal room for every 4-6 bedrooms depending on the size of the bedroom. The scheme provides for two communal areas on the ground floor with a total area of 40.3sqm comprising a kitchen/dining room (23.9sqm) and a separate living area (16.4sqm) with seating for 9 persons. Furthermore, there will be bike storage areas for future occupiers and a separate garden room area which could be used for extra storage if required. As above, all the bedrooms are of a good size and the communal space is considered to be of an acceptable size and layout to accommodate residents. Therefore, the overall level of communal provision is considered acceptable. A condition is recommended to ensure that the communal areas are retained for communal use only.

Amenity Space

- 6.16 The application includes a good size rear garden area of 202sqm and the scheme includes hard and soft landscaping as well as soft landscaping to the front of the site. A condition is recommended for the approval of hard and soft landscaping details to ensure appropriate planting, including hedge planting to the front of the site, along with biodiversity gains are provided. Plans also show bike and garden storage within the existing garage structure and as such no further outbuildings are required within the main garden area. Given the size and nature of the communal garden area, which is considered to provide sufficient space for functional communal space and sitting out and given the site's central location close to public recreation and leisure facilities, this is considered to be in accordance with Policy H10.

External windows

- 6.17 All habitable rooms would benefit from external windows. The two basement

bedrooms would be served by large front and rear lightwells providing an acceptable degree of daylighting to these rooms and which has been demonstrated in the submitted Internal Daylight Assessment. Furthermore, the head height of the two bedrooms in the basement (2.3m) is acceptable.

Layout/Stacking of Rooms

- 6.18 The Council's House Conversions SPD seeks to avoid layouts which locate living rooms, bathrooms and kitchens, next to, above, or below, proposed or neighbouring bedrooms. The applicant has now amended the internal layout from that previously refused under application 211420/FUL and the communal living and dining area has been relocated to the opposite side of the property so that bedrooms on the ground floor are above bedrooms in the basement. This revised layout has increased the size of the proposed kitchen/dining area. Bedrooms 6 and 7 are over the communal living spaces but the applicant has provided an Acoustic Design Statement which concludes that the conversion will provide adequate sound insulation between the communal areas and bedrooms above. A condition is recommended to ensure the conversion adheres to this document. Officers are therefore satisfied that the proposed layout is acceptable in terms of its impact on existing and future occupiers and is in accordance with Policies CC8 and H8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

Impact on neighbouring properties

Privacy and Overlooking/Overbearing Impacts

- 6.19 The two proposed dormer windows would face down the application site garden and any views towards the garden of 4 Howard Street would be at an oblique angle. It is not considered that there would be any significant material loss of privacy over and above the existing dormer window such to raise concern. Given the scale and position of the dormer windows, they will not result in any overbearing effects to any neighbouring property. Similarly, given the position of the single storey rear extension, this is not considered to result in any material overbearing effects over and above the current situation.

Noise and Disturbance and Pollution

- 6.20 The level of noise and disturbance from nine people is unlikely to be significantly harmful to the residents of adjoining properties, additional nuisance is controlled by civil enforcement (police) and statutory nuisance legislation (Environmental Health). A condition is recommended requiring the submission and approval of a management agreement, which among other matters includes the requirement to set out how noise within and outside the property will be managed.

iii) Design considerations and impact on conservation area and other heritage assets

- 6.21 Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) seeks to ensure that new development enhances and preserves the local character. Policy H10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space) states that the design of outdoor areas will respect the size and character of other similar spaces in the vicinity.
- 6.22 The site lies within the Castle Hill/Russell Street/ Oxford Road Conservation Area and as such there is a duty imposed by Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requiring decision makers to have special regards to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the

character or appearance of a Conservation Area. This is reflected in Policy EN1 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment) which states that historic features and areas of historic importance and other elements of the historic environment, including their settings, will be protected and where appropriate enhanced and Policy EN3 (Enhancement of Conservation Areas) which states that the special interest, character and architecture of Conservation Areas will be conserved and enhanced and that development proposals within Conservation Areas must make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. The Council will, therefore, have regard to both the quality of the townscape and the quality and interest of the area, rather than solely that of the individual building.

- 6.23 Whilst 2 Howard Street is not listed, it is identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal as a Building of Townscape Merit and is therefore reasonable to consider this to be a non-designated heritage asset. Furthermore, 4 and 4a Howard Street are listed buildings. As such there is also a duty imposed by Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requiring decision makers to have special regard to the desirability of preserving its setting or any features of special architectural historic interest which it possesses. This is also reflected in Policy EN1.
- 6.24 Paragraph 130 of the NPPF 2021 states that decisions should ensure that developments are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping and are sympathetic to local character including the surrounding built environment.
- 6.25 Paragraph 199 of the NPPF 2021 details that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.
- 6.26 The recently published National Design Guidance identifies 10 key components for good design and of particular note is the characteristic of 'Context' and it states that "well designed new development responds positively to the features of the site itself and the surrounding context beyond the site boundary. It should enhance positive qualities and improve negative ones." Additionally, there is specific reference to 'views inwards and outwards'.
- 6.27 Given the nature of the proposals, there would be no increase in the footprint of the property. In fact, following the replacement of the existing conservatory with a single storey rear extension there would be a slight reduction in the footprint. The Conservation Area Appraisal identifies the building as having well-intact interiors and the building has largely been well maintained. The building is not listed and as such there is little planning protection over interior alterations generally. However, it is noted that the proposals would not require a high degree of harmful change as the proposed HMO use would, by its nature, fit within existing internal spaces preserving the existing plan-form and would not require significant other alteration as shown on the proposed plans.
- 6.28 The proposed single storey rear extension would remain a subservient addition to the main property. Comprising red brick and painted timber doors that would match the host property, this is considered to be an improvement

on the existing uPVC conservatory. The rear extension would also allow for the reinstatement of the basement level window and allow increased daylight into the basement area than achieved at present.

- 6.29 Two pitched roof dormer windows are proposed which are not considered excessive in scale and would neatly align with the windows below. They would be set well below the main roof ridge, sitting comfortably within the roof slope and they are not considered to result in any harm to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area nor the setting of the adjacent listed building. Indeed, the dormer windows would replace the existing single dormer window that is currently considered to be visually discordant. In this respect, the proposed dormer windows are considered to result in a visual benefit to the building and character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
- 6.30 The existing rear garage structure is now proposed to be for cycle storage and garden storage (following the relocation of bin storage) and the existing windows are to be replaced with timber louvred doors.
- 6.31 Overall, it is considered that the proposed external works would not result in any detrimental effect on the character or appearance of the Conservation Area or the setting of the nearby listed buildings. The proposals, which include refurbishment works, are considered to provide some enhancement to the appearance of this non-designated heritage asset. As the existing fence to the front is to be retained, and new hedging will be required under the landscaping condition above, officers consider the request to re-instate the original fencing goes beyond the scope of this application. To ensure design quality however, conditions are recommended above requiring the submission of external material details including all new window and doors. In design terms the proposal is considered to be in accordance with Policies CC7, EN1, EN3 and H10.

iv) Car/Cycle parking

- 6.32 The site is located within Zone 2 for accessibility as identified in the Council's Parking and Design SPD, the primary core area but 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.
- 6.33 In accordance with the SPD, an HMO property would be required to provide 0.25 car parking spaces per room. No off-road parking is to be provided with this proposal. However, given the close proximity to the town centre and good transport links this is considered acceptable in this instance. Future occupiers would not be automatically entitled to resident or parking permits for the surrounding residential streets where parking is under considerable pressure. This would ensure that the development does not harm the existing amenities of neighbouring residential properties by adding to the already high level of on street car parking in the area. Conditions and an informative are included in the Recommendation above regarding a restriction on the entitlement to parking permits for existing and future schemes in the area.
- 6.34 In accordance with the SPD, cycle storage for an HMO should be provided at a ratio of 0.5 secure cycle storage spaces for each letting room, in the form of Sheffield type stands within a lockable store. 6 Sheffield stands (12 spaces) are proposed in the existing garage structure which exceeds the required

provision and is acceptable. A compliance condition is recommended to ensure that this facility is provided and retained for bicycle parking at all times.

v) **Bin Storage**

- 6.35 Policy H8 requires that bin storage is of an appropriate size and to which there is easy access. Bins were originally proposed to be stored in the existing garage structure in the rear garden however, amended plans have been submitted which have relocated the bins to the side of the property and therefore closer to the bin collection point. Environmental Protection have advised that bin stores need to be vermin proof and a condition is recommended for details of the bin store to be submitted for approval. The amended plans ensure bin capacity is compliant with the Council's Waste Services Managers requirements and the bins will be located behind an existing 1.5m high gate and presented onto the path of the property on collection day.
- 6.36 The recommended condition for the management plan agreement will include for management of the disposal of waste. Given that the bins will be located behind the front gate and closer to the collection point and will prevent the harmful clutter of bins, which is normally an indicator of large HMO use, there is not considered to be any detrimental impact on the character or appearance of the Conservation Area (or setting of the adjacent listed building) and nor would it raise amenity concerns for residents. The condition recommended will ensure this facility is provided and retained.

vi) **Sustainability**

- 6.37 Policy CC2 (Sustainable Design and Construction), supported by the Council's Sustainable Design and Construction SPD seeks the proposal, as a 'creation of new residential units through conversion', to comply with BREEAM Level of 'Very Good'. Policy CC2 also requires new development to reduce the consumption of resources and materials by using designs and site layouts which use *"energy, water, minerals, materials and other natural resources appropriately, efficiently and with care and take account of the effects of climate change"*.
- 6.38 Policy CC3 (Adaption to Climate Change) requires that all developments demonstrate how they have been designed to incorporate measures to adapt to climate change. Supporting text in paragraph 4.1.8 states that *"The design of developments therefore needs to more carefully consider matters such as shading, insulation and ventilation, surface water runoff and storage and the use of appropriate tree and other planting."*
- 6.39 Further to the above, it is acknowledged that the proposals, are largely a refurbishment proposal of an older, characterful building, and change of use of an existing building do not neatly align with the standard BREEAM requirements. Instead, the applicant is proposing sustainability enhancements to support the application including energy efficient lighting; energy efficient fixtures/fittings (water heating and water management); soft landscaping.
- 6.40 Officers are satisfied that in this specific instance and with regard to the site context and nature of the scheme, that the proposals will allow the building

to perform in an improved way to meet current sustainability policy expectations and the improvements will be secured by condition. As such, the proposal is considered to comply with Policies CC2 and CC3.

vii) Other Matters

Equality Impact

- 6.41 In determining these applications, the Committee 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, and sexual orientation. 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.

Community Infrastructure Levy

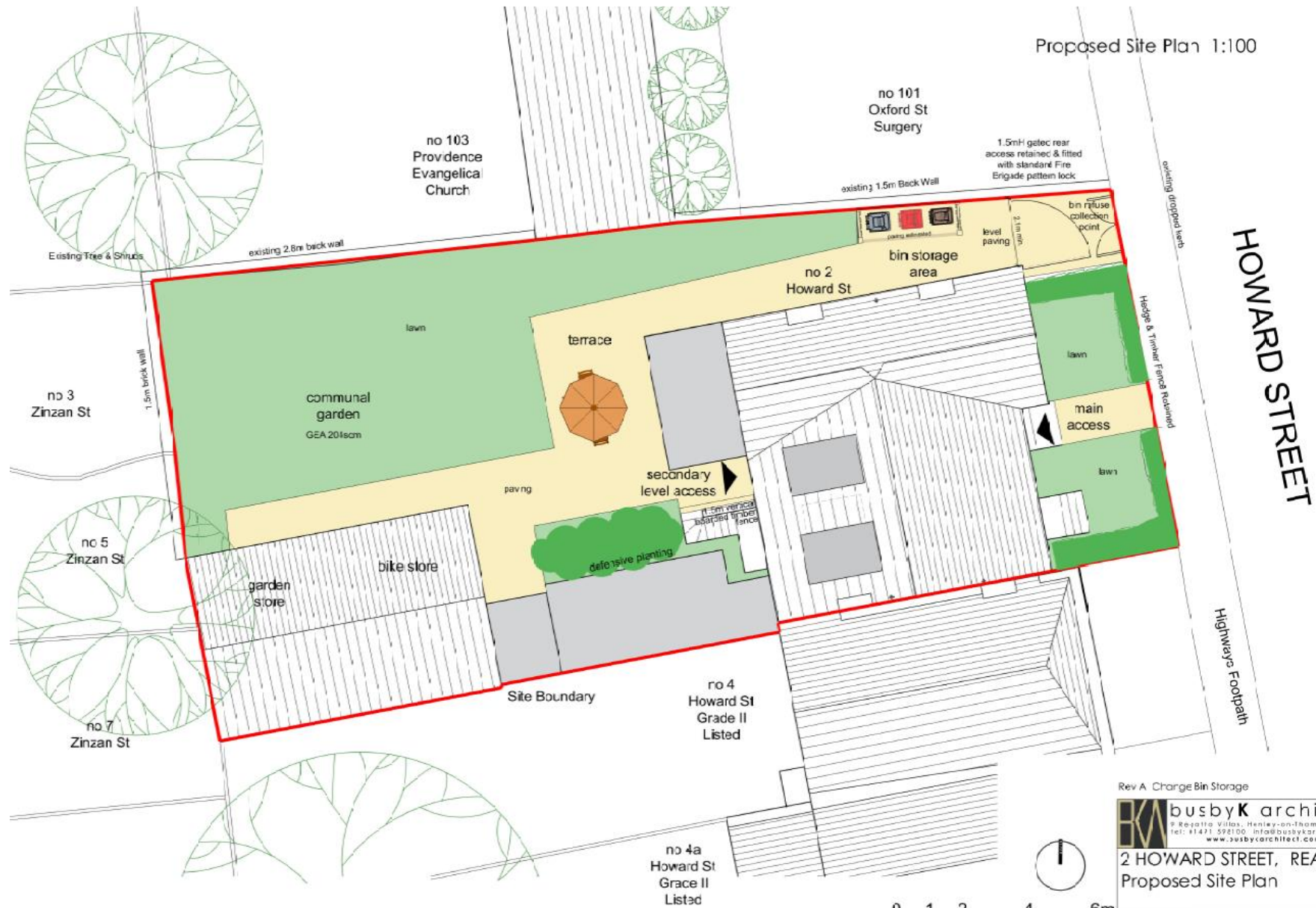
- 6.42 The proposal does not result in increased residential floorspace above 100sqm and as it does not create a new dwelling the proposed development is not CIL liable.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The proposal has been considered in the context of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.
- 7.2 The proposal to convert the property from a C3 dwellinghouse to large HMO is not considered to unduly dilute or harm the surrounding area and will ensure that this remains a mixed and sustainable community. In addition to this, it is considered that the proposal will not have any detrimental impact on amenity of future residents or existing residents of nearby properties, and nor will the proposals have any detrimental effect upon the character of the property as a Building of Townscape Merit or character and appearance of the Conservation Area or other nearby heritage assets.
- 7.3 Officers have worked positively and proactively with the applicant on this scheme, and the amendments provided by the applicant to overcome previous concerns raised with the scheme are considered to satisfactorily address policy issues and, overall, officers consider this to be a supportable scheme. It is therefore recommended for approval subject to conditions and informatives as above.

Case Officer: Claire Ringwood

Proposed Site Plan 1:100



Rev A Charge Bin Storage

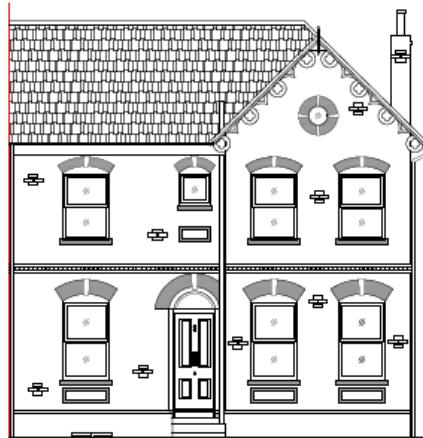
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 www.busbykarchitect.com

2 HOWARD STREET, READING
 Proposed Site Plan

Job No 210'5GRA Dwg No P103A

Scale 1:100 @A5 Feb 2022





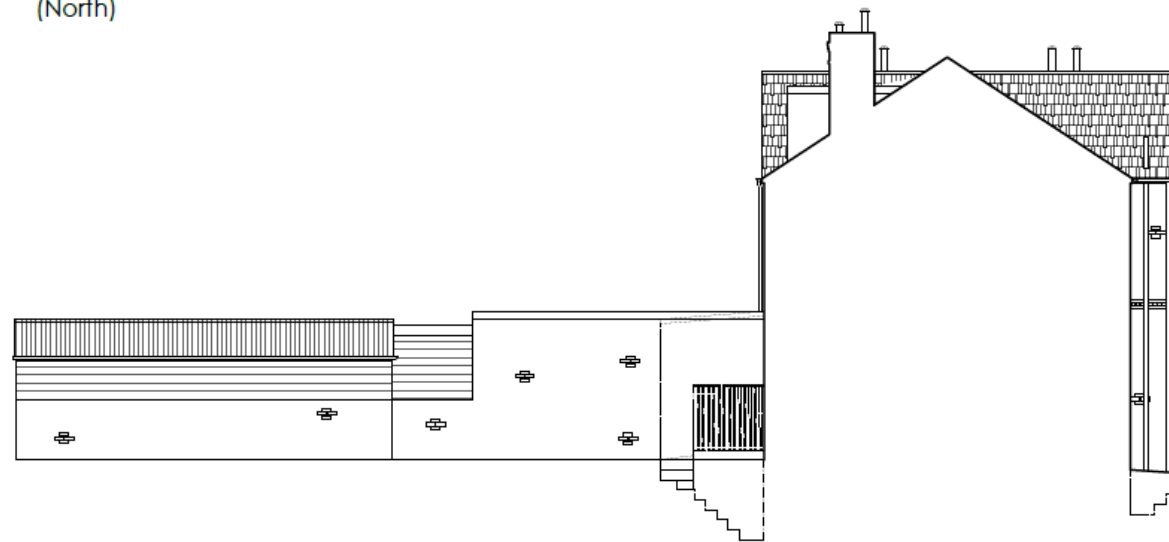
Proposed Street Elevation
(East)



Proposed Side Elevation
(North)



Proposed Rear Elevation
(West)



Proposed Party Wall Elevation
(South)

Schedule of Proposed Finishes

Roof- Blue/gray slate with ceramic ridge tile as existing. Roof to rear single storey, single ply lead effect membrane. Roof to existing garage and workshop profiled metal as existing. Dormer cheeks and arched roof- lead effect single ply membrane.

Walls- Red brick to match existing. Walls to existing garage and workshop as existing. Garage door infill to be horizontal timber cladding to match existing.

Windows- As existing timber sash to be retained. New windows to be timber casement with double glazed units.

Doors- Painted timber to match existing with double glazed units. Garden, bikes and bin stores to be bowed.

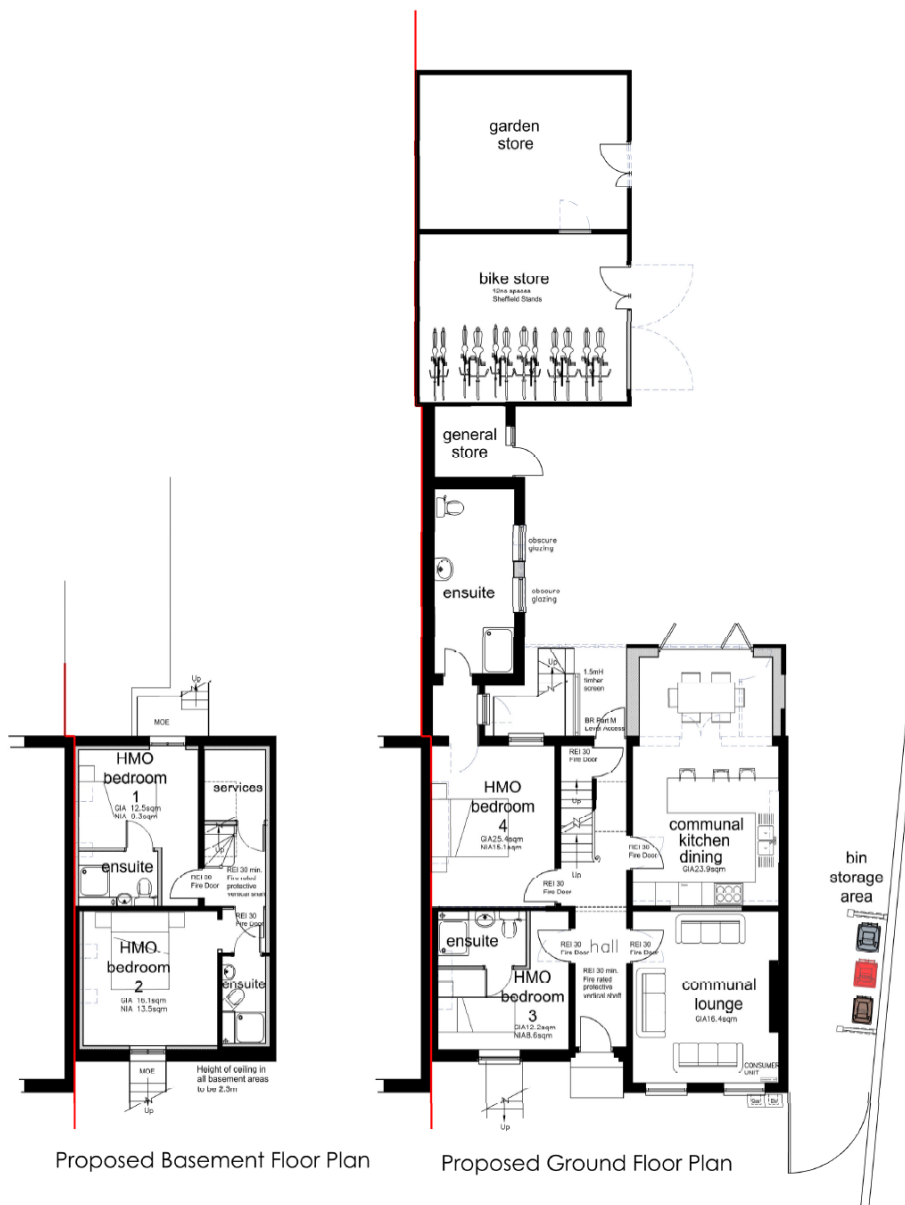
Rainwater Goods- Black round section to match existing.

0 1 2 4 6m
1:100

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tel: 01493 598100 info@busbykarchitect.com
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2 HOWARD STREET, READING
Proposed Elevations

Job No 21015GRA Dwg No P110
Scale 1:100 @A3 Feb 2022



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0 1 2 4 6m
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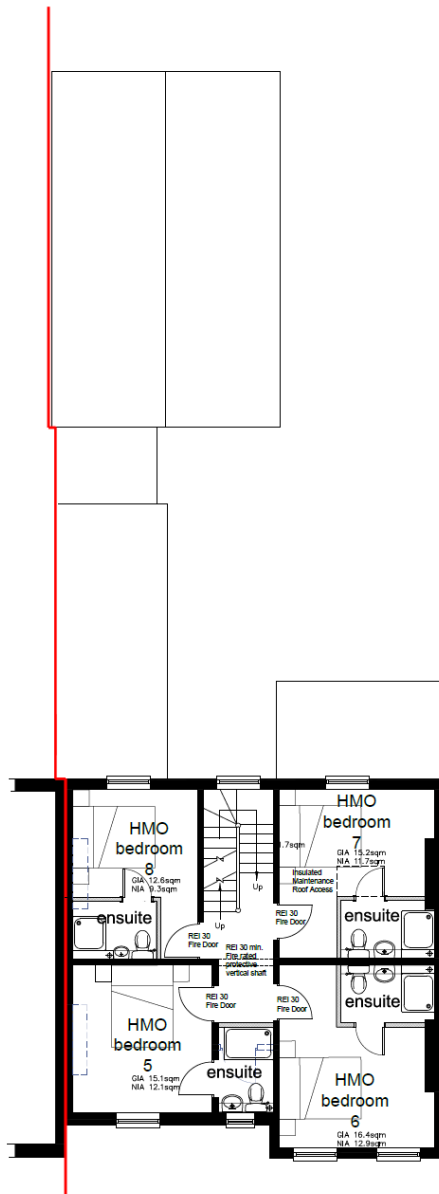
REV A MAY 2022 LPA REQUESTS

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2 Regatta Villas, Henley-on-Thames, RG9 1BE
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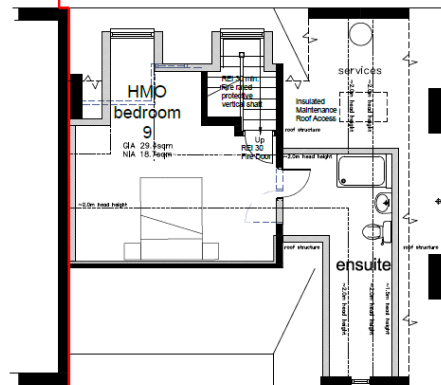
2 HOWARD STREET, READING
Proposed Basement
& Ground Floor Plans

Job No 21015GRA Dwg No P106A

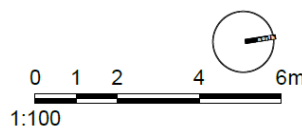
Scale 1:100 @A3 Feb 2022




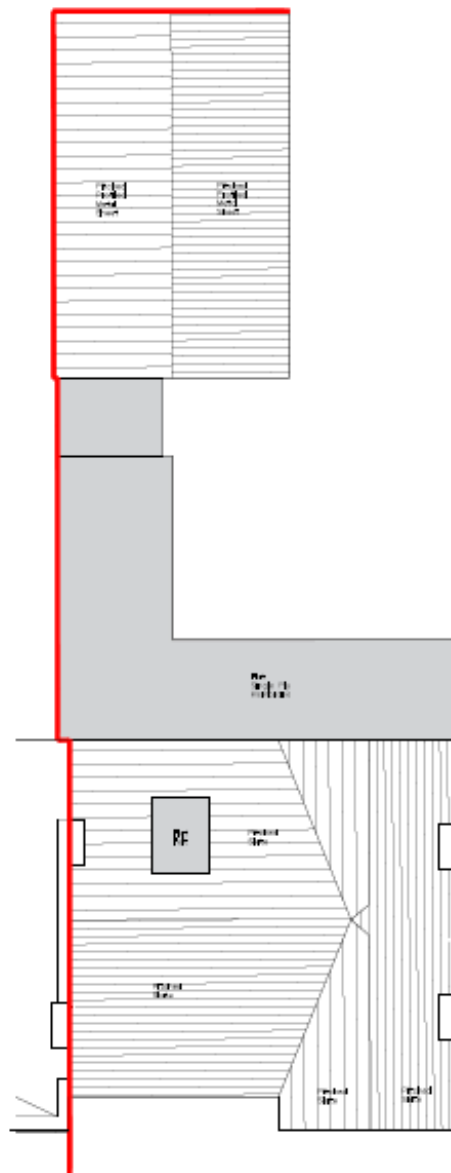
Proposed First Floor Plan



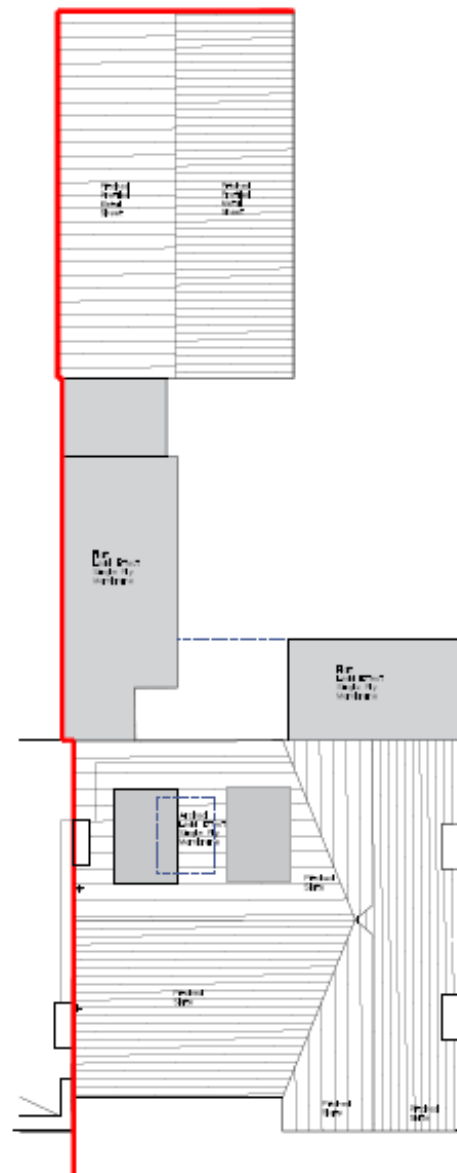
Proposed Second Floor Plan



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2 HOWARD STREET, READING Proposed First & Second Floor Plans	
Job No 21015GRA	Dwg No P107
Scale 1:100 @A3	Feb 2022



Existing Roof Plan



Proposed Roof Plan

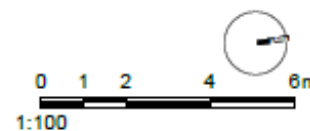
Rev A: Change dormers Oct 21

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2 HOWARD STREET, READING
Existing & Proposed Roof
Plans

Job No 21015GRA Dwg No P108

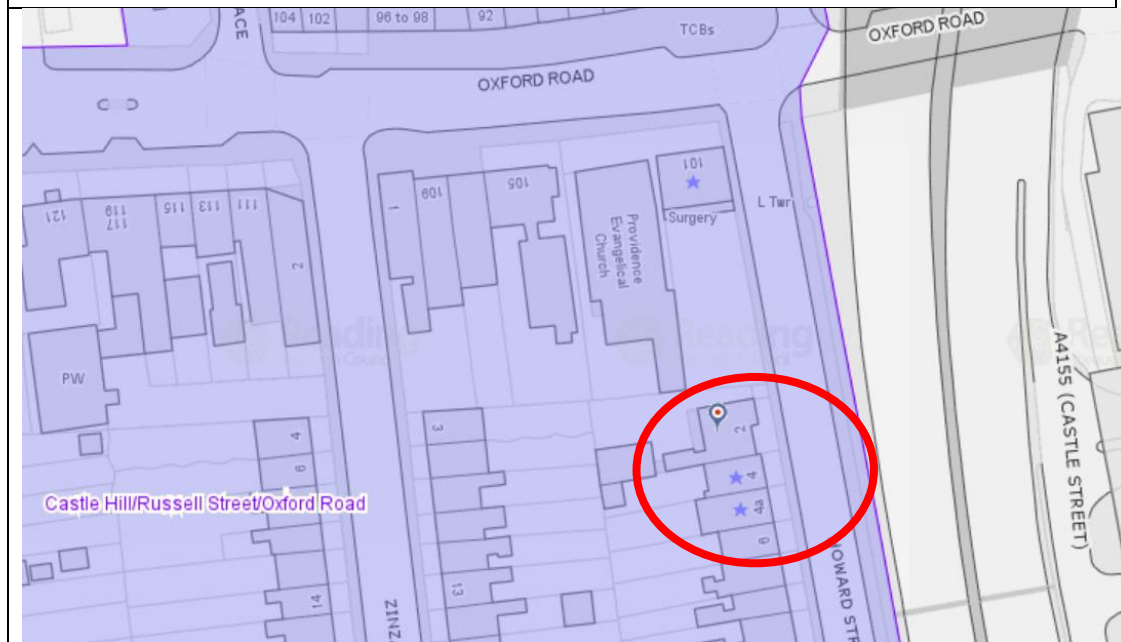
Scale 1:100 @A3 Feb 2022



Conservation & Urban Design Officer comments

Site location

Fig 1: GIS map showing host building which is in a conservation area, circled in RED, a Grade II, Listed Building. It is in between 3 listed Grade II, buildings. Kent House (4 & 4A Howard Street), to the south and 101 Oxford Road, to the north.



Historic England website notes.

1. Statutory Address: KENT HOUSE, 4 AND 4A, Howard Street, Reading.
Heritage Category: Listed Building Grade: II.
List Entry Number: 1113495

“HOWARD STREET 1. 5128 Nos 4 and 4A (Kent House) SU 7173 SW 2/501 II 2. Early C19. The best in a terrace of pleasant late Georgian houses. 3 storeys. Red brick. Ground floor rendered (No 4 channelled). String over ground floor. Cornice and blocking course. Concealed roof. 2 bays each, glazing bar sash windows except for modern casements on 1st floor of No 4A. Ground floor windows off centre, arched in recesses. Round headed entrances with recessed doors.”
(Listing NGR: SU7101173324)

2. Statutory Address: ROX BOROUGH HOUSE, 101 Oxford Street, Reading.
Heritage Category: Listed Building Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1113545

“OXFORD ROAD (South Side) 1. 5128 No 101 (Rox Borough House) SU 7175 SW 2/537 II GV 2. Circa 1859. 2 storeys, symmetrical. Red brick on basement with 1st floor stone cill band and wood block eaves cornice to slate roof. Coped gables with kneelers. End chimneys. 3 windows on 1st floor, 2 on ground-floor, glazing bar sashes; architrave surrounds and bracketed cornices on ground floor. Steps to 4 panel door, rectangular over-light. Basement openings have cast iron guards with honeysuckle ornament. Plain verandah at back. Brick flanking walls with stone cope and modern rails.”

Background

2 Howard Street dates from c.1850-70s and is an attractive single family home of substantial size with a well-tended front garden that lends itself positively to the street scene. The character of Howard Street is set by the avenue of trees, which provide a vital barrier between the street and the IDR, important boundary treatments comprising decorative cast iron railings, and interesting vistas over the town centre and beyond. The hedges along the street are a part of the original domestic character of the conservation area.



Conservation comments

The property is identified as a Building of Townscape merit in the conservation area character appraisal. It is a former mid-19th century, Georgian style, 2/3 storey brick family home. In relation to planning constraints only exterior works and the impact on the street can be assessed. The owner had recently applied for a similar scheme but it was refused, (211420). This new application (220291), has been developed in consultation with Council planners, to address certain aspects of design, which there were concerns with.

The conservation area has been placed on the Historic England - Heritage at Risk register. One of the issues is the number of HMOs, but this is a planning issue. The applicant has worked with Council's planner, on a number of planners issues, including the placement of bins and garden design.

Overall, there are no objections in heritage terms to the exterior works, subject to minor conditions relating to choice of materials, using timber framed windows and doors, and reinstating the front hedge and fencing. The character and setting of the conservation area, have been considered in this latest scheme. The proposed works will not have a greater impact than already exists on the adjacent listed buildings.

Planning Constraints

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

- Grade II, Listed Building in a Conservation Area.

- Section 16(2) requires the local planning authority to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special interest which it possesses.
- Section 72 (1) 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.

National Planning Policy and Guidance

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) - Section 16
- National Planning Practice Guidance

Reading Borough Council - Local Plan 2019

- St Mary's Butts Conservation Area / Castle Street
- Policy EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
- Policy EN3: Enhancement of Conservation Areas
- Policy EN4: Locally Important Heritage Assets

Other guidance

- Historic England Good Practice Guide Note Number 2: managing significance in decision-taking.
- Principles of Conservation (Historic England, 2008)
- Guide to the Conservation of Historic Buildings (British Standards Publication BS 7913:2013, 2015)

Relevance of NPPF in assessing application

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/conserving-and-enhancing-the-historic-environment>

Conclusion

It is recommended for **Approval**, with conditions;

1. all new windows and doors to be timber framed and generally match existing details;
2. a standard material condition in regard to materials and finishes;
3. that the original hedge and fence be reinstated and maintained.

Reason: The proposal is better than the previous application 211420, and considered to be relatively neutral and an enhancement of the exterior envelope in NPPF terms, subject to conditions, improving the street appearance. So overall, on balance the application is deemed to comply with Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, as well as Council's Local Plan policies: EN1, EN4 and EN6.

Prepared by:

Bruce Edgar, IHBC, M.Phil (Architectural History), M.PIA, M.ICOMOS (UK), B.Arch
Conservation & Urban Design Officer
Reading Borough Council

You may find the following useful for your response:

- ☐ No objections
- ☒ No objections subject to conditions attached
- ☐ Clarification required - see attached
- ☐ Object - see above

ANNEXURE A

GENERAL CONSERVATION PLANNING BACKGROUND - ADVICE & NOTES

PLANNING (LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS) ACT 1990.

With respect to Planning Applications and Listed Building consents, the applicable statutory provisions are:

- Section 16(2) which regards listed building consent for any works;
- Section 66(1) the determination of applications

These Sections state that when determining applications, the local planning authority or the Secretary of State, *'shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting of any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses'*.

LEGISLATIVE AND PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

PLANNING (LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS) ACT 1990.

Section 66(1), in the determination of applications affecting the setting of a Listed Building, states that:

'in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority, or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.'

Recent legal cases relating to issues of the setting of listed buildings have established that under section 70(3) the general power to grant planning permission under section 70(1) is expressly subject to sections 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

This means that under Sections 16 and 66 of the Act authorities considering applications for planning permission for works which affect a listed building must have special regard to certain matters, including the desirability of preserving the setting of the Listed Building.

CONSERVATION AREA

Section 69 of the Act imposes a duty on local planning authorities to designate as Conservation Areas any *'areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'*.

Recent legal cases have established that under section 70(3) the general power to grant planning permission under section 70(1) is expressly subject to section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. **Section 72(1) provides that the local authority has a statutory duty that:**

'with respect of any building or other land in a conservation area.....special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.'

LEGISLATIVE AND PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK (NPPF), 2021

In March 2012, the Government published the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and it has had a number of updates, the latest in 2021.

The NPPF sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development and a key dimension of *'sustainability'* is defined as *'...protecting and enhancing our...historic environment'* (DCLG et al, 2018).

The glossary annexed to the NPPF defines the setting of a heritage asset as:

“The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.”

Factors for consideration. It is recommended that a Heritage Statement, accompany any applications to address NPPF (paragraph 194):

“In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.”

NPPF SECTION 16. CONSERVING AND ENHANCING THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

The NPPF states, local planning authorities should take into account, the following paragraphs.

Paragraph 189 states:

“Heritage assets range from sites and buildings of local historic value to those of the highest significance, such as World Heritage Sites which are internationally recognised to be of Outstanding Universal Value (66). These assets are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations (67).”

Paragraph 197 states:

“In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and*
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.*

Paragraph 198 states:

” In considering any applications to remove or alter a historic statue, plaque, memorial or monument (whether listed or not), local planning authorities should have regard to the importance of their retention in situ and, where appropriate, of explaining their historic and social context rather than removal.

Considering potential impacts

Paragraph 199 states:

“When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.”

Paragraph 200 states:

Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of:

- a) Grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional;*
- b) assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II* listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly Exceptional.*

Paragraph 201 states:

Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

- a) the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and*
- b) no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and*
- c) conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and*
- d) the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.*

Paragraph 202 states:

Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

Paragraph 203 states:

The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

Paragraph 204 states:

Local planning authorities should not permit the loss of the whole or part of a heritage asset without taking all reasonable steps to ensure the new development will proceed after the loss has occurred.

Paragraph 205 states:

Local planning authorities should require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible (69). However, the ability to record evidence of our past should not be a factor in deciding whether such loss should be permitted.

Paragraph 206 states:

Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites, and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.

Paragraph 207 states:

Not all elements of a Conservation Area or World Heritage Site will necessarily contribute to its significance. Loss of a building (or other element) which makes a positive contribution

to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site should be treated either as substantial harm under paragraph 200 or less than substantial harm under paragraph 201, as appropriate, taking into account the relative significance of the element affected and its contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area or World Heritage Site as a whole.

Paragraph 208 states:

Local planning authorities should assess whether the benefits of a proposal for enabling development, which would otherwise conflict with planning policies but which would secure the future conservation of a heritage asset, outweigh the disadvantages of departing from those policies.

Planning Practice Guide (PPG)

The Planning Practice Guide (PPG) (2014) clarifies this additional requirement under ‘What is the main legislative framework for planning and the historic environment?’ where it states that:

“In addition to the normal planning framework set out in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 provides specific protection for buildings and areas of special architectural or historic interest.

Any decisions relating to listed buildings and their settings and conservation areas must address the statutory considerations of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (see in particular sections 16, 66 and 72) as well as satisfying the relevant policies within the National Planning Policy Framework and the Local Plan.” (See ID 18a-002-20140306)

Reading Borough Planning Policies

The Reading Local Plan Adopted 2019 is the document that contains the policies for how Reading will develop up to 2036, which is the end date of the plan. It replaces the three previous development plan documents - the Core Strategy (adopted 2008, amended 2015), Reading Central Area Action Plan (adopted 2009) and Sites and Detailed Policies Document (adopted 2012, amended 2015). It identifies the amount of development that will take place, the areas and sites where development is expected to be accommodated, and where it will be restricted, and sets out policies for how planning applications will be decided. Reading, has launched a 2050 vision for the town as a smart and sustainable city by 2050. The vision entails:

6. Maintain and enhance the historic, built and natural environment of the Borough through investment and high quality design, and capitalise on these assets to contribute to quality of life and economic success;

EN1: PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

Historic features, areas of historic importance and other elements of the historic environment, including their settings will be protected and where possible enhanced. This will include:

- *Listed Buildings;*
- *Conservation Areas;*
- *Scheduled Monuments;*
- *Historic parks and gardens; and*
- *Other features with local or national significance, such as sites and features of archaeological importance, and assets on the Local List.*

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.

Applications which affect Listed Buildings will not have an adverse impact on those elements which contribute to their special architectural or historic interest including, where appropriate, their settings.

Applications which affect Historic Parks and Gardens will safeguard features which form an integral part of the special character or appearance of the park or garden. Development will not detract from the enjoyment, layout, design, character, appearance, features or setting of the park or garden, key views out from the park, or prejudice its future restoration.

Applications which affect, or have the potential to affect, the significant features of heritage assets should be justified by a Heritage Statement.

The Council will monitor buildings and other heritage assets at risk through neglect, decay or other threats, proactively seeking solutions for assets at risk including consideration of appropriate development schemes that will ensure the repair and maintenance of the asset, and, as a last resort, using its statutory powers.

Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect or of damage to a heritage asset, the deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision.

EN4: LOCALLY IMPORTANT HERITAGE ASSETS

Development proposals that affect locally important heritage assets will demonstrate that development conserves architectural, archaeological or historical significance which may include the appearance, character and setting of the asset.

Planning permission may be granted in cases where a proposal could result in harm to or loss of a locally important heritage asset only where it can be demonstrated that the benefits of the development significantly outweigh the asset's significance. Where it is accepted by the Local Planning Authority that retention is not important, recording of the heritage asset should be undertaken and submitted alongside development proposals. Replacement buildings should draw upon heritage elements of the previous design, incorporating historical qualities that made the previous building significant. This may include appearance, scale and architectural quality.

HISTORIC ENGLAND GOOD PRACTICE ADVICE & BRITISH STANDARDS

Historic England has produced new guidance on the interpretation and implementation of the NPPF and PPG with regard to the historic environment in the form of:

- Historic England *Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 1: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management* (Historic England, 2016);
- Historic Environment *Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking* (Historic England, 2015a);
- Historic Environment *Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets* (Historic England, 2015b); and
- Historic England *Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 4: Tall Buildings* (Historic England, 2015c).
- Principles of Conservation (Historic England, 2008)
- Guide to the Conservation of Historic Buildings (British Standards Pub. BS 7913:2013, 2015)

COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

ITEM NO.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 12 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: 9th November 2021

Extended of time date: 14th January 2022

RECOMMENDATION

GRANT planning permission subject to conditions and informatives.

CONDITIONS TO INCLUDE:

1. TL1 - Full - time limit - three years.
2. Approved Drawings.
3. Pre-commencement submission and approval of materials for external works including window and roof details.
4. Cycle storage as specified.
5. Bin storage as specified.
6. Prior to first occupation HMO parking permits (notification to LPA).
7. Prior to first occupation HMO parking permits (notification to occupants).
8. Communal areas marked as social rooms on the approved plans to be retained for communal use at all times.
9. Prior to first occupation submission and approval of noise insulation between basement bedrooms and ground floor communal areas.
10. The HMO use at ground, first and second floors hereby approved shall be restricted to nine single occupancy bedrooms.
11. The garage building shall be retained for storage, including bin and cycle storage ancillary to the use of the dwelling as a large HMO and shall not be used for further residential living accommodation.
12. The area laid as garden shall be retained for private garden with existing vegetation to be retained and shall not be converted into parking areas or areas of hardstanding.
13. Prior to occupation an HMO management plan to be submitted and approved and thereafter complied with.
14. Pre-commencement submission and approval of details of hard and soft landscaping details.
15. Removal of planning rights for extensions, including in roof, hardstanding and outbuildings.
16. Hours of construction (std).

- 17. Conversion to comply with submitted sustainability strategy.
- 18. No burning on site.

INFORMATIVES TO INCLUDE:

- Terms and Conditions
- Building Regulations
- No entitlement to parking permits
- Fire safety requirements
- Requirements of the Housing Act
- Highways
- Contact Waste Team to ensure correct number of bins is provided.
- Positive and Proactive
- Pre-commencement conditions agreed by applicant/agent
- HMO expectations informative
- Separate HMO licence required

1. INTRODUCTION

1.2 The application site is a two storey end of terrace property with basement and attic accommodation located on the west side of Howard Street. The plot is relatively large and the property has a rear conservatory and extension linking to a garage/workshop structure in the garden. There is a small lawn area at the front of the site, bound by hedging and palisade fencing, with gated access to the north of the building to the rear garden.

1.2 Whilst No.2 Howard Street is not listed, Nos. 4 and 4a, to the south are Grade II listed. No.101 Oxford Road, to the north of the site, is also Grade II listed.

1.3 The site is within the Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area and the subject property is identified as a Building of Townscape Merit within the Conservation Area Appraisal.

1.4 Paragraph 6.3.4 of the Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Conservation Area Appraisal (2020) notes the following in respect of No.2 Howard Street:

“2 Howard Street dates from c.1850-70s and is an attractive single family home of substantial size with a well-tended front garden that lends itself positively to the street scene.”

Paragraph 6.3.8 of the appraisal notes:

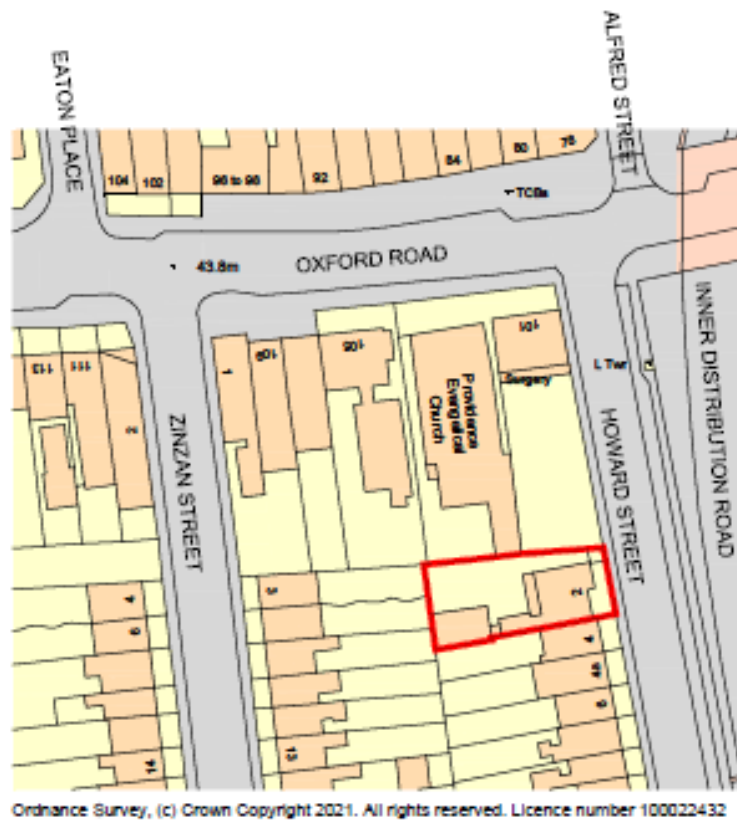
“2 Howard Street, Circa 1850-1870. A fine, well-cared for single family home with intact detailing and interiors.”

1.5 The site is not within the Article 4 Direction Area, which restricts the permitted change of use from C3 dwellinghouse to C4 small House in Multiple Occupation (HMO).

1.6 The site is also within an Air Quality Management Area.

- 1.7 The application was called in by Councillor Page due to concern over the proposed HMO use.

Location Plan



Aerial View



2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 2.1 The proposal was originally for the change of use from a C3 dwelling to 9-person (9 bedroom) HMO and conversion of existing garage/workshop to separate self-contained flat. The applicant was advised that this was considered to result in an over-intensive use of the site (and potential unacceptable subdivision of the plot) and revised plans were received omitting the conversion of the garage/workshop to self-contained flat and as such the description of development changed to confirm that just the house is proposed for use as a 9-person HMO with the garage retained for bicycle and bin storage.
- 2.2 The proposals include replacing the existing flat roof rear dormer window with two smaller pitch roof dormer windows. It is also proposed to replace the conservatory with a single storey rear extension. The materials for the new elements would match those of the host property.
- 2.3 Each HMO bedroom would have an en-suite bathroom and there would be a kitchen/dining area and separate living area.
- 2.4 The following plans and supporting documents were submitted with the application:

Location Plan PO1

Existing Basement and Ground Floor Plans PO4

Existing First and Second Floor Plans PO5

Existing Elevations PO8

Received 27th August 2021

Design, Heritage and Access Statement

Received 14th September 2021

Further to discussion with the agent, amended plans were submitted which removed the self-contained flat from the garage and instead proposed this space for the use of bike and bin storage. Revised plans also replaced the single flat roof dormer window with two smaller pitched roof dormer windows and plans also showed indicative soft landscaping.

Proposed Block Plan PO2B

Existing and Proposed Site Plans PO3B

Proposed Basement and Ground Floor Plans PO6B

Proposed Elevations PO9B

Proposed Site Plan P10B

Received 23rd November 2021

Proposed First and Second Floor Plans P07A

Received 8th December 2021

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

3.1 None for No.2 Howard Street.

3.2 Other nearby sites:

4 Howard Street

210568/FUL: Conversion of single dwelling (class C3) to Sui-Generis House in multiple occupation (HMO) for 8 persons. Pending Consideration.

4a Howard Street

161375/FUL and 161376/LBC: Change of use from 8 bedroom house in multiple occupation (HMO) (Sui Generis) to 10 bedroom HMO (Sui Generis) to include internal changes, demolition of existing rear projection and erection of basement and single storey rear extensions. Permitted.

160550/FUL and 160551/LBC: Change of use from 8 bedroom house in multiple occupation (HMO) (Sui Generis) to 9 bedroom HMO (Sui Generis) to include internal changes, demolition of existing rear projection and erection of single storey rear extension. Permitted.

11-00489-FUL: Conversion of dwelling to 1 x 2 bed flat and 2 x 1 bed flats. Permitted.

11-00490-LBC: Listed Building Consent for internal and external alterations to convert one dwelling to 2 x 2 bed and 2 x 1 bed flats and erection of ground and basement rear extension. Permitted.

4. CONSULTATIONS

(iv) Statutory

4.1 None.

(v) Non-statutory

4.2 **Conservation and Urban Design Officer** - No comments received.

4.3 **Transport** - No objection subject to conditions and informatives, discussed below.

4.4 **Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC)** - No comments received.

(vi) Public/ local consultation and comments received

4.5 No. 4 Howard Street, 3, 5 and 7 Zinzan Street and 101, 103 and 105 Oxford Road were notified of the applications by letter. A site notice was also displayed at the application site and a press notice provided.

4.6 No neighbour letters of representation have been received.

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) 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 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 16 - Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment

5.2 Section 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.

5.3 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.

5.4 Accordingly, the National Planning Policy Framework and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

National Planning Policy Framework 2021

National Planning Guidance 2014 onwards

Reading Borough Local Plan (Adopted November 2019)

CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction

CC3: Adaption to Climate Change

CC5: Waste Minimisation and Storage

CC7: Design and the Public Realm
CC8: Safeguarding Amenity
CC9: Securing Infrastructure
EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
EN3: Enhancement of Conservation Areas
EN6: New Development in a Historic Context
EN15: Air Quality
EN16: Pollution and Water Resources
H5: Standards for New Housing
H8: Residential Conversions
H10: Private and Communal Outdoor Space
TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging

5.5 Supplementary Planning Documents

Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)
Residential Conversions (2013)
Affordable Housing SPD (2021)
Revised SPD on Planning Obligations under Section 106 (2019)
Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2019)

5.6 Other relevant documentation / guidance / legislation

Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area Appraisal 2020
Historic England Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 1: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management (Historic England, 2016)
Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking (Historic England, 2015a)
Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (Historic England, 2015b)
Principles of Conservation (Historic England, 2008)
Guide to the Conservation of Historic Buildings (British Standards Publication BS 7913:2013, 2015)
National Design Guide: Planning practice for beautiful, enduring and successful places (2019)

6. APPRAISAL

Introduction

- 6.1 For conversions to residential the main planning policy is: Policy H8 (Residential Conversions), which states that: *‘Proposals to convert buildings into self-contained flats or for multiple occupation will be assessed against the impact on the amenity and character of the surrounding area, particularly in terms of intensification of activity, loss of privacy, loss of external amenity space, the provision and location of adequate on-site car parking and the treatment of bin storage areas and other related servicing.*

Proposals to convert properties into self-contained flats or for multiple occupation will only be acceptable where:

- The proposal respects the physical character of the area in terms of scale, location, materials and design, the arrangement of doors, windows and other principal architectural features;*
- The proposal would not, either individually or cumulatively, unduly dilute or harm an existing mixed and sustainable community through the significant loss of single family housing;*
- There are no unacceptable adverse impacts to residents of the scheme or surrounding properties arising from noise and disturbance in terms of the number and layout of units proposed and the proximity to other properties;*
- There is no inappropriate stacking and location of rooms between units;*
- Bin and cycle storage is of an appropriate size and standard for the units proposed and should be located at ground floor level with easy access; and*
- The resulting property or properties would provide adequate internal floorspace and headroom for residents.'*

Policy H8 continues:

'Additionally, in the case of sui generis houses in multiple occupation (HMOs):

- The property to be converted measures more than 120 square metres gross;*
- There is sufficient communal space.'*

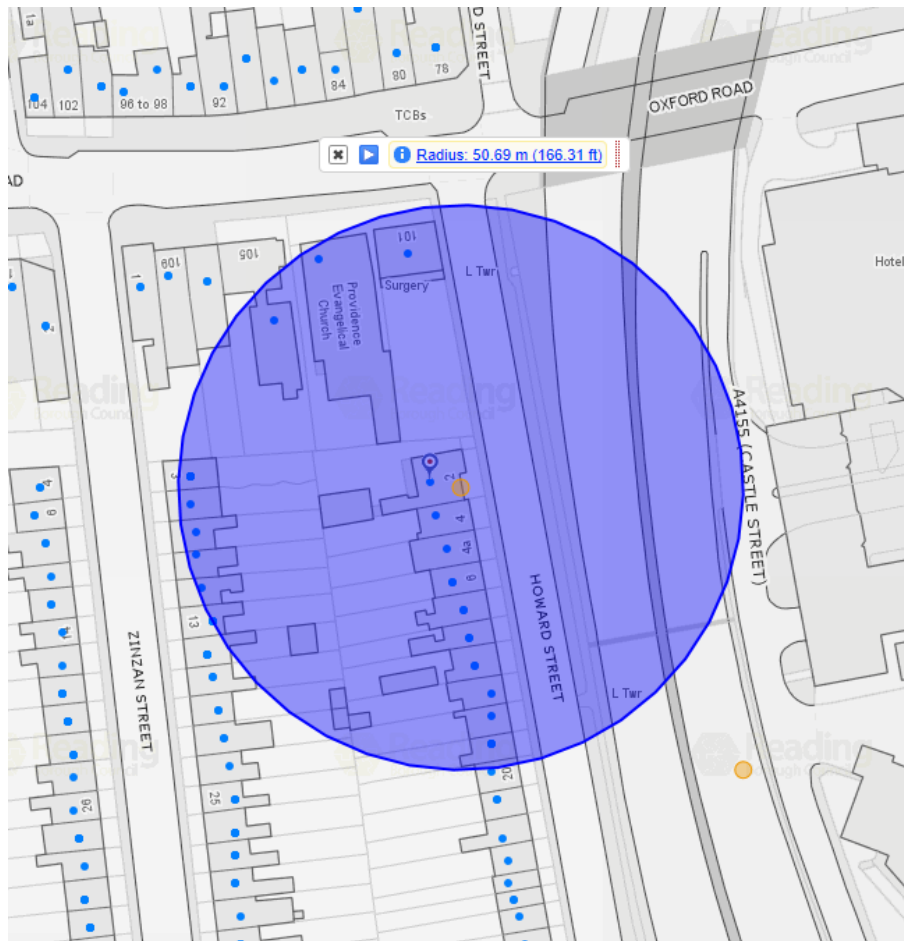
- 6.2 Along with the relevant adopted local planning policies, the appraisal of the application has been assessed against the adopted Residential Conversions SPD (2013), which provides further detail for the adopted policies. Section A of the SPD, deals with the 'General Assessment of all Conversions' (i.e. from C3 dwellinghouses to flats or HMOs (both small C4 use and sui generis HMOs). Section B specifically covers the assessment of applications for HMOs within the area covered by the Article 4 Direction. Albeit not located within an area covered by the Article 4 Direction, this application has been considered against both sections.

Main considerations:

The main issues to be considered are:

- i) Principle of development: Size requirements and whether the property results in unduly diluting or harming a mixed and sustainable community
 - ii) The impact on amenity of future occupiers and existing residents of nearby properties
 - iii) Design considerations and impact on the Conservation Area and other heritage assets
 - iv) Car/ cycle parking
 - v) Bin storage
 - vi) Sustainability
- (i) **Principle of development: Size requirements and whether the property result in unduly diluting or harming a mixed and sustainable community**

- 6.3 In terms of whether a property is suitable to be converted to a large HMO, Policy H8 (Residential Conversions) and the Residential Conversion SPD requires the property to have a gross floor area in excess of 120m² when measured externally. The property meets this requirement and therefore the conversion into a large HMO is acceptable in principle.
- 6.4 Further assessment as to whether a property is suitable for conversion is whether such a conversion would result in unduly diluting or harming a mixed and sustainable community. This is assessed using the ‘tipping point’ calculation.
- 6.5 The SPD identifies that the *‘tipping point is when the concentration of HMOs becomes over dominant and the community is no longer considered to be mixed and sustainable.’* The SPD states that *“planning permission will not normally be granted where the proportion of HMOs will result in HMOs representing 25% or more of the residential properties within a circle of 50m radius measured from the application site”* (para. 5.43).
- 6.6 Further to this, it is noted that the site lies outside of the Borough’s Article 4 Direction area, wherein HMO developments are more strictly controlled. In this respect, Policy H8 only refers to use of the 25% threshold inside these areas. However, the SPD, (para 4.2) explains that this calculation is to be applied to changes of use from C3 dwellinghouses to large Sui Generis HMOs anywhere in the Borough. Specifically, in respect of large *sui generis* HMOs the policy guidance does refer to the need to comply with the 25% threshold both within and outside Article 4 areas. Taking this guidance but noting the absence of such requirements in the overarching Policy H8 it is considered that the 25% threshold represents a good ‘rule of thumb’ for testing whether the proposal would unduly dilute or harm an existing mixed and sustainable community and as such this calculation has been undertaken by officers.
- 6.7 The concentration of HMOs in the area surrounding the application site has been calculated as a percentage of the total estimated number of existing HMOs (C4 or sui generis) against the total number of residential properties, i.e. those falling with C3, C4 or sui generis HMO use. Available data from Environmental Health, Council Tax, extant (unimplemented) permissions for HMOs, data on property websites, and data held by the Enforcement Team, has been used.



6.8 The total number of properties within the 50m radius, including the application site, has been calculated as twenty-three. 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 (excluding the application site) and therefore the overall percentage is calculated as 17.39% 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% 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.

(ii) **The impact on amenity of proposed and existing residents of nearby properties**

6.9 The Residential Conversions SPD sets out a number of checklist items which provide further detail related to adopted Policies CC8, H8 and H10 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

6.10 Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) 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.

- 6.11 Policy H8 (Residential Conversions) requires that there are no unacceptable adverse impacts to residents of the scheme or surrounding properties arising from noise and disturbance in terms of the number and layout of units proposed and the proximity to other properties.
- 6.12 Policy H10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space) deals specifically with private and communal space and requires such space to allow for sitting out, children's play areas, home food production, green waste composting, refuse storage, drying space.

Room Sizes

- 6.13 The SPD states, *"Where the cooking facilities are provided in a separate room, each bedroom must be a minimum of:*
- *6.5 square metres if occupied by one person;*
 - *10.5 square metres if occupied by two persons".*
- 6.14 The bedrooms are proposed for one person and there is a separate communal kitchen/dining area (and separate communal living area discussed below). The kitchen/dining area is shown as 19.1sqm and the smallest bedroom (no.8 on the first floor) is 12sqm with the majority of bedrooms far larger than this and all have en-suite bathrooms. All the proposed bedrooms (and kitchen area) are acceptable in terms of size and occupancy of the HMO will be restricted by condition.

Communal Space

- 6.15 The SPD identifies that the amount of communal space that is considered appropriate in a large HMO would be dependent on the number and size of bedrooms. The standard set out is for one communal room for every 4-6 bedrooms depending on the size of the bedroom. The amended scheme provides for two communal areas on the ground floor with a total area of 31.3sqm comprising a kitchen/dining room (19.1sqm) and a separate living area (12.2sqm) with seating for 9 persons. Furthermore, there will be bike and bin storage areas for future occupiers and a separate garden room area which could be used for extra storage if required. As above, all the bedrooms are of a good size and the communal space is considered to be of an acceptable size and layout to accommodate residents. Therefore, the overall level of communal provision is considered acceptable. A condition is recommended to ensure that the communal areas are retained for communal use only.

Amenity Space

- 6.16 The application includes a good size rear garden area of 204m² and amended plans indicate hard and soft landscaping as well as soft landscaping to the front of the site. Plans also show bike and bin storage within the existing garage structure and as such no further outbuildings are required. Given the size and nature of the communal garden area, which is considered to provide sufficient space for functional communal space and sitting out and given the site's central location close to public recreation and leisure facilities, this is considered to be in accordance with Policy H10.

External windows

- 6.17 All habitable rooms would benefit from external windows. The two basement bedrooms would be served by large front and rear lightwells providing an acceptable degree of daylighting to these rooms. Furthermore, the head height of the two bedrooms in the basement (2.3m) is acceptable.

Layout/Stacking of Rooms

- 6.18 The Council's House Conversions SPD seeks to avoid layouts which locate living rooms, bathrooms and kitchens, next to, above, or below, proposed or neighbouring bedrooms. The layout largely achieves this with only the communal kitchen/dining/living room located above the basement units. The remainder of the rooms are stacked appropriately. The development would likely require additional internal insulation to ensure basement bedrooms are protected from noise and to comply with building regulations and a condition requiring details of how this will be achieved to safeguard residential amenity will be required prior to commencement of the development.

Privacy and Overlooking/Overbearing Impacts

- 6.19 The two proposed dormer windows would face down the application site garden and any views towards the garden of No.4 Howard Street would be at an oblique angle. It is not considered that there would be any significant material loss of privacy over and above the existing dormer window such to raise concern. Given the scale and position of the dormer windows, they will not result in any overbearing effects to any neighbouring property. Similarly, given the position of the single storey rear extension, this is not considered to result in any material overbearing effects over and above the current situation.

Noise and Disturbance and Pollution

- 6.20 The level of noise and disturbance from nine people is unlikely to be significantly harmful to the residents of adjoining properties, additional nuisance is controlled by civil enforcement (police) and statutory nuisance legislation (Environmental Health). A condition is recommended requiring the submission and approval of a management agreement, which among other matters includes the requirement to set out how noise within and outside the property will be managed.

(iii) **Design considerations and impact on conservation area and other heritage assets**

- 6.21 Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) seeks to ensure that new development enhances and preserves the local character. Policy H10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space) states that the design of outdoor areas will respect the size and character of other similar spaces in the vicinity.
- 6.22 The site lies within the Castle Hill/Russell Street/ Oxford Road Conservation Area and as such there is a duty imposed by Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requiring decision makers to have special regards to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area. This is reflected in Policy EN1 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment) which states that historic features and areas of historic importance and other elements of the historic environment, including their settings, will be protected and where appropriate enhanced and Policy EN3 (Enhancement of Conservation Areas) which states that the special interest, character and architecture of Conservation Areas will be conserved and enhanced and that development proposals within Conservation Areas must make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. The Council will, therefore, have regard to both the quality of the townscape and the quality and interest of the area, rather than solely that of the individual building.
- 6.23 Whilst No.2 Howard Street is not listed, it is identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal as a Building of Townscape Merit and is therefore reasonable to consider this to be a non-designated heritage asset. Furthermore, No.4 (and 4a) Howard Street is a listed building. As such there is also a duty imposed by Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requiring decision makers to have special regard to the desirability of preserving its setting or any features of special architectural historic interest which it possesses. This is also reflected in Policy EN1.
- 6.24 Paragraph 130 of the NPPF 2021 states that decisions should ensure that developments are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping and are sympathetic to local character including the surrounding built environment.
- 6.25 Paragraph 199 of the NPPF 2021 details that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.
- 6.26 The recently published National Design Guidance identifies 10 key components for good design and of particular note is the characteristic of 'Context' and it states that "well designed new development responds

positively to the features of the site itself and the surrounding context beyond the site boundary. It should enhance positive qualities and improve negative ones.” Additionally, there is specific reference to ‘views inwards and outwards’.

- 6.27 Given the nature of the proposals, there would be no increase in the footprint of the property. In fact, following the replacement of the existing conservatory with single storey rear extension there would be a slight reduction in the footprint. The Conservation Area Appraisal identifies the building as having well-intact interiors and the building has largely been well maintained. The building is not listed and as such there is little planning protection over interior alterations generally. However, it is noted that the proposals would not require a high degree of harmful change as the proposed HMO use would by its nature fit within existing internal spaces preserving the existing plan-form and would not require significant other alteration as shown on the proposed plans.
- 6.28 The proposed single storey rear extension would remain a subservient addition to the main property. Comprising red brick, white timber sash windows and slate roof, that would match the host property, this is considered to be an improvement on the existing uPVC conservatory. The rear extension would also allow for the reinstatement of the basement level window and allow increased daylight into the basement area than achieved at present.
- 6.29 Concern was originally raised by the case officer that the proposed flat roof rear ‘box dormer’ window would, due to its scale and design, fail to satisfactorily integrate with the character of the host property or preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Revised plans were received replacing the dormer window with two smaller pitched roof dormer windows. These revised dormer windows would not be excessive in scale and would neatly align with the windows below. They would be set well below the main roof ridge, sitting comfortably within the roof slope and they are not considered to result in any harm to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area nor the setting of the adjacent listed building. Indeed, the dormer windows would replace the existing single dormer window that is currently considered to be visually discordant. In this respect, the proposed dormer windows are considered to result in a visual benefit to the building and character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
- 6.30 The proposals include the renovation of the existing rear garage structure, which includes replacing the corrugated galvanised steel tin roof with slate to match the main building and replacing the existing timber walls with fire retardant treated vertical timber boarding. This is considered to improve the overall character and appearance of this structure.

- 6.31 Further to revised plans omitting the originally proposed self-contained flat from the scheme, the garage structure is instead now proposed to be for bin and cycle storage, rather than requiring a separate structure for storage within the garden. This is considered to be an efficient use of the land/existing structure and will prevent the harmful clutter of bins, which is normally an indicator of large HMO use.
- 6.32 Overall, it is considered that the proposed external works would not result in any detrimental effect on the character or appearance of the Conservation Area or the setting of the nearby listed buildings. The proposals, which include refurbishment works, are considered to provide some enhancement to the appearance of this non-designated heritage asset. To ensure design quality, conditions are recommended above requiring the submission of external material details including window details. In design terms the proposal is considered to be in accordance with Policies CC7, EN1, EN3 and H10.

iv) **Car/Cycle parking**

- 6.34 The site is located within Zone 2 for accessibility as identified in the Council's Parking and Design SPD, the primary core area but 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.
- 6.35 In accordance with the SPD, an HMO property would be required to provide 0.25 car parking spaces per room. No off-road parking is to be provided with this proposal. However, given the close proximity to the town centre and good transport links this is considered acceptable in this instance. Future occupiers would not be automatically entitled to resident or parking permits for the surrounding residential streets where parking is under considerable pressure. This would ensure that the development does not harm the existing amenities of neighbouring residential properties by adding to the already high level of on street car parking in the area. Conditions and an informative are included in the Recommendation above regarding a restriction on the entitlement to parking permits for existing and future schemes in the area.
- 6.36 In accordance with the SPD, cycle storage for an HMO should be provided at a ratio of 0.5 secure cycle storage spaces for each letting room, in the form of Sheffield type stands within a lockable store. 12 Sheffield stands are proposed in the existing garage structure which exceeds the required provision and is acceptable. A compliance condition is recommended to ensure that this facility is provided and retained for bicycle parking at all times.

v) **Bin Storage**

- 6.37 Policy H8 requires that bin storage is of an appropriate size and to which there is easy access. Bins are proposed to be stored in the existing garage in the rear garden, which is acceptable. Bins will be moved to the front side of the property on collection day. The recommended condition for the management plan agreement will include for management of the disposal of waste. Given that the bins would be stored within an existing structure (which in itself is proposed to be refurbished) this is not considered to result in any detrimental impact on the character or appearance of the Conservation Area (or setting of the adjacent listed building) and nor would it raise amenity concerns for residents. A condition is recommended to ensure this facility is provided and retained. An informative is included to advise contacting the Council's Refuse and recycling Team to ensure the correct capacity of bins is provided.

vi) **Sustainability**

- 6.38 Policy CC2 (Sustainable Design and Construction), supported by the Council's Sustainable Design and Construction SPD seeks the proposal, as a 'creation of new residential units through conversion', to comply with BREEAM Level of 'Very Good'. Policy CC2 also requires new development to reduce the consumption of resources and materials by using designs and site layouts which use *"energy, water, minerals, materials and other natural resources appropriately, efficiently and with care and take account of the effects of climate change"*.
- 6.39 Policy CC3 (Adaption to Climate Change) requires that all developments demonstrate how they have been designed to incorporate measures to adapt to climate change. Supporting text in para 4.1.8 states that *"The design of developments therefore needs to more carefully consider matters such as shading, insulation and ventilation, surface water runoff and storage and the use of appropriate tree and other planting."*
- 6.40 Further to the above, it is acknowledged that the proposals, as largely a refurbishment proposal of an older, characterful building, and change of use of an existing building, do not neatly align with the standard BREEAM requirements. Instead, the applicant is proposing sustainability enhancements to support the application including: energy efficient lighting; energy efficient fixtures/fittings (water heating and water management); soft landscaping.
- 6.41 Officers are satisfied that in this specific instance and with regard to the site context and nature of the scheme, that the proposals will allow the building to perform in an improved way to meet current sustainability policy expectations and the improvements will be secured by condition. As such, the proposal is considered to comply with Policies CC2 and CC3.

Equality Impact

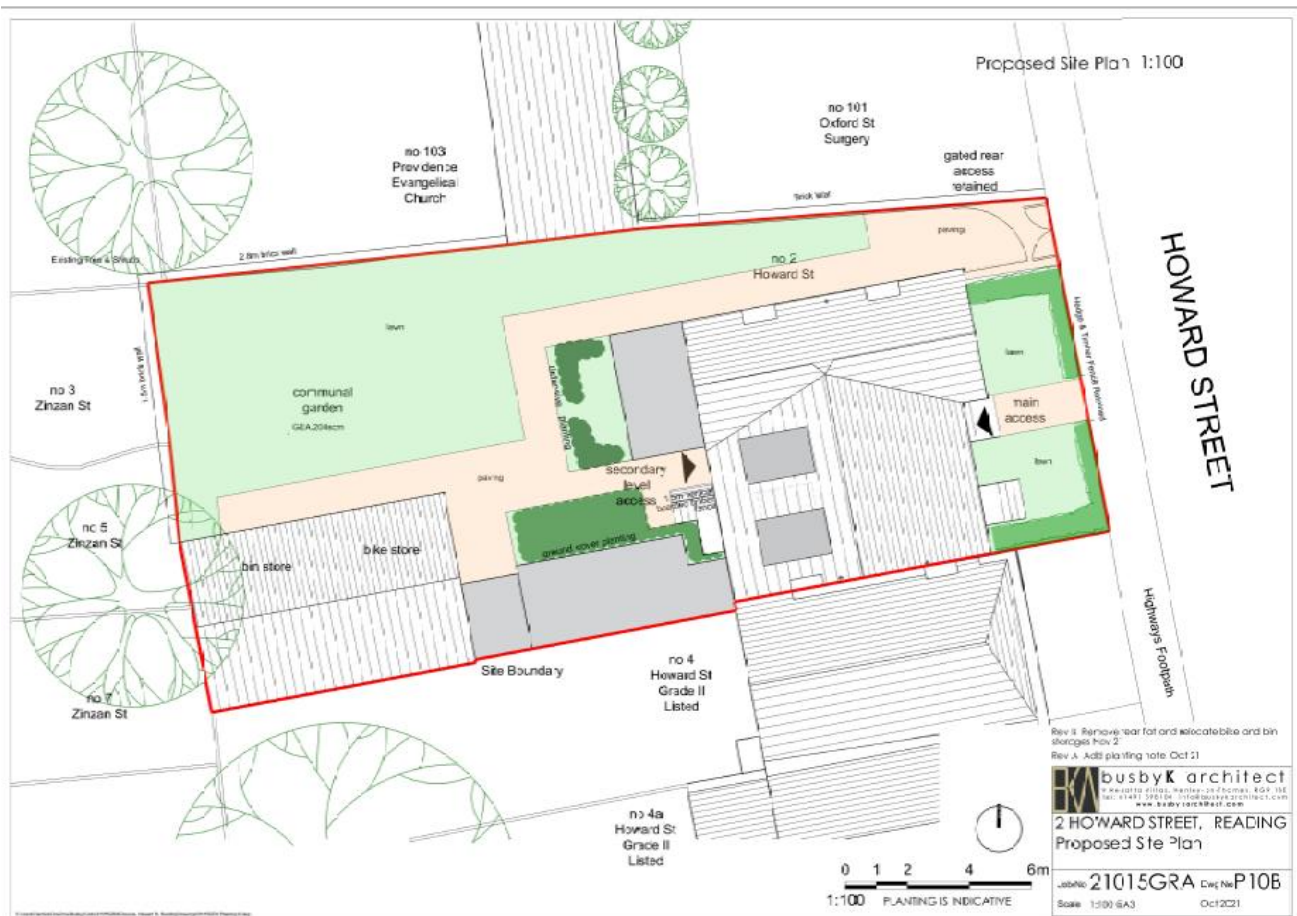
- 6.42 In determining these applications, the Committee is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, and sexual orientation. 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.

7. CONCLUSION

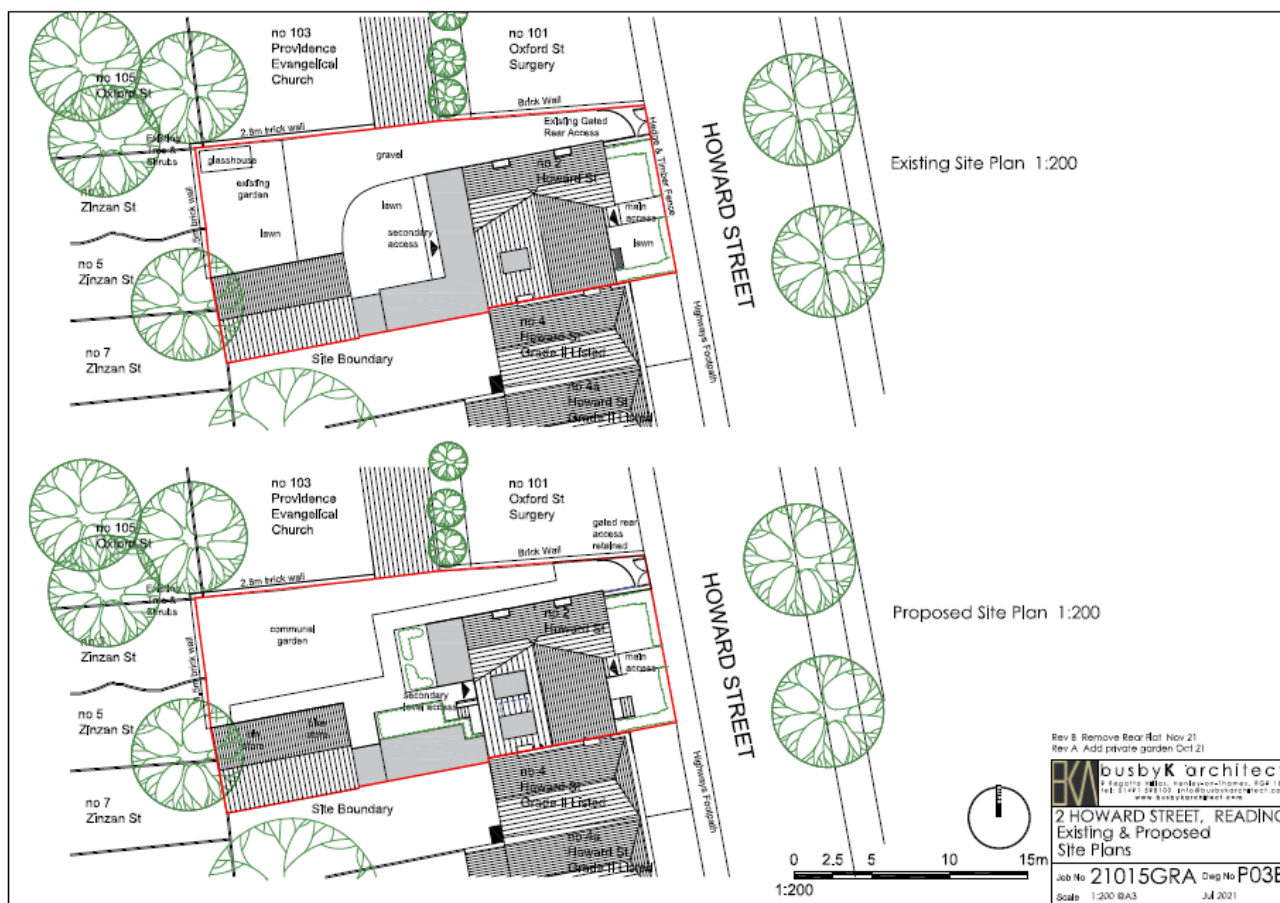
- 7.1 The proposal has been considered in the context of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.
- 7.2 The proposal to convert the property from a C3 dwellinghouse to large HMO is not considered to unduly dilute or harm the surrounding area and will ensure that this remains a mixed and sustainable community. In addition to this, it is considered that the proposal will not have any detrimental impact on amenity of future residents or existing residents of nearby properties, and nor will the proposals have any detrimental effect upon the character of the property as a Building of Townscape Merit or character and appearance of the Conservation Area or other nearby heritage assets.
- 7.3 Officers have worked positively and proactively with the applicant on this scheme, and amendments have been secured, which considered to satisfactorily address policy issues and, overall, officers consider this to be a supportable scheme. It is therefore recommended for approval subject to conditions and informatives as above.

Case Officer: Ethne Humphreys

Application Drawings



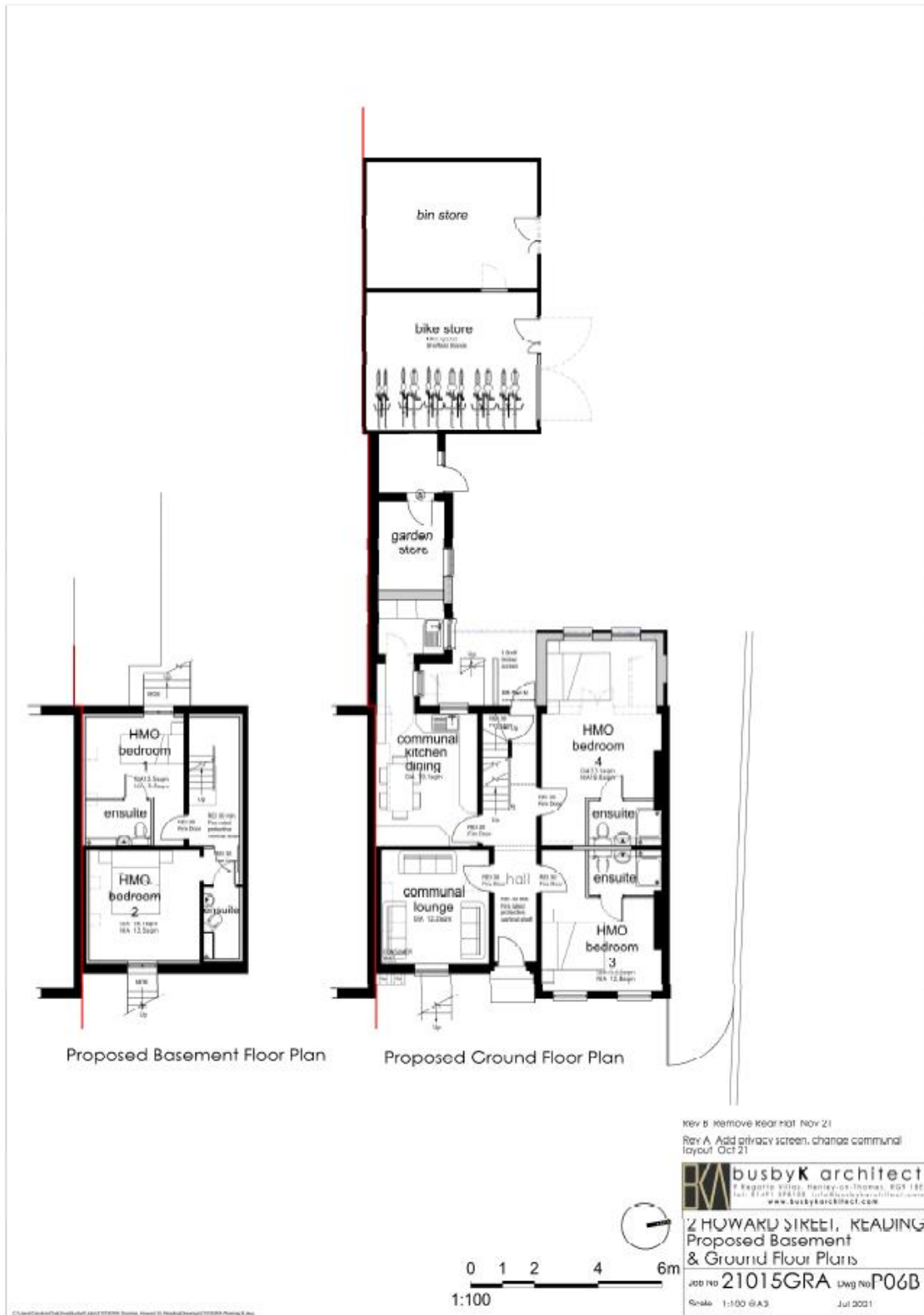
Proposed Site Plan



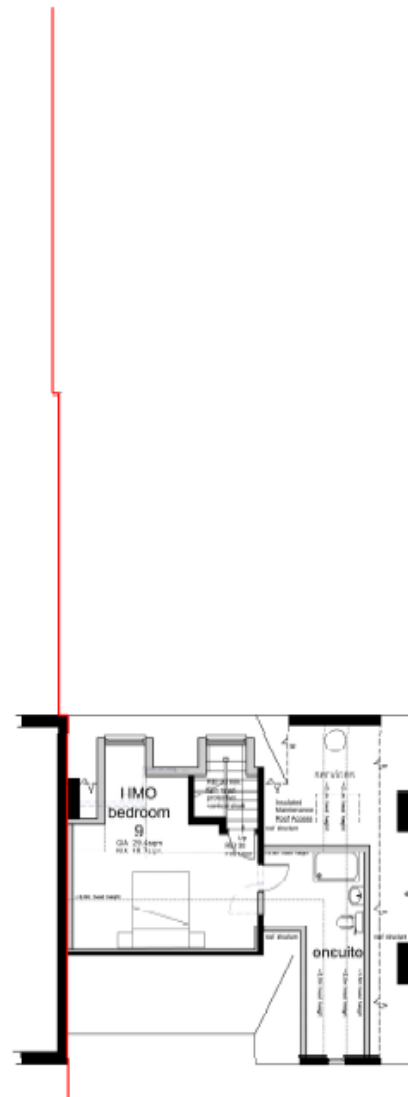
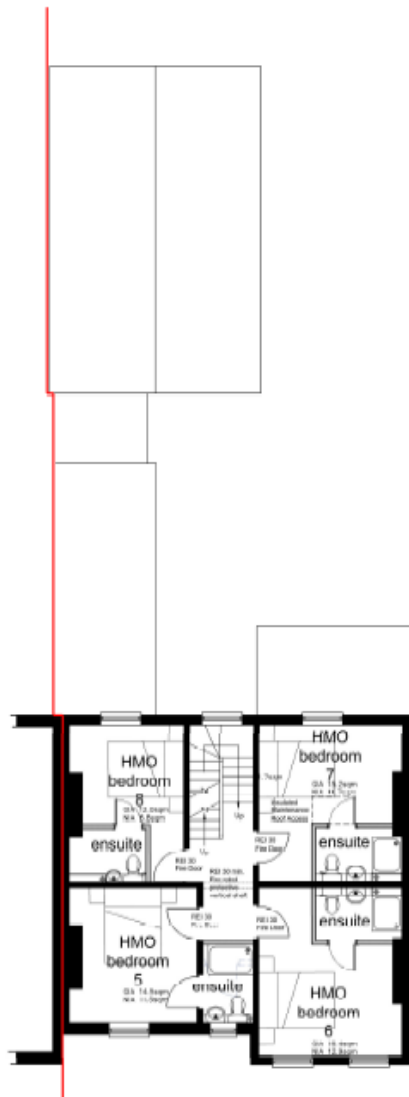
Existing and Proposed Site Plans



Proposed Elevations



Proposed Basement and Ground Floor Plans



Rev A Change doors Oct 21

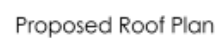
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2 HOWARD STREET, READING
 Proposed First
 & Second Floor Plans

JOB NO **21015GRA** Dwg No **P07A**

Scale 1:100 (A3) Jul 2021

Proposed First and Second Floor Plans



Existing and Proposed Roof Plans

UPDATE REPORT

BY THE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES READING BOROUGH COUNCIL PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 12th January 2022	ITEM NO. Page no:
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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: 9th 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 11th 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