

UPDATE REPORT

BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 22 June 2022

ITEM NO. 10
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Ward: Coley

App No.: 211416/FUL

Address: 4 Downshire Square, Reading

Proposal: Erection of 1 x detached and 2 x semi detached dwellings following demolition of the existing bungalow and detached garage.

Applicant: Finerain Developments Ltd

Deadline: 21 October 2021; Extended to 22 September 2022

AMENDED RECOMMENDATION:

As per the main agenda report but with an additional heads of term:

- a financial contribution for the planting and maintenance of 1x street tree (amount to be agreed)

And amended condition:

3. Submission and approval of external materials including: all brick, cladding, glazing, window frames/cills/surrounds/doors (*to be timber*), guttering and boundary treatments (pre-commencement)

1. Additional S106 obligation for street tree

- 1.1 The legal agreement will secure an additional financial contribution for the planting and maintenance of a street tree on the site frontage.

2. To clarify the space standards

- 2.1 Paragraph 6.36 of the Officer Report commented that Bedrooms 1 (as annotated) to the semi detached dwellings may fall minimally below the space standards as set out in Policy H5. To clarify, on further examination the overall size of the bedrooms *does* meet the space standard as it is a second double room i.e not the main bedroom and meets the floorspace and width standards for this type of room.

3. Additional consultation response

- 3.1 A consultation response was received from the Conservation and Urban Design Officer (CUDO) on 21/06/22.

3.2 His advice is as follows:

“The building is within the Downshire Square Conservation Area. The significance of the area is outlined in the Conservation Area Appraisal, but the following are identified as making a positive contribution:

- Retention of original buildings and their settings with few sympathetic enhancements by way of new development and/or addition of non-traditional materials;
- Retention of original brick walls and/or railings (original and replacement) throughout the area
- Good tree cover within the grounds of individual properties;
- Street trees in Downshire Square and on the Bath Road frontage.

The existing building is an interwar period building with moderate character. The Downshire Square Conservation Area Appraisal identifies buildings of townscape merit that make a positive contribution to the special character of the area, and this is not one of the identified buildings. The loss of the existing building was not a reason for refusal of a previous scheme (200571) that went to appeal, nor was it a reason for dismissal of the appeal. Therefore, there are no objections to its demolition.

It is noted there is a variety of different buildings in the area, and a mix of Victorian and Edwardian buildings from 2 to 4 storeys. Buildings on this street are generally two to three storeys, and the proposed height is similar to the buildings immediately to the north and south. None of the immediately neighbouring buildings are identified as being buildings of townscape merit, and nor are they listed. The proposal would not detrimentally impact the setting of any of the original buildings, nor would it impact on any of the other elements that make a positive contribution to the character of the area.

The proposed works are therefore considered to have a neutral impact from a conservation impact point of view. However, there should be a standard materials condition and the proposed windows and doors should be timber, so that the new buildings are an enhancement to the setting and character of the conservation area in accordance with Policy EN3.”

Officer comment: the pre-commencement condition requiring submission and approval of external materials (condition 3 in the main agenda report) has been amended above to note that windows and doors should be of timber construction.

4. To clarify the Ecological position

- 4.1 Concern has been raised in neighbour representation that the Bat Roost Assessment submitted with the application is no longer a valid document.
- 4.2 The building was assessed by a licenced bat surveyor in January 2020. The surveyor concluded that there were no features potentially suitable for use by roosting bats.
- 4.3 The Council's Ecologist has raised no objection to the proposals and further confirmed 21/06/22 that it is considered unlikely that the building will have changed significantly since the initial assessment was undertaken.
- 4.4 The Ecologist has confirmed that it would not normally be proportionate to ask for an updated survey report particularly where a building has been assessed as having negligible potential to host a bat roost.
- 4.5 Importantly, the Ecologist has confirmed that bats are not considered to be a constraint to the development and there remains no objection to the proposals on ecological grounds.
- 4.6 Biodiversity enhancement measures are proposed to be secured by condition as set out within the main agenda report.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The recommendation remains as set out in the main agenda report, subject to additional heads of term in the legal agreement and amended condition as detailed above.

Case Officer: Ethne Humphreys