

COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 1st February 2023

Ward: Thames

App No.: 221324/FUL

Address: 97a-117 Caversham Road, Reading, RG1 8AN

Proposal: Redevelopment of 97a-117 Caversham Road, and associated land to the rear, to provide 60 dwellings, including affordable housing, together with associated access, parking and landscaping.

Applicant: Bellway Homes Limited (Thames Valley)

Major Application: 13-week target decision date: 2nd January 2023

Extension of time: 1st April 2023

RECOMMENDATION

Delegate to the Head of Planning, Development and Regulatory Services (HPDRS) to:

i) **GRANT** full planning permission, subject to the satisfactory completion of a S106 legal agreement

OR

ii) Refuse full planning permission if the legal agreement is not completed by 1st April 2023 (unless officers on behalf of the Head of Planning, Development and Regulatory Services agree to a later date for completion of the legal agreement)

The S106 to include the following heads of terms:

Affordable Housing

To secure affordable housing on site consisting of eighteen units (30% provision) on site, to be 7 no. one-bedroom units, 4 no. two-bedroom units, 5 no. 3 bedroom units and 2 no. four bedroom houses. Of these, 5 of the one-bedroom units, 3 of the two-bedroom units, 3 of the three-bedroom units and both of the four bedroom houses to be let at the Reading Affordable Rent (RAR) tenure, capped at 70% of market rent as per published RAR levels. The remaining units (2 one bedroom units, 1 two bedroom unit and 2 three bedroom units) to be Affordable Home Ownership. This split is 72.2% Affordable Rent and 27.8% Affordable Home Ownership.

In the event that a Registered (affordable housing) Provider is not secured for the provision of the Affordable Housing on site, the units to be offered to the Council to be provided by the Council as Affordable Housing. In the event that neither a Registered Provider or the Council can come forward to provide Affordable Housing on-site, the developer to pay to the Council a default sum equivalent to 12.5% of the Gross Development Value of the development for provision of Affordable Housing elsewhere in the Borough. To be calculated (the mean average) from two independent RICS valuations to be submitted and agreed by the Council prior to first occupation of any market housing unit. In this event, the sum to be paid prior to first occupation of any market housing unit and index-linked from the date of valuation.

Open Space

To secure an Open Space contribution, amount to be reported at Committee, towards the improvement and extension of facilities within Christchurch Meadows - payable before first occupation.

Employment, Skills and Training

Secure a construction phase Employment Skills and Training Plan or equivalent financial contribution. As calculated in the Council's Employment Skills and Training SPD (2013) - payable on commencement of the development.

Sustainability

To secure a Zero Carbon Offset contribution of £48,419 [forty-eight thousand, four hundred and nineteen pounds], as per the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD 2019 a minimum of 35% improvement in regulated emissions over the Target Emissions Rate in the 2013 Building Regulations, plus a contribution of £1,800 per remaining tonne towards carbon offsetting within the Borough (calculated as £60/tonne over a 30-year period). As per formula in the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD. Payment would be triggered on commencement of development and would be index-linked.

Transport

Car Club

The developer shall provide and fund the provision of a car club bay as shown on Drawing ITB17593-GA-002H for a duration of 5 years (within the site on the newly-adopted road section). The provision of one car club vehicle shall be provided no later than one third (20 units) of the units are occupied.

A contribution of £5,000 towards the cost of a Traffic Regulation Order to extend the adopted road with no stopping or parking controls for a car club bay and on-street parking restrictions, to be paid prior to commencement of the development.

S278 for the adoptable road.

All financial contributions index-linked from the date of permission.

CONDITIONS TO INCLUDE:

1. TL1 - Full - time limit - three years
2. Approved Plans
3. Materials (samples to be approved)
4. Vehicle Parking (as specified)
5. EV Charging Points
6. Vehicular Access (as specified)
7. Access Closure with Reinstatement
8. Cycle Parking (pre-commencement)
9. Refuse Collection (to be approved)
10. Parking Permits 1 (notification to LPA)
11. Parking Permits 2 (notification to occupants)
12. Car Parking Management Plan (re-worded)
13. Construction Method Statement (pre-commencement)
14. Noise Mitigation Scheme (as specified)
15. Mechanical Plant (Noise Assessment required)
16. Air Quality Mechanical Ventilation (as specified)
17. Hours of construction/demolition
18. No burning on site
19. Contaminated Land Remediation Scheme (pre-commencement)
20. Contaminated Land Remediation Scheme (implement and verification)
21. Unidentified Contamination
22. Additional Bat Surveys if commencement after 2 years
23. Demolition outside bird nesting season
24. Archaeological Investigation (pre-commencement)
25. Biodiversity Enhancements

26. Crime Prevention Strategy (pre-commencement)
27. Sustainable Drainage (pre-commencement)
28. Sustainable Drainage (as specified)
29. Submission and approval of hard and soft landscaping (pre-commencement)
30. Scheme for retention/replacement of northern boundary wall with the rear of properties on Swansea Road
31. Boundary treatment (wider site)
32. External Lighting
33. SAP Assessment - Major - design stage
34. SAP Assessment - Major - As Built

INFORMATIVES TO INCLUDE:

- Positive and Proactive
- Pre-commencement conditions
- Highways
- Traffic Regulation Order
- S106
- Terms and Conditions
- Building Regulations
- Complaints about construction
- Encroachment
- Contamination
- Noise between residential properties
- CIL
- Parking Permits
- Thames Water

Delegate to the Head of Legal Services and Head of Planning Development and Regulatory Services to make such changes or additions to the conditions and obligations as may reasonably be required in order to complete/issue the above permissions.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The application site is on the western side of Caversham Road, adjacent to the roundabout linking to Vastern Road. The site comprises three two and three storey buildings which face directly onto Caversham Road, as well as a number of single and two storey buildings behind these. The buildings which face onto Caversham Road are currently vacant, but historically had retail use at ground floor level. The buildings further into the site are mainly vacant industrial units, although one is still in use as an MOT workshop.
- 1.2 The site has two access points, both from Caversham Road, one in the south eastern corner, the other at the north eastern corner of the site.
- 1.3 The area surrounding the site is mixed in character. To the east and south east is predominantly commercial, with large scale office, storage and retail use. To the north and west is predominantly residential, mainly comprising two storey terraced properties along Caversham Road to the north and Swansea Road to the west. EP Collier school is also located on Swansea Road to the west.
- 1.4 The site is within the Station/River Major Opportunity Area (MOA) in the Local Plan. The site forms part of the West of Caversham Road allocation for residential development (Policy CR11f). The other part of this allocation

continues to the south of the site, comprising the Shurgard self storage facility. The boundary of the Central Reading Area follows the site boundary along the northern edge.

- 1.5 The site has no statutory designations, but is within the Environment Agency Flood Zone 2 and within Reading's Air Quality Management Area.
- 1.6 The application is brought to Planning Applications Committee as it is a Major scheme.

Location Plan



2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 1.7 The proposal is for the demolition of all buildings on site and the erection of three blocks of flats and two terraces of houses, for a total of 60 residential units. Access would be from one of the existing accesses from Caversham Road, to the north of the roundabout. The proposed mix of units is shown in the table below:

Type	Market	Affordable	Total
1 bedroom flat	14	7	21
2 bedroom flat	14	4	18
3 bedroom flat	6	5	11
4 bedroom house	8	2	10
Total	42	18	60

- 1.8 30 car parking spaces would be provided within the development, as well as a Car Club space off-site. There would be 38 cycle parking spaces for the flats as well as 2 cycle parking spaces per house.
- 1.9 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL): the applicant has duly completed a CIL liability form with the submission. The proposed C3 use is CIL liable and the estimated amount of CIL chargeable from the proposed scheme would be **£475,125.84** based on £156.24 (2022 indexed figure) per sqm of Gross Internal Area (GIA).

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 1.10 The only application of relevance was application ref. 090634, which was for the change of use of a B8 storage unit to an MOT centre. This was granted in February 2009 and relates to the current MOT centre which currently sits in the centre of the site.

4. CONSULTATIONS

RBC Transport

- 1.11 No objection subject to conditions and informatives. Key points relate to the following:
- Parking provision at 50% would be acceptable subject to Parking Permit Restrictions
 - Cycle parking provision would meet Local Plan requirements
 - Access arrangements are acceptable given the reduction in trip generation
 - Appropriate turning space has been provided for refuse and emergency vehicles
 - Car club space to be provided as part of the development to offset lower parking offer
 - Construction Management Plan to be secured by condition

RBC Environmental Protection

- 1.12 No objection subject to the conditions and informatives as detailed in the recommendation above.

RBC Ecology Consultant & Natural Environment

- 1.13 The proposals are unlikely to affect priority habitats or protected species and are likely to result in a net gain for biodiversity. The proposal would be acceptable subject to conditions as detailed above.

Berkshire Archaeology

- 1.14 The proposal is acceptable subject to condition as detailed above.

RBC Waste & Recycling

- 1.15 Appropriate levels of bin storage have been provided in acceptable locations which would allow for collection. The turning head allows for waste and recycling vehicles to enter and exit the site in forward gear.

RBC Housing

- 1.16 The amount, mix and location of the affordable units are acceptable. A cascade function should be included in the legal agreement as a fallback position. Should an RP not want to take on the three bedroom flats, arrangement should be made for alternative units within the scheme to be provided instead.

Environment Agency

- 1.17 No comments at time of report writing. Further update to be issued prior to committee

Thames Water

- 1.18 No objection.

Public/local consultation and comments received

- 1.19 56 neighbouring residents were consulted by letter , as well as the Bell Tower Residents Association. A site notice was also displayed at the application site.

- 1.20 Five letters of representation from residents were received, which highlighted the below concerns:

- Lack of parking
- Impact on neighbour's living conditions
- Loss of the boundary wall between the site and the rear gardens of Swansea Road
- Privacy
- Security
- Lack of green space
- Noise and disruption
- Light, noise and air pollution for future residents
- Out of keeping with the wider area
- Lack of infrastructure

- 1.21 A letter from local Ward Councillors was also received which raised the following concerns:

- Lack of parking
- Request to prohibit new residents from acquiring parking permits
- Impact on neighbour's living conditions, in particularly privacy
- Potential loss of the boundary wall between the site and the rear gardens of Swansea Road- causing harm to neighbours and potential security issues
- Lack of green space
- Issues with the shared use roads within the site

- 1.22 A letter from the local MP, Matt Rodda was received, which raised concerns regarding:

- Lack of parking
- Request to prohibit new residents from acquiring parking permits
- Issues relating to future security, in particular retaining the existing boundary wall
- Concerns regarding overlooking

- Out of keeping with the area

5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.23 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 also states at Paragraph 11 “Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development”.
- 1.24 The following relevant planning policy and guidance is applicable to the assessment of this application:
- 1.25 National Policy - National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021
 Section 2 - Achieving Sustainable Development
 Section 4 - Decision Making
 Section 5 - Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
 Section 6 - Building a strong, competitive economy
 Section 7 - Ensuring the vitality of town centres
 Section 8 - Promoting healthy and safe communities
 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 15 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- 1.26 Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019)
 CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
 CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction
 CC3: Adaptation to Climate Change
 CC5: Waste Minimisation and Storage
 CC6: Accessibility and the Intensity of Development
 CC7: Design and the Public Realm
 CC8: Safeguarding Amenity
 EN2: Areas of Archaeological Significance
 EN7: Local Green Space and Public Open Space
 EN9: Provision of Open Space
 EN10: Access to Open Space
 EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network
 EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodland
 EN15: Air Quality
 EN16: Pollution and Water Resources
 EM3: Loss of Employment Land
 H1: Provision of Housing
 H2: Density and Mix
 H3: Affordable Housing
 H5: Standards for New Housing
 H10: Private and Communal Outdoor Space
 TR1 Achieving the Transport Strategy
 TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
 TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging
 CR1: Definition of Central Reading
 CR2: Design in Central Reading

CR3: Public Realm in Central Reading
CR11: Station/River Major Opportunity Area

- 1.27 Supplementary Planning Documents
Affordable Housing (2021)
Revised Parking Standards and Design (Oct 2011)
Planning Obligations under S106 (April 2015)
Sustainable Design and Construction (Dec 2019)
Employment, Skills and Training (2013)

6. APPRAISAL

1.28 The main issues to be considered are:

- a) The principle of development;
- b) Housing Mix;
- c) Design and appearance;
- d) Residential amenity;
- e) Transport and parking;
- f) Natural Environment;
- g) Sustainability;
- h) Sustainable Drainage Systems
- i) S106 (including Affordable Housing)
- j) Other matters

a) Principle of development

1.29 The site is within the Station/River Major Opportunity Area (CR11), which requires development to contribute towards providing a high-density mix of uses, requiring careful consideration to the areas of transition to medium and low development. Specifically, the site forms part of the allocation “West of Caversham Road”, CR11f. This allocation extends to include the storage site to the south. The proposal encompasses approximately half of the overall allocation. The allocation proposes between 75 and 115 units for the whole site and reads:

“This area will be developed for residential with on-site open space. Densities will be lower than elsewhere in the Station/River area to reflect the proximity to low-rise residential areas, and the edge of the site nearest to the areas of terracing will require careful design treatment and respect the historic context of areas to the west. Development should take account of mitigation required as a result of a Flood Risk Assessment”

1.30 The proposal would demolish the existing commercial buildings and erect several residential blocks, with some on site open space. The commercial uses would be lost. The majority of the commercial buildings are vacant and in poor repair, and so their loss and re-use of an urban brownfield site for residential would be considered acceptable. The MOT centre is currently in operation and would be lost, however, it is considered that the benefits of the proposed scheme would outweigh the loss of this use, which of itself would not normally be compatible in a residential setting. Furthermore, the site has been through a robust assessment when adopting the Local Plan, and its loss as an employment site has been considered acceptable.

1.31 The proposal would be entirely residential, and therefore would be generally in accordance with the allocation. The proposal would provide 60 residential

units, which is just over half of the maximum indicative site potential, which officers advise is an appropriate proportion.

- 1.32 The applicant has also demonstrated that consideration has been given to ensuring that the remainder of the site is not prejudiced in coming forward for development in the future. The site adjoins the other half of the wider allocated site along the southern boundary and part of the western boundary. It is laid out as below:



- 1.33 One end of Block C sits adjacent to this boundary and although windows do face onto the site they are all secondary. The end of the western terrace also sits adjacent to the southern boundary but presents a blank façade. The rear of the terrace faces onto the western boundary of the site, with the properties are between 7m and 8m away from the boundary. A pedestrian access runs to the boundary of the site which could be continued if the remainder of the site came forward in future. Given the nature of the site, it is considered that the proposals would not prejudice any future development on the remainder of the allocated site.
- 1.34 Local Plan Policy EN18 seeks to direct development away from areas at risk of flooding. It requires Major developments to include sustainable drainage systems (SuDS).
- 1.35 The site is located within Flood Zone 2, which means that there would be between a 1% and 3.3% annual probability of fluvial flooding occurring. The type of development would be categorised as “More Vulnerable”, which is considered compatible within Flood Zone 2, as per the NPPG, and an

exemption test would not be required. The applicant has submitted a Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy. The site is assessed to be at low risk from most forms of flooding, other than fluvial flooding, which is considered to be a medium risk.

1.36 The submitted Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) and Sustainable Drainage Strategy set out mitigation against flooding at the site, including the following measures, which are included in the scheme:

- Finished floor levels (FFL) to be set above the design flood level, resulting in all FFLs being above 39.05m AOD.
- Sustainable Drainage Strategy to be implemented

1.37 Given the nature of the development, relatively low risk of flooding and the mitigation measures proposed, it is considered that the proposal would be acceptable in principle with regard to flooding.

1.38 The application proposes to provide residential use on a site allocated for residential in the Local Plan and would not prejudice future development. The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in principle, subject to detailed assessment.

b) Housing Mix

1.39 Policy H2 states that wherever possible, residential development should contribute towards meeting the needs for the mix of housing set out in figure 4.6, in particular for family homes of three or more bedrooms. The site is within the Central Area, so there is no requirement for 50% of the units to be family housing.

1.40 The scheme comprises 60 units, split as below:

Type	Market	Affordable	Total
1 bedroom flat	14	7	21 (35%)
2 bedroom flat	14	4	18 (30%)
3 bedroom flat	6	5	11 (18.3%)
4 bedroom house	8	2	10 (16.6%)
Total	42 (70%)	18 (30%)	60 (100%)

1.41 The overall mix would provide a variety of unit sizes and types which would address the need for housing across Reading. The proposal provides a significant amount of family housing in the Central Area, including houses. Given this, the proposed housing mix would be considered acceptable.

c) Design and appearance

1.42 Policy CC7 states that, “*all development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area*”. The NPPF in paragraph 130 c) states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments, “*are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities)*”.

1.43 The existing buildings on the site have limited value. The buildings along the frontage of Caversham Road are not unattractive, but do not include features

which cannot be found elsewhere in Reading or in the immediate vicinity. Their loss would not result in any harm to the character and appearance of the area, providing they are replaced with buildings of high quality design. The industrial buildings in the remainder of the site do not positively contribute to the area and their loss would be acceptable

- 1.44 The surrounding area to the north and west is predominantly at a domestic scale, with two and three storey terraces and townhouses. To the south and east, the character is more commercial in nature, with large footprint office and retail buildings, interspersed with smaller-scale terraces. Across the surrounding areas, the use of red and grey bricks are prevalent, as well as prominent gables and pitched roofs. The residential streets tend to be quite narrow, often with changes in height where larger buildings sit within the tighter terraced properties.
- 1.45 The proposal comprises of three blocks of flats and two terraces of houses. Block A is a smaller block in the northeastern corner between the access and the northern boundary, Block B faces onto Caversham Road and sits between the access and the southern boundary and Block C sits in the centre of the site, to the rear of Block B. One terrace of four houses is to the rear of Block A and backs onto the northern boundary, the other terrace is to the rear of Block C and backs onto the western boundary.
- 1.46 Blocks A and B face directly onto Caversham Road and are the most visible from the surrounding area. They are four storeys in height, with prominent front-facing gables and a mixture of pitched and flat roofs. They use red and grey bricks with black metal balcony railings. The design of these blocks take cues from the existing buildings on the frontage as well as the buildings along Caversham Road to the north and west. The gables reflect the pattern of design in the surrounding streets and create a unified frontage. The buildings include balconies which have been recessed into the frontages. These, combined with the set backs between the gables on Block B, the window recesses and use of materials work together to provide interest on the façades by breaking up the massing. Both Block A and B step down to the north and west respectively to three storeys to meet the neighbouring buildings.
- 1.47 Block C is of a different design to the other buildings on the site. The building is L-shaped, following the proposed street pattern through the site. Given it is in the centre of the site, surrounded by predominantly red brick buildings with pitched roofs, it is proposed to be distinguishable by the use of mainly grey brick with a flat roof. It is four storeys in height, but the flat roof ensures that it reads as a step down from Blocks A and B in height into the site. The design draws some cues from the existing industrial buildings, thereby reflecting some of the history of the site. It is set away from the wider public realm and provides a visual difference in the centre of the site which ensures that the scheme does not appear monotonous in its style. The block is set back from the road within the site to provide some landscaped areas, and would provide welcome contrast when viewed from Caversham Road down the access of the site.
- 1.48 The two terraces are positioned towards the rear of the site, stepping down from the 3/4 storey blocks to three storey townhouses to meet the mainly two-storey terraced properties to the north and west. The houses take the gabled theme and present it along the street within the development, using both the styles present on Caversham Road and on Swansea Road to the rear, to bring the character of the surrounding area into the centre of the site.

1.49 The proposal would represent high quality design which would reflect the character and appearance of the wider area. The palette of materials would be appropriate and details would be secured by condition. The proposals are considered to be acceptable in terms of design.

d) Residential Amenity

1.50 Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) of the Reading Borough Local Plan states that development will not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties.

Impact on neighbour amenity

1.51 The immediate surrounding neighbours are along the northern boundary of the site, comprising 54 - 68 Swansea Road, 119 - 133 Caversham Road and directly to the south of the site at 93 - 97 Caversham Road. The remainder of the site boundary is with a self-storage facility to the south and west and fronting onto Caversham Road to the east.

1.52 The properties along Swansea Road are two storey terraced houses, whose gardens back directly onto the site boundary. Currently the rear wall of an industrial unit runs along this boundary at a height of between 5 and 6 metres above natural ground level. The distance between the main rear elevation of the existing properties and the rear of the proposed terrace would be 22m and 17.5m to the rear of the existing terraces' outriggers. Given the orientation of the existing properties, this varies slightly between the houses.

1.53 The applicant proposes to retain the existing boundary wall if structurally possible, or replace it with a similar structure if not, to ensure that there would be no impact on privacy or security to the properties along Swansea Road. Given the universal support for the retention of the boundary wall, this is a rather unique situation, whereby the retention of a high boundary wall would be beneficial to the living conditions of both the existing and future residents. This would be secured by condition. A daylight/sunlight report has also been submitted which demonstrates that there would be no adverse impact.

1.54 Given the distances and retention of the wall, it is not considered that there would be any adverse impact on living conditions at the properties along Swansea Road.

1.55 119-133 Caversham Road is a row of houses and sits directly to the north of Block A. The proposal would be of a similar scale to the existing building adjacent to number 119 Caversham Road. It would project slightly beyond the rear elevation of number 119, but would be set in from the boundary. The daylight/sunlight report produced by the applicant shows that there would be no unacceptable adverse impact on light received at the property or its garden. The proposal is considered to have an acceptable relationship with number 119 Caversham Road.

1.56 To the south, Nos. 93-97 Caversham Road which commercial at ground floor with residential above abut the site. The proposed buildings step down to match the height of the neighbouring property. The proposals would not

project beyond the rear elevation of this building, and the relationship is considered acceptable.

- 1.57 The applicant has demonstrated that there would be no loss of privacy or outlook to neighbours due to the position of windows and the distances between the proposal and neighbouring buildings. The applicant's daylight/sunlight report shows that the amount of daylight and sunlight received within each neighbouring habitable room windows would exceed the BRE criteria, and shows that gardens surrounding the proposal would have an improved sunlight amenity as a result of the development and the removal of the commercial buildings. The scale and position of the proposed buildings would also ensure that there would be no increased sense of overbearing or enclosure. The nature of the development would not result in any increase in noise pollution to neighbouring properties, which has been confirmed through a submitted noise report and has been agreed by RBC Environmental Protection officers. The proposals would have no unacceptable impact on the living conditions of neighbours.

Amenity of proposed dwellings

- 1.58 In addition to Policy CC8 above, policies H5 (Standards for New Housing) and H10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space) also apply. Policy H5 states that new build housing will need to comply with the nationally-prescribed space standards.
- 1.59 All of the proposed units meet or exceed the nationally-prescribed space standards. The internal layouts are acceptable with adequate sized bedrooms (which meet the size requirements in Policy H5) and living accommodation. The proposed development therefore provides an acceptable standard of accommodation and is in accordance with Policy H5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

Sunlight/daylight

- 1.60 The applicant's daylight/sunlight report demonstrates that 89% of the habitable rooms within the development would meet or exceed the BRE targets. Given the location of the site within the Central Area, this is considered to be a very high level of compliance. Furthermore, the majority of amenity space areas would receive enough sunlight to exceed the BRE targets. Overall, it is considered that the proposals would receive adequate levels of daylight and sunlight.

Outdoor space

- 1.61 Policy H10 sets out that *"Dwellings will be provided with functional private or communal open space wherever possible, that allows for suitable sitting-out areas, children's play areas, home food production, green waste composting, refuse storage, general outdoor storage and drying space. Houses will be provided with private outdoor space whereas flats may be provided with communal outdoor space, balconies and/or roof gardens."*
- 1.62 Every unit would have a useable private amenity space in the form of a terrace or balcony for the flats and a garden for the houses. Given the relatively high proportion of family housing on the site, communal amenity space should be provided. However, although the proposal does include some communal outdoor space to the rear of the site between the western terrace

and Block C, this is not considered sufficient on its own to meet the needs of the future residents. Given this, a financial contribution (amount to be confirmed in the Update Report) will be provided as part of the legal agreement to enhance nearby outdoor space.

- 1.63 Given the town centre location, provision of acceptable private amenity space and the applicant's willingness to provide a financial contribution, officers are satisfied that the lack of on-site amenity space could be adequately overcome by way of a financial contribution. As such, the scheme is considered to accord with policies EN9 and H10 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

Air Quality

- 1.64 The site is within an air quality management area, as a result of its location next to the IDR and Caversham Road. An Air Quality Assessment has been submitted which demonstrates that the proposals would not result in harm to living conditions of future occupants through the use of mechanical ventilation, where the intakes are located on the inside of Blocks A and B. This can be secured by condition.

Crime and safety

- 1.65 The proposals would provide natural surveillance across the site, with every area within the site being overlooked by several windows. The boundary treatment, particularly to the north, would ensure that the site is secure and would not result in any antisocial behaviour. Furthermore, no objections have been received from the Police Crime Prevention Design Officer. Notwithstanding, this is a town centre site with backland development and so a Crime Prevention Strategy would need to be secured by condition.

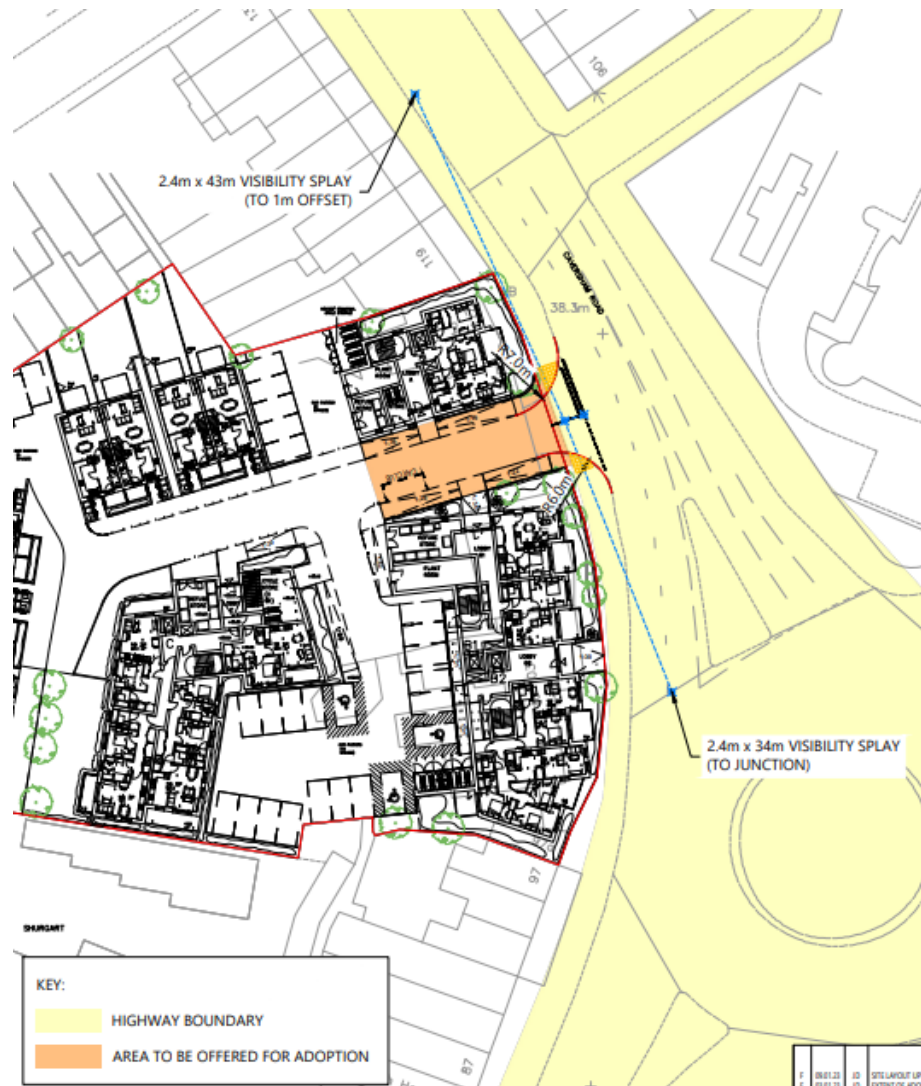
e) Transport and parking

Access

- 1.66 Policy TR1 of the Local Plan requires developments to promote and improve sustainable transport. Policy TR3 states that consideration will be given to the effect of a new development on safety, congestion and the environment. Proposals should provide acceptable access to the site and ensure that there would not be a detrimental impact on the functioning and safety of the transport network.
- 1.67 One of the vehicular accesses is proposed to be retained as existing, from a single point from the A4155 Caversham Road, north of the roundabout. The other existing access, in the southeastern corner of the site, would be stopped up/closed off. This would have a beneficial impact by reducing the number of direct accesses from a classified road and improving traffic flow and safety. The applicant has provided trip rate analysis that indicates that the proposed development would result in a net reduction in vehicle trips when compared to its existing/previous uses, which includes an MOT centre, various industrial uses and retail. Given this, there would be a reduced number of vehicle movements at the proposed access, and therefore the access is considered acceptable.
- 1.68 The access road would be 5.5m wide therefore allowing two-way access, with dedicated 2m wide footways, which accords with the relevant guidance. The

applicant has demonstrated that a refuse vehicle making a left-hand turn from Caversham Road into the site would not obstruct the flow of traffic on the road or within the site. The width of the access would allow vehicles to enter and leave the site simultaneously if required.

- 1.69 It is proposed that the first 25m of the access is adopted, and that a contribution towards the introduction of waiting restrictions at the junction would be secured through a legal agreement. The plan below shows the area to be adopted, as well as the location of the proposed car club space, discussed in the next section of this report.



Car Parking

- 1.70 Policy TR5 of the Local Plan states that development should provide car parking and cycle parking that is appropriate to the accessibility of locations within the Borough to sustainable transport facilities, particularly public transport. Local parking standards are set out in the RBC, Revised Parking Standards and Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which takes into account the accessibility of the site.
- 1.71 The site is well located in terms of accessibility by non-car modes of travel and within easy walking and cycling distance from the town centre providing a wide range of local facilities and services. The site sits on the boundary of Zone 1 as identified in the Council's the adopted parking standards.

- 1.72 The proposed development would provide a total of 30 car parking spaces, with one parking space provided for each of the four-bedroom houses, and 20 unallocated parking spaces provided for the flats. The parking is considered acceptable given the location of the site and the controlled parking areas surrounding the application site, a condition would ensure that the development would not be eligible for permits in the surrounding residential streets.
- 1.73 A parking management plan would be secured by condition. The Parking management plan shall highlight where vehicles are able to park and enforcement process to ensure turning areas for service and delivery vehicles are maintained within the development. If a vehicle is not authorised to park within the site, the parking management company will operate an enforcement procedure. Full details will be secured by condition.
- 1.74 The reduced level of car parking provision for the residential units would be supported by a financial contribution towards a car club space. The car club space would be located within the site, adjacent to Block B1, as shown on Drawing ITB17593-GA-002H. This is shown within the area of the internal street to be offered for adoption. The location of the space still allows for a refuse vehicle to enter the site and pass a waiting car. The applicant will subsidise the Car Club for a period of 5 years.
- 1.75 To meet the Local Plan requirements, each new house would be provided with an electric charging point and 10% of all communal parking spaces would be provided with an active vehicle charging point equating to a total of 12 EV charging points across the development. This will be secured by condition.

Cycle Parking

- 1.76 The Borough's Parking Standards and Design SPD require a minimum provision of 0.5 cycle storage spaces per 1 or 2 bedroom flat, 1 cycle storage space per 3-bedroom flat and 2 cycle storages spaces per 4-bedroom dwelling.
- 1.77 Cycle parking would be provided for the houses in accordance with the Council's standards, with two cycle parking spaces provided for each of the four bedroom dwellings in secure cycle stores. For the flats, a total of 38 cycle parking spaces would be provided, which is in excess of the 32 cycle parking spaces required in line with the minimum standards. The preferred type of cycle parking is the Sheffield stand as this device provides support for the whole bicycle, allowing both the frame and wheels to be secured and is easy to facilitate the use of 'D' type locks and/or conventional chains/cables. Covered, secure cycle storage would be secured by condition.

Servicing and Deliveries

- 1.78 Large deliveries and servicing will be undertaken within the site. This is considered acceptable.
- 1.79 There are ten proposed dwelling houses, with a terrace of six, 4 bedroom, houses along the western boundary of the site and four on the northern boundary. Each of the dwellings are provided with bin storage areas to the front of the properties to enable 'kerbside' collection.

- 1.80 Bin storage for the flats has been illustrated on the ground floor of each block, located no further than 10m from the carriageway within the site to avoid the stationing of service vehicles on the carriageway for excessive periods.
- 1.81 The waste & recycling storage and collection arrangements are considered acceptable.

Construction

- 1.82 A condition requiring a Construction Method Statement (CMS) will be attached to any approval, requiring submission and approval before any works commence on-site to regulate the amenity effects of construction. As well as demonstrating a commitment to ensuring the number of HGV movements are managed and controlled, the CMS must demonstrate that appropriate measures will be implemented to ensure the safety of pedestrians and cyclists on the road network around the construction site. The agreed measures included in the CMS become a formal commitment and will be approved by the Local Highway and Planning Department.

f) Natural Environment

- 1.83 Policy EN12 seeks to protect existing green space, ensure that there would be no net loss of biodiversity, and where possible to demonstrate that there is a net gain for biodiversity. Policy EN14 seeks to protect trees, and requires new development to make provision for tree retention and planting within the application site.
- 1.84 At present, the site is primarily hardstanding, buildings with scattered shrub. These are not priority habitats and are not considered a constraint to the proposals and the application provides the opportunity to improve the present situation. A biodiversity calculation was presented by the applicants which demonstrates that the development would result in a 2,015% net gain in habitat units. Enhancements include 23 new trees, native and ornamental hedge and shrub planting and modified grassland. The significant biodiversity net gain the proposals would achieve complies with the Local Plan.
- 1.85 A bat survey was undertaken and demonstrates that there are no roosting bats at the site. A condition is included to re-take a bat survey if more than two years elapse between survey and commencement of development.
- 1.86 The ecology survey identifies that two of the buildings support nesting pigeons. A condition has been attached to ensure that demolition takes place outside of the bird nesting season.
- 1.87 A condition is attached to ensure that wildlife enhancements such as bird and bat boxes are included within the development.

g) Sustainability

- 1.88 Local Plan Policy H5 'Standards for New Housing' seeks that all new-build housing is built to high design standards. In particular, new housing should adhere to, water efficiency standards in excess of the Building Regulations, zero carbon homes standards (for major schemes), and provide at least 5% of dwellings as wheelchair user units. Policy CC2 (Sustainable Design and Construction) and Policy CC3 (Adaption to Climate Change) seeks that

development proposals incorporate measures which take account of climate change.

- 1.89 An energy and sustainability statement was submitted as part of the application. This demonstrates that the proposal would not meet zero carbon targets, but would achieve circa 74.37% carbon reduction through higher fabric standards and the low carbon and renewable energy systems, namely photovoltaic panels and air source heat pumps.
- 1.90 Residual emissions would be offset with a carbon offset payment of £1,800 per tonne, in accordance with Policy H5. This contribution would be £48,419, and would be secured in the legal agreement.
- 1.91 The Council's Sustainable Design and Construction SPD states in paragraph 3.11 that "in achieving Zero Carbon Homes for major residential developments, the preference is that new build residential of ten or more dwellings will achieve a true carbon neutral development on-site. If this is not achievable, it must achieve a minimum of 35% improvement in regulated emissions over the Target Emissions Rate in the 2013 Building Regulations, plus a Section 106 contribution of £1,800 per remaining tonne towards carbon offsetting within the Borough (calculated as £60/tonne over a 30 year period.)"
- 1.92 Although it is unfortunate that the proposed development cannot achieve Zero Carbon, the submitted Sustainability Statement demonstrates that the development achieves a 74.37% improvement along with a carbon offsetting in the form of a financial contribution, which will be secured through a S106 legal agreement. Officers are therefore satisfied that the development would be policy compliant in this regard.

h) Sustainable Drainage Systems

- 1.93 Policy EN18 requires all major developments to incorporate Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) with runoff rates aiming to reflect greenfield conditions and, in any case, must be no greater than the existing conditions of the site. The applicant has submitted a Surface Water Drainage Strategy which demonstrates that the proposed drainage rate would be a reduction when compared against the Brownfield runoff rate and provides a pipes' network to the attenuation tank. As such, the proposal complies with Policy EN18 and is considered acceptable subject to the conditions recommended above.

i) S106 (including Affordable Housing)

- 1.94 The overarching infrastructure Policy CC9 (Securing Infrastructure) allows for necessary contributions to be secured to ensure that the impacts of a scheme are properly mitigated. The following obligations would be sought and as set out in the recommendation above:
- To secure affordable housing on site consisting of eighteen units (30% provision) on site, to be 7 no. one-bedroom units, 4 no. two-bedroom units, 5 no. 3 bedroom units and 2 no. four bedroom houses. Of these, 5 of the one-bedroom units, 3 of the two-bedroom units, 3 of the three-bedroom units and both of the four bedroom houses to be let at the Reading Affordable Rent (RAR) tenure, capped at 70% of market rent as per published RAR levels. The remaining units (2 one bedroom units, 1

two bedroom unit and 2 three bedroom units) to be Affordable Home Ownership. This split is 72.2% Affordable Rent and 27.8% Affordable Home Ownership.

- In the event that a Registered (affordable housing) Provider is not secured for the provision of the Affordable Housing on site, the units to be offered to the Council to be provided by the Council as Affordable Housing. In the event that neither a Registered Provider or the Council can come forward to provide Affordable Housing on-site, the developer to pay to the Council a default sum equivalent to 12.5% of the Gross Development Value of the development for provision of Affordable Housing elsewhere in the Borough. To be calculated (the mean average) from two independent RICS valuations to be submitted and agreed by the Council prior to first occupation of any market housing unit. In this event, the sum to be paid prior to first occupation of any market housing unit and index-linked from the date of valuation.
- Zero carbon offset financial contribution of £48,419 based on the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD formula
- Employment, Skills and Training - construction either a contribution base on the Employment, Skills and Training SPD formula or the submission of a plan
- Open space financial contribution, amount TBC
- The developer should provide and fund the provision of a car club bay as shown on Drawing ITB17593-GA-002H for a duration of 5 years. The provision of one car club vehicle should be provided on occupation of the development.
- A contribution of £5,000 towards the Traffic Regulation to provide a car club bay and on-street parking restrictions, to be paid prior to commencement of the development.
- A contribution of £5,000 towards waiting restrictions at the junction between Caversham Road and the site access road.

1.95 The affordable housing offer is fully policy compliant, and would provide an acceptable mix of affordable units. Given this, no viability information was required as part of the application. The cascade option to secure a financial contribution would only come into effect should a Registered Provider not take up the proposed units. Given the number of units and their layout, this would be considered unlikely.

1.96 The carbon offsetting contribution is required in accordance with Policies CC2 and H5 and set out further in the Sustainability section above.

1.97 In accordance with Policy CC9, and the details within the supporting Employment, Skills and Training SPD, an obligation would be included in the S106 for the applicant to either develop an Employment Skills Plan for construction skills, in conjunction with Reading's Economic and Destination Agency (REDA), or provide a financial contribution.

1.98 Policy EN9: Provision of Open Space requires all new developments to make “*provision for appropriate open space based on the needs of the development*”. The open space within the development has limited effective recreational green space included within it and given the mix of units, it is likely that families would reside here. As the amenity space provided is insufficient and of limited value it is expected that people will use other nearby outdoor spaces for recreational activity and a financial contribution has been included within the heads of terms for the S106 to contribute towards other open spaces, which is considered sufficient to adequately mitigate and address the shortfall.

1.99 The applicant has confirmed their commitment to these obligations, which would be part of a S106 legal agreement. It is considered that each of the obligations referred to above would comply with the NPPF and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) in that it would be: i) necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, ii) directly related to the development and iii) fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

j) Other Matters

Contaminated Land

1.100 The applicant submitted a contaminated land assessment which concludes that remediation would be required. As such, relevant conditions relating to contaminated land are recommended.

Equalities Impact

1.101 In determining this application the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups as identified in the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to the particular planning application. Therefore, 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

1.102 Having regard to all matters raised and assessing it against the relevant national and local policies, it is concluded that the scheme overall is acceptable. The insufficient on-site communal amenity space would be sufficiently mitigated through the provision of private amenity space for each unit and securing an appropriate contribution. The proposed 30% on-site, policy compliant affordable housing offer, would provide a significant benefit, especially given the proportion of family sized units. The proposal would provide additional housing in compliance with national and local policy and would ensure effective use of an allocated brownfield site in a Major Opportunity Area. Therefore, when applying an overall critical planning balance of all material considerations presented, the application is recommended for approval, subject to the recommended conditions and completion of a S106 Legal Agreement.

Case Officer: Thomas Bradfield

Appendix 1 - Drawing schedule

Plan	No.	Date Submitted
Site Location Plan	CR-RMA-ZZ-00-DR-A-0001_P0	With Application
Proposed Site Location Plan	CR-RMA-ZZ-00-DR-A-0002_P2	8 th December 2022
Proposed Ground Floor Plan	CR-RMA-ZZ-00-DR-A-0100_P11	17 th January 2023
Proposed First Floor Plan	CR-RMA-ZZ-01-DR-A-0101_P9	17 th January 2023
Proposed Second Floor Plan	CR-RMA-ZZ-02-DR-A-0102_P9	17 th January 2023

Proposed Third Floor Plan	CR-RMA-ZZ-03-DR-A-0103_P8	17 th January 2023
Proposed Roof Plan	CR-RMA-ZZ-RF-DR-A-0104_P6	17 th January 2023
Site Elevations A, B & C	CR-RMA-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-0200_P3	8 th December 2022
Site Elevations D, E & F	CR-RMA-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-0201_P3	8 th December 2022
Site Elevations G, H & I	CR-RMA-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-0202_P3	8 th December 2022
Site Elevations J & K	CR-RMA-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-0203_P3	8 th December 2022
Landscape Strategy Plan	7906.LSP.ASP3.D	8 th December 2022
Landscape Plan	7906.LP.40C	8 th December 2022
Initial Site Access Arrangement	ITB17593-GA-00F	17 TH January 2023
Swept Path Analysis - Refuse Vehicle	ITB17593-GA-002H	17 TH January 2023
Swept Path Analysis- Estate Car	ITB17593-GA-003D	8 th December 2022
Swept Path Analysis- Fire Tender	ITB17593-GA-004E	8 th December 2022
Site Layout- Kerbing Arrangements	ITB17593-GA-006A	17 TH January 2023
Drainage Strategy	B05895-CLK-XX-XX-DR-C-0500 P06	17 TH January 2023

Appendix 2 - Selected Site Plans and Elevations

Proposed Site Layout - Roof Plan and Ground Floor



Proposed Elevation - Front, showing Block A, B and access point



Proposed Elevation - From internal access road looking south, showing Blocks B, C and northern end of the western terrace of houses



Proposed Elevation - Western terrace of houses, front elevation



Proposed CGI - Front elevation of site from Caversham Road



Proposed CGI - Looking along front elevation of western terrace



Proposed CGI - Looking into the site from the access point

