

COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 31st May 2023

Ward: Norcot

Application No.: 221130/FUL

Address: 103 Dee Road, Reading, RG30 4FS

Proposal: Redevelopment of former fire station to provide 54 dwellings, including affordable housing, together with associated access, parking, public open space and landscaping (amended description)

Applicant: Bellway Homes Limited (Thames Valley)

Application target decision date: Originally 10/11/2022; a formal extension of time for the determination of the application to be agreed to complete legal agreement

RECOMMENDATION

Delegate to Assistant Director for Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services (AD PTPPS) to

- i) **GRANT** full planning permission, subject to the satisfactory completion of the Section 106 agreement;

The Section 106 legal agreement to secure a minimum of the following:

Affordable Housing

- Secure 30% on-site affordable housing consisting of 16 units (4x one-bedroom, 4x two-bedroom and 6x three-bedroom), of which 10 would be for Reading Affordable Rent and 6 shared ownership. Of these, 1 of the three bedroom houses, 4 two bed flats and 5 one bed flats to be let at Reading Affordable Rent tenure. The remaining units (5 three bed houses and 1 one bed flat to be Shared Ownership).
- In the event that a Registered 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 are to provide Affordable Housing on-site, the developer to pay to the Council a default sum equivalent to 15% 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.

Highways Works

- Contribution of £70,000 towards the provision of a controlled crossing on Spey Road (to north west of application site) or the applicant to deliver the scheme through a S728 Agreement.
- Enter into a S278/38 Agreement to facilitate the alteration to accesses located around the site, the provision of a new adoptable footway around the existing substation, relocation of speed cushions, relocation of a bus stop and any other ancillary Highway Works.
- S142 licence for landscaping proposals contained within the highway. Provision prior to

first occupation – or timetable to be agreed.

Zero Carbon Offset

- Zero Carbon Offset as per SPD 2019 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).

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.

Open Space

- Provision of all open space to be provided prior to first occupation or alternative timetable to be agreed.
- Public access to be permitted at all times.
- Management and future maintenance by the owner in accordance with plan to be submitted for approval prior to first occupation.

Public Realm Access

- To allow public access to all public areas at all times and to maintain the public areas to the standards reasonably required by the Council.

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

Or;

- ii) Refuse full planning permission if the S106 agreement is not completed by 30th June 2022 (unless the Assistant Director for Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services agree to a later date for completion of the legal agreement)

And the following conditions to include:

1. *Time Limit – 3 years*
2. *Approved plans*
3. Pre-commencement, barring partial demolition works hereby approved, details of all external materials to be submitted to the LPA (and sample details to be provided on site) and approved in writing with the LPA.
4. Pre-commencement Demolition and Construction Method Statement (including EP-based matters)
5. Provision of vehicle parking as shown prior to first occupation
6. Provision of vehicular access as shown prior to first occupation
7. Provision of cycle parking as shown prior to first occupation
8. Provision of roads and paths to be provided as shown prior to first occupation
9. Pre-commencement submission of details of physical measures to prevent vehicles encroaching onto footways.
10. Visibility splays as specified prior to first occupation
11. Provision of refuse and recycling storage facilities as shown prior to first occupation
12. Existing accesses to be stopped up after new access is in use
13. Pre-occupation submission and approval of EV Charging Point Scheme details
14. Submission and approval of contaminated land remediation scheme (pre-commencement including demolition)
15. Pre-construction above foundation level contaminated land validation report

16. Reporting of unexpected contamination at any time
17. Pre-commencement including demolition submission and approval of land gas risk assessment
18. Pre-occupation submission and approval of gas risk validation remediation report
19. Compliance condition relating to hours of demolition/construction works
20. Compliance condition relating to no burning of materials or green waste on site
21. Pre-occupation submission and approval of measures to prevent pests and vermin accessing bin stores
22. Pre-commencement barring demolition submission and approval of noise mitigation scheme
23. Pre-commencement including demolition submission of arboricultural method statement and tree protection plan
24. Pre-commencement, barring the partial demolition works hereby approved, submission and approval of all hard and soft landscaping details, specifically including green roof details and garden areas
25. Compliance condition for hard and soft landscaping and management and maintenance to be carried out in accordance with approved plans
26. Pre-occupation submission and approval of boundary treatment details
27. Pre-commencement, barring the partial demolition works hereby approved, submission of and approval of habitat enhancement measures
28. Pre-commencement including demolition requiring licence for works affecting bats to be obtained from Natural England. Mitigation measures approved maintained thereafter
29. Pre-commencement requiring submission and approval of scheme to protect badgers
30. Compliance condition relating to protecting nesting birds
31. Pre-commencement, barring partial demolition works hereby approved, submission and approval of Sustainable Drainage Strategy to integrate with tree planting and other landscaping.
32. Compliance condition for SuDS approved in condition above to be completed prior to first occupation of any part of the development and managed/maintained thereafter.
33. Dwelling Mix restricted to 13 x 1-bed flats, 7 x 2-bed flats, 3 x 3-bed flats, 23 x 3-bed houses and 8 x 4-bed houses
34. Pre-occupation accessible and adaptable dwellings including 5% wheelchair user accessible - details to be submitted.
35. Flat roof areas not to be used as roof terraces unless where specified on the approved plans
36. Pre-commencement submission and approval of external lighting details – no other lighting other than approved.
37. Pre-commencement, barring partial demolition, Security Strategy details to be submitted and approved
38. SAP Assessment – Major – Design Stage
39. SAP Assessment – Major – As Built

Delegate to Assistant Director for Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services to make such changes or additions to the conditions and obligations as may reasonably be required in order to complete/issue any of the above permissions/approvals.

Informatives to include

1. Terms and Conditions
2. Positive and Proactive Working
3. Pre-commencement Conditions
4. Works Affecting Highways
5. S278 Agreements
6. S38 Agreements
7. Building Control

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|--|
| 8. Section 106 Legal Agreement 9. CIL 10. Thames Water 11. Noise between residential properties |
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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The application site comprises the former Berkshire Fire Station, which includes a number of buildings previously used by The Royal Berkshire Fire Authority, along with associated parking.
- 1.2 The site is bounded by Leven Street to the north west, Spey road to the north east and Dee Road to the south east. Gairn Close, a pedestrian path fronted by houses, runs to the south west of the site. The main frontage to the site is on Dee Road whilst Spey Road which runs along the north eastern boundary of the site gives access to the on-site car parks and service areas associated with the fire station.
- 1.3 The immediate surrounding area comprises of rows of terraced houses along Leven Street, Spey Road, Dee Road and Gairn Close. On the opposite side of Leven Street, lies the Montague House block flats. The site is located on the edge of the Dee Park Estate.
- 1.4 The wider site is allocated under Policy WR1: Dee Park of the Local Plan 2019, which states that:

“The Dee Park area, as identified on the Proposals Map, will continue to be regenerated to provide a sustainable community including the following:

- *New and improved housing, which increases the overall density of the site, and provides a greater mix of size, type and tenure, including a higher proportion of family housing than at the outset of regeneration;*
- *A new Local Centre including a range of facilities, integrated with housing development;*
- *Improved community facilities, which would be multi-functional and serve a range of groups, and may include sports facilities; and*
- *Improved quality of open space provision, including greater usability of recreational space, and an area of public realm in the centre.*

Development will be integrated with surrounding areas, provide a safe and secure environment, and enhance transport links to and from the estate. Development will take account of potential surface water flooding.

Development will maintain and enhance the role of Ranikhet Primary School in serving the local and wider community.”

- 1.5 The specific site itself is allocated in the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 under Policy WR3m: Dee Road, which states:

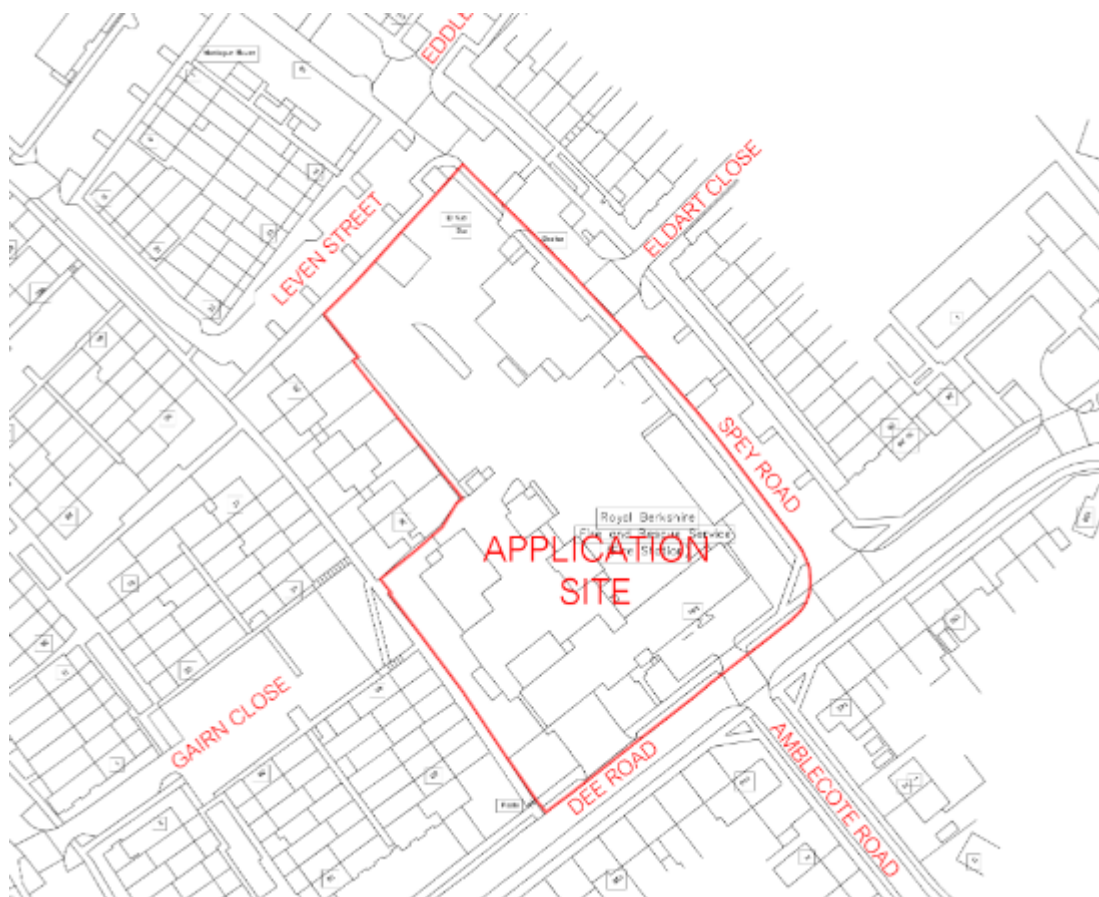
“Development for residential subject to the fire station being surplus to requirements. Development should:

- *Address any contamination on site; and*
- *Take account of the potential impact on water infrastructure in conjunction with Thames Water and make provision for upgrades where required.*

Site size: 0.85 ha 34-50 dwellings”

- 1.6 The application is brought to the Planning Applications Committee as it is a major scheme.

- 1.7 The site in relation to the wider urban area is shown below, together with a site photograph and an aerial view.



Site Location Plan (not to scale)



Aerial view

2. PROPOSALS

- 2.1 Full planning permission is sought for the redevelopment of the fire station to provide dwellings following demolition of existing fire station and associated buildings.
- 2.2 The scheme comprises 31 houses and 23 flats. Each house would have its own private garden space and would take the form of 2 storey semi-detached properties and 3 storey townhouses. The flats would be located within a 3 storey block at the northern end of the site, split into 2 sections.
- 2.3 The scheme proposes 30% on site affordable housing and 62% of the units would have 3+ bedrooms:

| | |
|-----------------|----------|
| 1 Bedroom Flats | 13 |
| 2 Bedroom Flats | 7 |
| 3 Bedroom Flats | 3 |
| 3 Bedroom House | 23 |
| 4 Bedroom House | 8 |
| TOTAL | 54 Units |

- 2.4 A formal area of public open space is proposed at the front of the site adjacent Spey Road, and soft landscaping and tree planting is proposed throughout the site.
- 2.5 The scheme proposes parking provision of 2 spaces per 3 and 4 bed houses, with the remaining 23 flats provided with 25 spaces including visitor parking.
- 2.5 In terms of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), the applicant duly completed a CIL liability form as part of the submission of this application. Based solely on the information provided on the completed form (which will be required to be verified in due course), there would be a net increase of 6,315.2sqm residential floorspace across the site.
- 2.6 Drawings received 19th May 2023:

| | |
|------------------------------|------------------------|
| Site Location Plan | 092102-BEL-TV-06 |
| Presentation Planning Layout | 092102-BEL-TV-01 Rev E |
| Supporting Planning Layout | 092102-BEL-TV-01 Rev E |
| Storey Heights Plan | 092102-BEL-TV-01 Rev E |
| Tenure Layout | 092102-BEL-TV-01 Rev E |
| Perspective View 01 | 092102-PER01 Rev C |
| Perspective View 02 | 092102-PER01 Rev D |
| Street Scene 01 | 092102-SS01 Rev D |

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|--|----------------------|
| | |
| Street Scene 02 | 092102-SS02 Rev C |
| Street Scene 03 | 092102-SS03 Rev C |
| The Coppersmith – Elevations (plots 3, 4, 7, 8, 18, 19, 22, 23) | CS-3B-2S-TC-E1 |
| The Coppersmith – Floorplans | CS-3B-2S-P2 |
| The Fisher – Elevations (plots 26, 31) | FI-3B-25S-TC-E1 |
| The Fisher – Floorplans | FI-3B-25S-P1 |
| The Lardner – Elevations (plots 11, 12, 14, 15) | LD-3B-3S-TC-E1 Rev A |
| The Lardner – Floorplans | LD-3B-3S-P1 Rev A |
| The Lardner – Elevations (plots 10, 13, 16, 28, 29) | LD-3B-3S-TC-E2 |
| The Lardner – Elevations (plots 27, 30) | LD-3B-3S-TC-E3 |
| The Lardner – Floorplans | LD-3B-3S-P2 |
| The Lardner – Elevations (plot 17) | LD-3B-3S-TC-E4 |
| The Lardner – Floorplans | LD-3B-3S-P3 |
| The Walker – Elevations (plot 9) | WL-3B-3S-TC-E1 |
| The Walker – Floorplans | WL-3B-3S-P1 |
| The Reedmaker – Elevations (plots 2, 5, 6, 20, 21, 24) | RE-4B-2S-TC-E1 |
| The Reedmaker – Floorplans | RE-4B-2S-P2 |
| The Reedmaker – Elevations (plots 1, 25) | RE-4B-2S-TC-E2 |
| The Reedmaker – Floorplans | RE-4B-2S-P3 |
| Tompion Court – Town Vernacular – Elevations (plots 32 – 54) | TOA-3S-TC01-E1 |
| Tompion Court – Town Vernacular – Elevations | TOA-3S-TC01-E2 |
| Tompion Court – Floorplans | TOA-TC01-P1 |
| Tompion Court – Floorplans | TOA-TC01-P2 |
| Tompion Court – Floorplans | TOA-TC01-P3 |

| | |
|---|------------------|
| Cycle Shed 01 – Floorplans and Elevations | 092102-CS01 |
| Landscape Strategy Plan | 7881.ASP4.LSP_K |
| Hard Landscape Plan 1 of 2 | 7881.HSP.6.1 H |
| Hard Landscape Plan 2 of 2 | 7881.HSP.6.2 H |
| Landscape Maintenance Plan | 7881.LMP.8.0 E |
| Planting Plan Overview | 7881.PP.5.0 I |
| Planting Plan 1 of 2 | 7881.PP.5.1 I |
| Planting Plan 2 of 2 | 7881.PP.5.2 I |
| Tree Pit Detail 1 of 3 | 7881.TPD.7.0B |
| Tree Pit Detail 2 of 3 | 7881.TPD.7.1 B |
| Tree Pit Detail 3 of 3 | 7881.TPD.7.2 B |
| Dee Road access visibility splays | ITB17485-GA-001B |
| Spey Road access visibility splays | ITB17485-GA-002B |
| Spey Road access | ITB17485-GA-004C |

3. **PLANNING HISTORY**

100126/EXT Application for an extension of time limit for implementation of permission 070728/OUT. Approved, not implemented.

070728/OUT Outline application for a residential development comprising 42 units (all matters reserved). Approved, not implemented.

060538/OUT Outline application for residential development (all matters reserved). Refused.

051232/OUT Outline application for residential development (access only). Appeal dismissed.

4. **CONSULTATIONS**

RBC Transport

- 4.1 Further to revised plans and additional information, no objection subject to conditions relating to vehicle and cycle parking, vehicle access and roads to be as specified and obligations to include:

- S142 licence required to maintain the landscaped area along Spey Road

- Contribution of £70,000 or the developer to enter into a S278/38 Agreement to provide a zebra crossing on Spey Road.
- Enter into a S278/38 Agreement to facilitate the alteration to accesses located around the site, the provision of a new adoptable footway around the existing substation, relocation of speed cushions, relocation of a bus stop and any other ancillary Highway Works.

RBC Natural Environment

- 4.2 Following receipt of revised plans and information, no objection subject to securing Arboricultural Method Statement and Tree Protection Plan, landscaping, boundary treatments and SuDS details via condition.

RBC Ecology Consultant

- 4.3 Following receipt of additional bat surveys, no objection subject to conditions relating to bird nesting season, the need for a bat licence from Natural England, safety to badgers, lighting and ecological enhancements.

Berkshire Archaeology

- 4.4 No objection and no further archaeological information required.

RBC Environmental Health – Environmental Protection (EP)

- 4.5 No objection subject to conditions relating to noise mitigation, contaminated land, noise and dust and pest control.

RBC Housing

- 4.6 Numbers proposed are acceptable; however, there is a need to secure 30% of all of the property types proposed, 3 bed houses and larger are the biggest need in Reading for Affordable Housing.

RBC Waste Services

- 4.7 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 Lead Local Flood Authority

- 4.8 The proposed drainage scheme significantly reduces surface water run-off. As such, there are no SuDS based objections subject to planning conditions. The first condition would be pre-commencement, securing a fully detailed SuDS strategy. The second condition would ensure the details in the first condition are completed prior to first occupation.

Environment Agency (EA)

- 4.9 The EA replied advising that the planning application is for development the EA does not wish to be consulted on.

Thames Water

- 4.10 No objection.

Public consultation

- 4.11 Notification letters were sent to nearby occupiers on 31/08/22. Site notices were displayed at the site and a press notice was published on 05/09/2022.

- 4.12 Three letters of representation received, with the issues raised being summarised as follows:

- Overlooking
- Loss of light
- Loss of views (officer note: not a material consideration)
- Loss of security
- Noise levels during development
- Noise levels from future occupiers
- Building dust
- Insufficient parking
- Construction works disturbance

5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development', which means 'approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay' (NPPF paragraph 11).

For this Local Planning Authority, the development plan is the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019). The relevant national / local policies / guidance are:

National

National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

The following NPPF chapters are the most relevant (others apply to a lesser extent):

- 2. Achieving sustainable development
- 4. Decision-making
- 5. Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
- 6. Building a strong, competitive economy
- 8. Promoting healthy and safe communities
- 9. Promoting sustainable transport
- 11. Making effective use of land
- 12. Achieving well-designed places
- 14. Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
- 15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

National Planning Policy Guidance (2014 onwards)

Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019) policies are:

CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction
 CC3: Adaptation to Climate Change
 CC4: Decentralised Energy
 CC5: Waste Minimisation and Storage
 CC6: Accessibility and the Intensity of Development
 CC7: Design and the Public Realm
 CC8: Safeguarding Amenity
 CC9: Securing Infrastructure
 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
 EN17: Noise Generating Equipment
 EN18: Flooding and Drainage
 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
 H14: Suburban Renewal and Regeneration
 OU1: New and Existing Community Facilities
 TR1: Achieving the Transport Strategy
 TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
 TR4: Cycle Routes and Facilities
 TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging
 WR1: Dee Park
 WR3m: 103 Dee Road

RBC Supplementary Planning Documents

Affordable Housing (2021)
 Employment, Skills and Training (2013)
 Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)
 Planning Obligations under Section 106 (2015)
 Sustainable Design and Construction (2019)

Other relevant documentation

Dee Park Planning Brief (2008)
 Reading Tree Strategy (2021)
 Reading Biodiversity Action Plan (2021)
 The National Design Guide (2019)
 The National Model Design Code (July 2021)

6. APPRAISAL

The main issues are considered to be:

- Land use Considerations
- Density and Housing Mix
- Provision of Affordable Housing
- Design Considerations – Demolition, Layout, Scale and Appearance
- Residential Amenity – Existing and Proposed
- Environmental Protection Matters
- Transport and Highways

- Natural Environment – Trees and Landscaping
- Ecology
- Sustainability and Energy
- SuDS
- Archaeology
- S106 and Cil
- Other Matters

Land Use Considerations

- 6.1 Policy CC1 (Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development) requires a positive approach to development proposals that reflect the presumption in favour of sustainable development, which lies at the heart of the National Planning Policy (NPPF). To achieve sustainable development a proposal needs to meet economic, social and environmental objectives. It is considered that a proposal for new housing would contributing to providing sufficient land for housing, a range of homes and would make effective use of land.
- 6.2 A key Government objective is to significantly boost the supply of new homes (Section 5 of the NPPF) and the local housing requirement as set out within Policy H1 (Provision of Housing) which confirms that there is a pressing need for additional housing in Reading and the surrounding area.
- 6.3 The wider principle of re-development of this site is established under Local Plan housing allocation Policy WR1 Dee Road and specifically WR3m (103 Dee Road) which allocates the site for residential development as follows:
- 6.4 *Development for residential subject to the fire station being surplus to requirements. Development should:*
- *Address any contamination on site; and*
 - *Take account of the potential impact on water infrastructure in conjunction with Thames Water, and make provision for upgrades where required.*
- Site size: 0.85 ha 34-50 dwellings*
- 6.5 *Loss of existing use*
The former fire station (and associated buildings) has been vacant since November 2021 and a new community fire station has been built in Theale. The former fire station is no longer required and as such the proposals are in accordance with the site allocation in Policy WR1.
- 6.6 *Principle of housing*
The proposed development, providing 54 residential units on previously development land, would contribute towards meeting the Council's housing need requirements in accordance with Policy H1. The wider regeneration of Dee Park is a key element of the wider Spatial Strategy for Reading as set out in the Local Plan 2019. As set out in Policy H14 (Suburban Renewal and Regeneration), the area is identified as a priority area for suburban renewal, making specific reference to '*regeneration that can address existing problems within an area at the same time as delivering new homes*'. Policy WR1: Dee Park expands upon this, stating that '*The Dee Park area...will continued to be regenerated to provide ...new and improved housing, which increased the overall density of the site, and provides a greater mix of size, type and tenure, including a higher proportion of family housing than at the outset of regeneration*'. The subtext of Policy WR1: Dee Park at para 7.3.2 confirms that '*Regeneration of the area is therefore essential, and a key priority for the Council.*'

6.7 Further to the above, the Fire Station is included in the Dee Park Planning Brief (2008) which established a core set of aims which the regeneration should address, such as:

- To foster a positive sense of place;
- Integration of Dee Park with the surrounding area and improved transport links; and
- An increase in housing density and improvements in the housing mix in terms of types, sizes and tenures, creating a balanced mixed community

6.8 Given the above, the principle of providing residential accommodation at the site is supported by the site allocation and wider Dee Park Planning Brief. The proposal is considered to represent a valuable development opportunity which can positively contribute to meeting the Borough's ongoing housing need and the regeneration of this part of the Dee Road estate.

Density and Housing Mix

6.9 The NPPF seeks to '*boost significantly the supply of housing*' and deliver a wide range of homes, of different types and tenures. Achieving an efficient use of the land within the context of any central and sustainability located site is a key priority both at a national and local level. The NPPF states that LPAs should actively "*encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value*". In general terms, officers support those urban design principles which encourage an ambitious approach to density on such sites.

6.10 Policy H2 (Density and Mix) specifically considers density and mix and requires that an appropriate density of residential development is informed by the character and mix of uses of the area in which it is located and its current and future level of accessibility.

Density

6.11 The proposed development is for 54 dwellings. This equates to 63 dwellings per hectare (ha) (54 dwellings on a 0.85 site). This is slightly above the indicative density range of 30-60 in suburban locations, set out in figure 4.5 of the Local Plan. The proposed 54 dwellings is also slightly higher than the figure envisaged by the Site Allocation (30-54 dwellings). However, as Policy H2 recognises, the appropriate density of residential development will be informed by a range of factors, including the character and mix of uses of the area, the housing mix, the need to achieve high quality design, site accessibility, and the need to minimise environmental impacts. As such, density should not be considered in isolation - it is a useful indicator in seeking to meeting housing targets, but not necessarily as good an indicator of the likely form, quality, or appropriateness of a scheme. Furthermore, the Dee Park Planning Brief notes that with regard to densities, '*it is likely that regeneration proposals will increase this in accordance with the objective of making more efficient use of land and other design improvements*'. Taking this advice into account, and the character of the regeneration area, suggests a higher density would be acceptable in this specific instance.

Housing Mix

6.12 Policy H2 (Density and Mix) identifies that wherever possible, residential development should contribute towards meeting identified needs in respect of housing mix, and in particular, for family homes of 3 or more bedrooms. The Policy seeks that at least 50% of the homes outside centres will be 3 bed or larger.

- 6.13 The proposals include thirty-four 3+ bedroom dwellings, equating to 62% of the overall mix and is therefore in accordance with Policy H2 in this regard. The overall mix would provide a variety of unit sizes and types which would address the need for housing across Reading. This is considered to be a key benefit of the proposed development - providing family sized housing to meet identified housing needs. The proposed mix of dwellings will be secured by way of condition.

Provision of Affordable Housing

- 6.14 Affordable Housing is a key identified priority within the Borough. Policy H3 (Affordable Housing) seeks to ensure that development proposals of more than 10 dwellings should provide the equivalent of 30% on-site provision of affordable housing.
- 6.15 The Council's updated Affordable Housing SPD (2021) requires that new development should include a range and mix of tenures of affordable housing (as appropriate depending on site size) to reflect local needs. Specifically, the SPD identifies a tenure mix of 38% shared ownership and 62% rented, with rented allowed to be Affordable rent but capped at 70% of Market Rent ('Reading Affordable Rent') is required to meet the Borough's most pressing needs.
- 6.16 The proposed development would provide 16 affordable housing units, which equates to 30% of the total dwellings on-site designated Affordable Housing, the mix of which is set out in Figure 1 below.

| Units size | Number of units |
|------------------|-----------------|
| 1 bed apartment | 6 |
| 2 bed, apartment | 4 |
| 3 bed house | 6 |
| Total | 16 |

Figure 1 - Affordable unit mix

- 6.17 Of the sixteen Affordable Housing units, ten would be of 2 or more bedrooms, supporting current priority needs for these types of units outlined in Policy H3.
- 6.18 Through Officer negotiations, 62% of Affordable Housing are to be designated as Affordable Rent and 38% Shared Ownership, which complies with the Affordable Housing SPD in terms of tenure split. Furthermore, the mix of Affordable Housing sizes has been amended to better reflect the overall housing mix, with six 3-bed houses designated Affordable Housing (of which one would be Reading Affordable Rent
- 6.19 The proposed S106 legal agreement would make provision that, in the unlikely event that an Affordable Housing provider is not secured (either a Registered provider or the Council), the developer would be required to pay to the Council a sum equivalent to 15% of the Gross Development Value of the whole development for provision of Affordable Housing elsewhere in the Borough. This would be calculated (the mean average) from two independent valuations to be submitted and agreed by the Council prior to first occupation of any market housing units. This would be paid prior to first occupation of any market housing unit and index-linked from the date of valuation. This is based upon the formula contained within the Council's Affordable Housing SPD (2021).
- 6.20 It is considered that the amount and tenure of affordable housing provides an appropriate contribution to local Affordable Housing needs in the Borough in

accordance with Policy H3. Provision of the proposed on-site affordable housing would be secured via S106 legal agreement, as set out in the recommendation above.

Design Considerations – Demolition, Layout, Scale and Appearance

- 6.21 Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) seeks to ensure that new development enhances and preserves the local character. The policy places importance on the layout of the urban structure and urban grain, stipulating that development should respond positively to the local context and create safe and accessible environments. The policy requires a “high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located”.
- 6.23 Paragraph 130 of the NPPF 2021 details 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.
- 6.24 The 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’.
- 6.25 *Demolition*
In relation to the demolition of the existing buildings at the site, these are not considered to be of any architectural merit to warrant their retention either individually or cumulatively. 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. Demolition is, therefore, considered acceptable subject to the proposed replacement buildings being suitable in design and related matters detailed below.
- 6.26 *Layout and Scale*
The scale and layout of the proposal is the result of detailed discussions at application stage. The proposal as originally submitted was for 63 dwellings. During the course of the application, this has been reduced to 54 dwellings. The reduction in number of units was considered necessary to allow for better quality open space to be provided, to reduce dead frontages, to introduce a better arrangement of streets and spaces, and improve soft landscaping (including more tree planting along the Spey Road frontage), as well as achieving a less cramped and stark appearance overall.

Original Proposed Layout



Revised Proposed Layout



- 6.27 The immediate surrounding area largely comprises 2 storey rows of terrace houses on Leven Street and Spey Road and two storey semi-detached houses of Dee Road. There is a 4 storey block of flats (with ground floor supermarket) on the north side of Leven Street, on the corner with Spey Road.
- 6.28 The proposals originally comprised a part three, part four storey block of flats adjacent Leven Street, on the corner with Spey Road. However, during the course of the application this was reduced to a three storey height and the massing adjusted. This would be the largest building and whilst would have a relatively large footprint this would be broken up by the lower two storey flat roof central section fronting Leven Street that would minimise the bulk and create a visual separation between the two more prominent facades fronting Leven Street and Spey Road. It is considered that the building would not appear excessively large in this context; moreover, this approach is considered to suitably address the transition in scale from the predominantly two-to-three storey townhouses at the southern end to the aforementioned block of flats at the northern end fronting Leven Street.
- 6.29 The townhouses fronting Spey Road would be of 3 storey height. It is considered that the mass of the buildings is sufficiently set back from the Spey Road frontage to provide sufficient relief to the scale of the buildings. Again, this is considered an appropriate transition from the two storey semi-detached properties of Dee Road.
- 6.30 The remainder of the development is proposed to take the form of 2 storey semi-detached houses across the remainder of the site to the south, replicating the scale and form of the surrounding two storey semi-detached properties of Dee Road.
- 6.31 The reduction in number of units, has enabled Plots 25 to 31 to sit back further into the site. In turn, this allows for an area of open space to the front of the site adjacent Spey Road which provides a visually attractive 'entrance' to the site as indicated in the street scene perspective drawing below:



- 6.32 It is considered that the proposed layout has successfully maximised the use of the site, whilst ensuring that the proposal includes sufficient distances between buildings and that the areas between buildings have been suitably designed to integrate vehicle parking whilst maintaining a pleasant residential environment. Furthermore, it is considered that parking areas will be appropriately landscaped and suitably overlooked by dwellings and would not result in unacceptable 'dead spaces' within

the development. The proposed dwellings, when seen from all nearby vantage points, are considered to acceptably respond to its context and the constraints of the site in terms of their scale and appearance. The overall design of the development is considered to create a pleasant, unified scheme, with the proposal considered to provide a good balance between site density and an appropriate layout and landscaping.

Appearance

- 6.33 The design of the houses has been amended during the course of the application. The building line of the pairs of semi-detached houses to the south of the site (Dee Road frontage) has been stepped and staggered, as well as the introduction of wider and deeper buildings to avoid a regimented form. The houses would be largely finished in red brick, in keeping with the prevailing character of the area. Elements of grey brick are proposed, and these would complement the main brick, providing a slightly more contemporary approach and adding a richness to the finished appearance.
- 6.34 During the course of the application the design of the flats was amended to reduce the apparent bulk of the building. The unsightly undercroft feature has been removed and the façade detailing amended to give impression of being vertically split into individual terraced houses. The building includes a lower central section to break up the massing and the three storey height further replicates the townhouse appearance, to assist in assimilating with the remainder of the site, with the flats reflecting the overall character, including the use of the same brick choices.
- 6.35 As discussed further below, the proposals include soft landscaping and tree planting which is considered to significantly improve the overall character of the site and would help to improve the visual amenities of the site itself and wider area.
- 6.36 In overall terms, the proposed scheme is considered to represent good quality design that will enhance the character and appearance of the area and which will successfully integrate into the surrounding area. The proposed scale of the new buildings at 2 and 3 storeys would sit comfortably within the surrounding context and the palette of materials would be appropriate. However, to ensure the design quality, it is considered reasonable and appropriate to secure further details of all external materials will be secured via condition, including the provision of sample panel on site prior to commencement, to guarantee the design quality of the scheme. In accordance with Policy CC7.

Residential Amenity

- 6.37 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 neighbouring amenity

- 6.38 The proposed block of flats as originally proposed was considered to result in overbearing effects to occupiers of 26-28 Gairn Close to the south west. This was due to the proximity, depth and 3 storey height close to the common boundary with these properties. During the course of the application the depth of this block of flats has been reduced to draw it away from the boundary with these neighbouring dwellings and the roof hipped away to further minimise the impact. This relationship is now considered acceptable. No upper floor windows are proposed on the elevations closest to the common boundary and where upper floor windows are proposed they are more than twenty metres away from the boundary, which complies with Policy CC8 in this respect.

6.39 The layout, separating distances and orientation of the remainder of the proposed buildings within the site would avoid overbearing effects or loss of privacy to properties surrounding the site.

6.40 In overall terms, the scale and position of the proposed buildings would also ensure that there would be no increased sense of overbearing or enclosure. Furthermore, the applicant has provided a daylight/sunlight report with the application. The report demonstrates that the scheme would not have a significant detrimental impact upon adjoining properties in terms of daylight/sunlight. The proposals would have no unacceptable impact on the living conditions of neighbours in accordance with Policy CC8.

Amenity of future occupiers

6.41 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. 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.”*

6.42 All dwellings would meet the nationally described space standards (as outlined in Policy H5) for the type of dwelling/number of bedrooms and the internal layout of the proposed units are arranged so as to create a suitable standard of living accommodation for future occupiers. It is considered that all dwellings would have good levels of outlook.

6.43 All units are considered to be provided with adequate levels of privacy. The proposed dwellings fronting Dee Road would have a twenty metre back-to-back separation distance from those within the site to the rear which is considered adequate to prevent any undue overlooking within the development.

6.44 All the proposed houses would have their own private outdoor garden amenity space of reasonable size which would offer a good standard of amenity for future occupiers – as well as providing welcome greenery within the site – each garden is of a size and layout which is comparable with other properties within the wider regeneration area. The flats would have access to communal outdoor space to the rear of the flats, as well as the landscaped public open space to the front of the site.

Sunlight/Daylight

6.45 The applicant’s daylight/sunlight report demonstrates that the proposal has a very high level of compliance across the site with 2020 BRE guidelines and, overall, it is considered that the proposals would receive adequate levels of daylight and sunlight.

Accessibility

6.46 Policy H5(f) requires that on all developments of 20 or more new build dwellings, at least 5% of dwellings will be wheelchair user dwellings in line with M4(3) of the Building Regulations. Any market homes provided to meet this requirement will be ‘wheelchair adaptable’ as defined in Part M, whilst homes where the Council is responsible for allocating or nominating an individual may be ‘wheelchair accessible’.

6.47 The development includes this provision and officers are satisfied that the accessibility/adaptability of the units can meet these requirements. To ensure these

units are provided and maintained as such, a compliance condition is recommended to state that a policy compliant proportion of wheelchair user dwellings are ready prior to first occupation and are retained as such thereafter.

Crime and Safety

- 6.48 It is considered reasonable and necessary to secure details of a robust security strategy via condition, for the benefit of existing nearby occupiers as well as future occupiers.

Environmental Protection matters

Air Quality

- 6.49 Policy EN15 (Air Quality) requires developments to have regard to the need to improve air quality and reduce the effects of poor air quality.
- 6.50 The site is located within an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and an Air Quality Assessment has been submitted. This has been reviewed by the Council's Environmental Protection Officer who agrees with the conclusions that pollutant levels will not be above the limit values and therefore no mitigation is required. The assessment also concludes that traffic generation is unlikely to lead to increased pollutants which the Environmental Protection Officer also agrees with, confirming no mitigation is required.

Noise

- 6.51 Policy EN16 (Pollution and Water Resources) states that proposals for development that are sensitive to the effects of noise or light pollution will only be permitted in areas where they will not be subject to high levels of such pollution, unless adequate mitigation measures are provided to minimise the impact of such pollution.
- 6.42 A Noise Assessment has been submitted with the application. This concludes that for some of the properties fronting Dee Road, the levels of noise will be higher than the guidance levels. As such, it is proposed to install suitably performing glazing and trickle ventilations as an alternative to needing to open windows. It is not considered that trickle vents provide sufficient ventilation to opening windows and additional ventilation will need to be considered. The Council's Environmental Protection Officer is satisfied that this can be dealt with via a suitably worded condition.

Contaminated Land

- 6.43 Policy EN16 (Pollution and Water Resources) required that developments on land affected by contamination can be satisfactorily managed or remediated against so that it is suitable for the proposed use.
- 6.44 A Contaminated Land Investigation Report has been submitted with the application. This concludes that remediation will be needed due to the presence of some contaminants above guideline levels. The Council's Environmental Protection Officer is satisfied that this can be dealt with via suitably worded conditions. A ground gas risk assessment will also be conditioned.
- 6.45 Conditions are also recommended to secure submission and approval of a construction method statement to ensure existing occupiers are not adversely impact upon by construction noise and dust, while further conditions are proposed to control construction hours and to prevent burning of construction waste on site.

Transport and highways

- 6.46 Policies TR3 (Access, Traffic and Highway related matters), TR1 (Achieving the Transport Strategy) and TR5 (Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging) seek to address access, traffic, highway and parking relates matters relating to

development. The Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD sets out guidance in respect of parking provision.

Parking

- 6.47 The site is located within the Zone 2, primary core area of the Parking SPD but close to 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.
- 6.48 Following the reduction in the number of units proposed, there has also been an associated reduction in the number of car parking spaces proposed, from 106 to 87. Out of these parking spaces, 62 are proposed for the 31 houses which would be allocated and 25 for the 23 flats (including visitor parking), which would be unallocated. Provision also includes 2 disabled parking bays. This provision complies with the Parking Standards and Design SPD and is acceptable.
- 6.49 Concern was originally raised by the Council's Transport Officer that the parking spaces for units 9-17 fronting Spey Road would allow for tandem parking resulting in the footway being obstructed, which would not be acceptable. Parking was consequently reconfigured such that parking spaces are now proposed to be parallel to the highway in a series of small, landscaped, parking areas. Overall parking numbers are retained with a visitor parking space being relocated adjacent to the public open space. It is also confirmed that there is safe access for pedestrians from the flats to Spey Road, via a path through the public open space. Furthermore, paths have been added to the gardens of units 30 and 31 to demonstrate access to parking from these properties. The Council's Transport Officer has confirmed that the amount and arrangement of parking spaces proposed is acceptable.
- 6.50 As currently designed, there is a risk that parked cars may encroach onto footways due to low curbs. A condition is recommended to secure appropriate physical measures e.g. low rails to prevent this.
- 6.51 To meet the Policy TR5 requirements, electric vehicle charging points are proposed for each house and 22 of the 25 unallocated parking bays serving the flats will have access to an electric vehicle charging point which is acceptable and will be secured by condition.

Trip Generation

- 6.52 TRICS data has been provided which indicates that the impact on the network would be negligible in terms of vehicle increase. The Council's Transport Officer has confirmed that this is acceptable.
- 6.53 The proposed development would generate in the region of 100 pedestrian movements a day, as well as an increase of 132 vehicle trips through the day. With this in mind, Transport Officers consider that the applicant should contribute £70,000 towards the provision of a controlled crossing on Spey Road to the north west of the site to provide a safe route to and from Ranikhet Primary School, the Lyon Square Play Area and the Community Centre. The applicant has agreed to this but also indicated that they may wish to undertake the works as part of a S278/38 Agreement. Transport Officers have confirmed that this is acceptable and this will be secured as part of the S106 legal agreement as set out in the Recommendation above.

Access

- 6.54 Three vehicular accesses are proposed from Dee Road serving the proposed houses. The accesses will move further away from the junction with Spey Road and

be slightly off set from Amblecote Road. Transport Officers have confirmed that the layout is acceptable in principle, with revised drawings illustrating an indicative location for a relocated lamp column. The exact location for any lamp column would be determined as part of a S278/38 Agreement should permission be granted and this will be secured as part of the S106 legal agreement as set out in the Recommendation box above.

- 6.55 Transport Officers have confirmed that the accesses onto Spey Road comply with the required design standards and are acceptable.
- 6.56 It is considered that the internal road network is sufficient to accommodate the anticipated level of traffic as well as allowing sufficient turning for refuse and delivery vehicles.
- 6.57 At the north east corner of the site a new adoptable footway is to be provided that links Leven Street to Spey Road around the existing substation. The current footway is not sufficient in width as a result of the substation and therefore this proposed footway will improve pedestrian links around the site. The applicant has been reviewing gradients of this path and it is noted that compliant gradients can be provided. A revised drawing illustrating this is required, and this will be secured via condition.
- 6.58 During the course of the application, Transport Officers requested that the applicant provide a review of the gradients across the site to establish whether improvements could be made to reduce steepness. This has been provided and it confirms that any improvements to be made in terms of the levels would necessitate the undesirable inclusion of steps elsewhere on the site and the provision of taller retaining walls at the south east corner of the site. The levels are largely due to the topography of the site and Transport Officers have confirmed that the gradients as proposed would not be excessive. As such, the layout proposed is considered acceptable. Any residual harm should be weighed against the wider benefits of the scheme in the wider planning balance.

Visibility Splays

- 6.59 Visibility Splays have been illustrated on plans and turning heads have been provided for the refuse vehicle on site which Transport Officers have confirmed is acceptable.
- 6.60 It is proposed to relocate the existing bus stop on Spey Road. Transport Officers have confirmed that in principle there are no concerns; however, details of where the recycle bins located on the grass verge (which is part of the public highway on Spey Road) have not been provided. These recycle bins will need to be relocated along the existing frontage or elsewhere in the vicinity and it is considered this can be dealt with via condition.

Cycle Storage

- 6.61 Proposed plans show that parking will be provided across the site in accordance with the adopted RBC standards. The houses will have storage within their private gardens which is acceptable. Three communal cycle stores are proposed for future occupiers of the flats, providing a total of 30 cycle parking spaces. This equates to one cycle parking space per flat. This provision is in excess of the current adopted standards and is acceptable as it encourages the use of sustainable modes.

Refuse

- 6.62 Bin storage has been illustrated on plans which is considered acceptable. Subject to the submission of an amended plan in relation to the adoptable footway linking Leven

Street and Spey Road, Transport Officer have confirmed no objections to the development.

Construction

- 6.61 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.

Natural Environment - Trees and Landscaping

- 6.62 Policy EN14 (Trees, Hedges and Woodland) seeks to extend the Borough's vegetation cover and that development should make provision for tree planting whilst Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) seeks proposal should include appropriate landscaping. Proposals should demonstrate an appropriate level of greening and/or net gain in the tree number.
- 6.63 With regard to trees shown to be retained, the Council's Natural Environment Officer has confirmed that there are no concerns about the impact of the development to existing trees, subject to securing an appropriate Arboricultural Method Statement via condition.
- 6.64 A Tree Survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment has been submitted with the application. This confirms the removal of 2 individual trees and 3 groups. However, the groups consist largely of shrub species and the Council's Natural Environment Officer has confirmed that none are specimen trees worthy of a TPO. The greatest impact would be the loss of a row of Leylandii but these are also not considered to be suitable for inclusion in a TPO. The loss of these trees is considered acceptable subject to appropriate mitigation through the provision of tree planting.
- 6.65 Further to the above, a landscape masterplan has been submitted with the application. This includes the provision of 51 new trees. The Council's Natural Environment Officer has confirmed that the principles of landscape layout and planting, particularly trees, are considered acceptable. During the course of the application the tree species proposed were amended for diversity and to comply with the biodiversity aims of the Council's Tree Strategy. Further to revisions, proposed tree species and diversity are considered acceptable. The proposals have incorporated tree planting within the proposed public open space as well as provision within parking areas. Other hedging and ground cover vegetation is provided throughout the site and as discussed elsewhere in this report, the provision of garden spaces within the site is welcomed. The biodiversity net gain achieved by the proposals is also acceptable.
- 6.66 A pre-commencement landscaping condition is recommended which will secure tree protection measures and planting details to include the species, maintenance and management schedule in accordance with EN14.

Ecology

- 6.67 Policy EN12 (Biodiversity and the Green Network) seeks that development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity and should provide for a net gain of biodiversity wherever possible by protecting, enhancing and incorporating features of biodiversity on and adjacent to development sites and by providing new tree planting and wildlife friendly landscaping and ecological enhancements wherever practicable.

- 6.68 The site comprises mostly hardstanding and buildings with some areas of amenity grassland and planting, scattered trees and scrub. The site close to Lousehill Copse Local Wildlife Site and there are a number of bat roosts in nearby properties. An Ecology report has been submitted with the application, which the Council's Ecologist has confirmed has been undertaken to an appropriate standard.

Bats

- 6.69 All the buildings on site were assessed as having potential to host roosting bats. As such, further bat emergence surveys were undertaken, concluding that one of the building's is in use by one soprano pipistrelle bat and that it is a small day roost of low conservation status. This will be lost when the buildings are demolished. As such, the Ecologist has confirmed that a licence for development works affecting bats will need to be obtained from Natural England before works which could impact upon the roost can commence. This will be secured via suitably worded condition. The report provides a mitigation plan that if implemented will ensure that bats are not harmed, that roosting sites are provided and that the favorable conservation status of bats will be maintained. This will be secured via suitably worded conditions.

Badgers

- 6.70 The report states that there are no badger setts on site and that there are negligible opportunities for badgers. The Ecologist has confirmed that given the proximity of the site to a number of known badger setts, the site is likely to be traversed by badgers. A suitably worded condition will be attached to ensure no harm to foraging badgers during construction.

Habitats

- 6.71 With regard to Habitats on site, the Ecologist has confirmed their loss is acceptable. Nevertheless, the vegetation on site is likely to be used by nesting birds and pigeons were recorded nesting within one of the buildings. As such works could potentially affect nesting birds and a condition is recommended to ensure that demolition takes place outside of the bird nesting season.

Biodiversity Enhancements

- 6.72 The Ecology report includes a number of ecological enhancements including wildlife friendly planting, bat and bird boxes and mammal gaps. Full specifications of bird and bat boxes showing the locations and elevations will be secured via suitably worded conditions. A green roof is also proposed which is welcomed, and full details including planting and ongoing maintenance will be secured via suitably worded conditions.
- 6.73 A condition will also be attached to ensure that a wildlife friendly lighting scheme is provided so that excessive or poorly designed lighting does not affect bats.

Sustainability and Energy

- 6.74 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. Policy CC4 (Decentralised Energy) seeks that developments of more than 20 dwellings should consider the inclusion of combined heat and power plant (CHP) or other form of decentralised energy provision.
- 6.75 Policy H5 (Standards for New Housing) and the Council's Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2019) identify that, as a minimum, new dwellings should achieve 35% improvement in regulated emissions over the Target Emissions Rate (TER) in the 2013 Building Regulations, with financial contribution required to off-set any remaining carbon emissions to zero.

- 6.76 The applicant has submitted an energy and sustainability report as part of the application which follows the relevant policies and Sustainable Design and Construction SPD guidance applying the recognised energy hierarchy of 'be lean', 'be clean' and 'be green'.
- 6.77 The information submitted demonstrates that through the measures outlined in the energy strategy, it is anticipated that a 55% improvement above Building Regulations Part L compliant baseline is achievable. In terms of decentralised energy, there are no heat networks which extend near the site however, roof mounted Photo Voltaic cells are included, as well as air source heat pumps and positively support the development in achieving the above energy improvement below Building Regulations. Details of these additions are to be secured by way of conditions.
- 6.78 The remaining 45% to achieve zero carbon performance would be offset by a financial contribution in accordance with the methodology outline in the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD to be secured by way of S106 legal agreement. This money would be ring-fenced for carbon saving, energy efficiency and renewable energy projects in Reading.
- 6.79 Officers are satisfied that the proposals demonstrate a good standard of energy sustainability and, subject to conditions, the development accords with relevant policy in this regard.

Sustainable Drainage Systems

- 6.80 Policy EN18 (Flooding and Sustainable Drainage Systems) 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.
- 6.81 A sustainable drainage scheme has been submitted with the application. Through officer discussions, the scheme has been revised to ensure that drainage is designed in conjunction with soft landscaping – connecting tree planting pits with the proposed soakaways so that the trees and smaller plants can filter surface water within the site. Furthermore, the scheme shows a significant reduction in run off when compared to the existing run off from the site and as such is acceptable in principle. However, the final details of all elements of the strategy are recommended to be secured via condition. Conditions will also secure a timetable for implementation and details of management and maintenance of the scheme.

Archaeology

- 6.82 Policy EN2 (Areas of Archaeological Significance) seeks to protect areas of archaeological importance.
- 6.83 An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment has been submitted as part of the application. Berkshire Archaeology have reviewed the submitted assessment and concur with the conclusions that the likelihood of buried archaeological remains within the site is, at best, low, and likely to be negligible. On this basis, they advise that further archaeological investigation of the site would not be proportionate and therefore no further action is required in this respect.

Section 106 Legal Agreement

- 6.84 The vast majority of elements to be secured via s106 legal agreement, as per the Recommendation at the outset of this report, have already been detailed in earlier sections of this report. One matter not explicitly referenced is the requirement to secure an Employment and Skills Plan (ESP) for the Construction phases of the

development. This is required in line with Policy CC9 (Securing Infrastructure) and the Employment, Skills and Training SPD. It is not yet known whether this will take the form of an actual ESP to be progressed by them on site, or payment of an equivalent financial contribution, as per the SPD formula. The legal agreement will be worded flexibly to enable either eventuality.

- 6.85 It is considered that the obligations referred to in the Recommendation would comply with the National Planning Policy Framework 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. These Head of Terms has been agreed by the applicant and a S106 Legal Agreement is in the process of being prepared to secure this contribution.

Other matters

Equality

- 6.86 In determining this application, the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation. It is considered that there is no indication or evidence that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular application.

Representations

- 6.87 Objections received refer to loss of and impact on views – but these are not material considerations and should not affect the decision. Other relevant matters including loss of light, privacy and impact on outlook have been considered above.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The proposal would provide a residential scheme on land allocated for housing within the Local Plan. The loss of the former fire station is acceptable due to it having been re-provided elsewhere. The proposal would contribute to meeting the Borough's identified housing need and in particular the proposed 30% on-site Affordable Housing. The proposed mix of housing includes an appropriate amount of larger sized units.
- 7.2 In design terms, the proposal is considered to positively improve the character and appearance of the site and wider area creating new streets and areas of public open space. On-site tree planting, biodiversity measures and landscaped amenity areas will provide visual and environmental benefits to the immediate area, improving the ecology of the site. The proposal is considered to make an effective and efficient use of the land in a relatively sustainable location.
- 7.3 The proposal provides appropriate routes and spaces, creating new routes with appropriate levels of parking and access, all of which would be accessed safely.
- 7.4 Overall, the proposals would be a positive addition to the regeneration of the wider Dee Park area. The proposals are considered to be acceptable within the context of national and local planning policies, as detailed in the appraisal above. As such, full planning permission is recommended for approval, subject to the recommended conditions and completion of the S106 Legal Agreement.

Case Officer: Ethne Humphreys

Selection of Submitted Plans



Proposed site layout





Front Elevation



Side Elevation



Proposed Flats – Spey Rd Elevation (above) – Leven Street Elevation (below)