

**Ward:** Abbey

**Appeal No:** APP/E0345/W/22/3303428

**Planning Ref:** 211424/FUL

**Site:** 1a Eaton Place, Reading, RG1 7LP

**Proposal:** Demolition of existing commercial building (Class E) and erection of residential block comprising of 2 x 1 bed flats (Class C3)

**Decision level:** Appeal    **Method:** Written representations

**Decision:** Appeal Allowed subject to conditions.

**Date Determined:** 12/05/2023    **Inspector:** David Reed BSc DipTP DMS MRTPI

## **BACKGROUND**

The appeal site is currently occupied by a single storey building to the rear of 104 Oxford Road, fronting on to Eaton Place. Two of the reasons (and issues below) turn on the location of the site, which falls within the Reading Central Area as defined in the Local Plan. The application was presented to your 1<sup>st</sup> June 2022 meeting with a recommendation of approval (subject to completion of the legal agreement), but the Committee overturned the Recommendation and resolved to refuse the application for three reasons:

- 1. The proposed development, by reason of its overall scale relative to plot size would result in a cramped arrangement that would fail to provide any private amenity space for both flats, and sufficient internal floor space for the proposed ground floor flat. This would adversely impact upon the level of amenity and provide an unacceptable quality of living accommodation for future occupants, contrary to Policies CC8, H5 and H10 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).*
- 2. The proposed development would locate the first-floor flat's kitchen, bathroom and landing over the bedroom of the ground floor flat. This is considered to be an inappropriate 'stacking' arrangement which, through noise and disturbance of the occupiers of the first floor flat using these areas, will result in an unacceptable level of harm to residential amenity for occupants of the ground floor flat. This would be contrary to policies CC8 and CR6 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).*
- 3. In the absence of a completed legal agreement to secure an acceptable contribution towards the provision of Affordable Housing and off-site tree planting, the proposal fails to contribute adequately to the housing needs and amenity requirements of Reading Borough, contrary to policies H3 and EN14 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019), the Council's Adopted Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (2021) and the Reading Borough Council Tree Strategy (2021).*

## **SUMMARY OF DECISION**

The Inspector used the reasons for refusal as the issues for the appeal decision.

### **External Amenity Space – Both Flats (Reason for Refusal 1)**

The Inspector acknowledged that neither flat would be provided with external amenity space, and that this is contrary to Policy H10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space) of the Local Plan, however, he referred to paragraph 4.4.83 of the supporting text, which accepts that flats

in central Reading are less likely to be suitable for families requiring private amenity space. Further, he identified local parks which would provide recreational opportunities.

The lack of balcony or roof top garden for the flats is also acknowledged by the Inspector, referring to paragraph 4.4.86 of the Local Plan, which states that in the central area, where communal space is not provided, balconies and roof gardens should be provided. As communal open space would not been provided for the development either, the Inspector concluded that the lack of external amenity space weighed against the proposal in the Planning balance.

### **Internal Floorspace, Noise and Disturbance – Ground Floor Flat (Reason for Refusal 2)**

The Inspector acknowledged the constrained nature of the site, which limits the gross internal area of the ground floor flat to 30.5m<sup>2</sup>, considerably below the nationally described space standard (NDSS) of 37m<sup>2</sup>. The Inspector also acknowledged that the gross internal area of the first floor flat would be 50.5m<sup>2</sup>, which meets the NDSS for a one-bedroom, two person flat. The shortfall in the ground floor flat he found to be within the spirit of Policy H5 and a suitable design response in this central location. The acceptability of the shortfall is on the basis that a planning condition would be in place to restrict the occupancy of the ground floor flat to a single resident.

Although the Inspector agreed that the internal ‘stacking’ of rooms was sub-optimal in terms of the amenity policy (CC8), he again referred to the central Reading situation and considered that this could be suitably mitigated by sound insulation, and he therefore attached a condition in order to insulate between the two flats, including the submission of a verification report to confirm suitable amenity was secured.

### **Affordable Housing and Off-Site Tree Planting (Reason for Refusal 3)**

During the appeal, a Section 106 agreement was signed with obligations to deliver £17,666 towards affordable housing, and £1,800 towards off-site tree planting within Abbey Ward to comply with policies H3: Affordable Housing and EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodland, thereby overcoming this reason for refusal.

### **Planning Balance**

The Inspector concluded that the development was sustainable, contributed to housing needs, and provided social and economic benefits to the Borough and he reasoned that the shortfalls of the development in terms of residential amenity to future occupants were acceptable due to the flexibility provided in central Reading by the policies in the Local Plan.

### **AD OF PLANNING, TRANSPORT & PUBLIC PROTECTION SERVICES COMMENT**

The benefits and disbenefits of the scheme were considered to be marginal on this application which resulted in the difference of opinion between officers and the Committee. The Inspector clearly agreed that the margins were fine too; but felt that with the contributions, on balance, the development overall was positive. Officers will now seek to ensure that in discharging the planning conditions, the development provides an acceptable form of development in terms of detailed design.

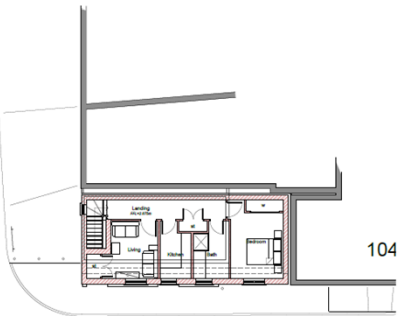
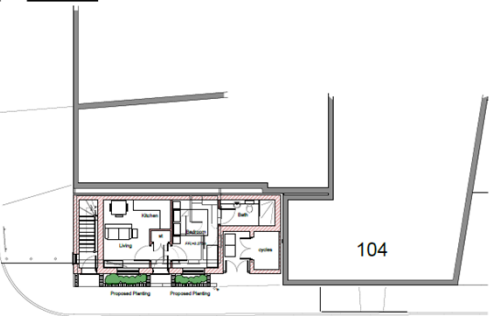
**SITE LOCATION**



**PROPOSED FLOOR PLAN**

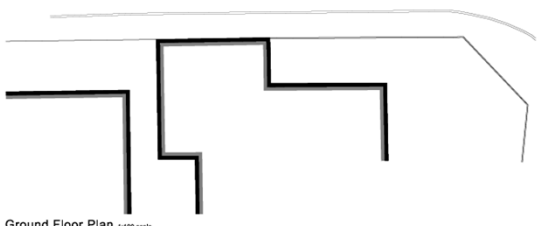
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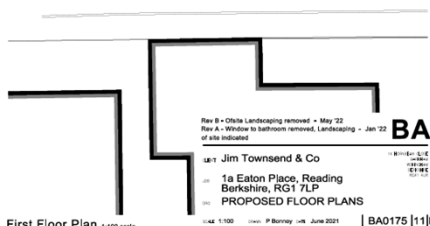


Eaton Place

Eaton Place



Ground Floor Plan 1:100 scale



First Floor Plan 1:100 scale

Rev B - Office Landscaping removed - May '22  
Rev A - Windows to bathroom removed, Landscaping - Jan '22  
of site indicated

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