

Planning Applications Committee

19 July 2023



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT
Ward	Katesgrove
Planning Application Reference:	221364
Site Address:	Central Club, 36-42 London Street, Reading, RG1 4SQ
Proposed Development	Partial demolition of existing building, construction of new building to accommodate a community hall (Use Class F2) and 17 no. residential flats (Use Class C3), with associated works and landscaping
Applicant	Red Line Land Ltd
Report author	Tom Bradfield
Deadline:	19/07/2023
Recommendations	Grant planning permission, subject to S106 (terms as follows) & conditions as follows
S106 Terms	<p>To secure affordable housing on site consisting of two units (11.8% provision), to be 1 no. one-bedroom unit and 1 no. 3 bedroom units. Both would be Reading Affordable Rent (RAR) tenure, capped at 70% of market rent as per published RAR levels.</p> <p>A (1) pre-implementation review and (2) a late stage review to be included, to re-visit the viability assessment [further details to be confirmed in the Update Report].</p> <p>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.</p> <p>To secure a Zero Carbon Offset contribution to be confirmed in the update report 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</p>

	<p>Construction SPD. Payment would be triggered on commencement of development and would be index-linked.</p> <p>Secure an employment and skills contribution of £2,192.60. As calculated in the Council’s Employment Skills and Training SPD (2013) – payable on commencement of the development.</p> <p>The rental charge for the community facility to be capped at a ‘peppercorn rent’ per annum for at least 25 years.</p>
<p>Conditions</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. TL1 - Full - time limit - three years 2. Approved Plans 3. Materials (samples to be approved) 4. Historic England – Mural Conservation and Restoration 5. Cycle Parking (pre-commencement) 6. Refuse Storage 7. Refuse Collection (to be approved) 8. Parking Permits 1 (notification to LPA) 9. Parking Permits 2 (notification to occupants) 10. Construction Method Statement (pre-commencement) 11. Noise Assessment & Mitigation 12. Noise Mitigation Scheme (as specified) 13. Mechanical Plant (Noise Assessment required) 14. Noise Mitigation Scheme (Internal) 15. Air Quality Mechanical Ventilation (as specified) 16. Hours of construction/demolition 17. No burning on site 18. Contaminated Land Remediation Scheme (pre-commencement) 19. Contaminated Land Remediation Scheme (implement and verification) 20. Unidentified Contamination 21. Archaeological Investigation (pre-commencement) 22. Biodiversity Enhancements (Swift Bricks) 23. Sustainable Drainage (pre-commencement) 24. Sustainable Drainage (as specified) 25. Submission and approval of hard and soft landscaping (pre-commencement) 26. Landscaping Implementation 27. SAP Assessment – Major - design stage 28. SAP Assessment – Major – As Built 29. Community use control 30. Obscure Glazing
<p>Informatives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive and Proactive • Pre-commencement conditions • Highways • S106 • Terms and Conditions • Building Regulations • Complaints about construction • Encroachment • Contamination • Noise between residential properties • CIL • Parking Permits • Thames Water

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1. Executive summary

- 1.1. The proposal is recommended for approval subject to a legal agreement and conditions as set out above.
- 1.2. The proposal would successfully redevelop an allocated Local Plan site within the town centre which has been vacant for fifteen years. It would provide housing, a community facility and restore and preserve the Black History Mural. The proposals would have an appropriate design, ensure that there would be no unacceptable impact on neighbouring properties and provide suitable accommodation for future residents. The proposal would have no adverse transport impacts, be acceptable in terms of ecology, biodiversity and sustainability. The minor adverse impact on the setting of heritage assets would be mitigated by the significant public benefits as outlined above. The application is therefore recommended to you for approval.

2. Introduction and Site Description

- 2.1. The site is on the corner of London Street and Mill Lane. It currently comprises a part single, part two storey building which has been vacant for over 15 years. The previous use of the site was as a community facility (the Central Club, a community hall). There is a locally significant Black History Mural on the northern elevation of the site which runs the length of the site and has been identified as an Asset of Community Value.
- 2.2. The front elevation faces east onto London Street and comprises of the historic element of the Central Club. The southern elevation adjoins number 44 London Street, the western elevation faces onto Crosslands Road. The northern elevation comprises of the Black History Mural, and faces onto Mill Lane, with the A329 beyond and the Oracle shopping centre on the opposite side of the road.
- 2.3. The site is within the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area, and there are numerous Listed Buildings nearby, although the site itself does not contain any Listed or Locally Listed Buildings. Immediately to the south of the site on the western side of London Street is a row of Listed Buildings which extends up to the junction with London Road (approximately 275m away). The closest Listed Buildings on this side of London Street are 44 and 46 London Street, 48-52 London Street, 54-58 London Street and 62-66 London Street, which are all Grade II Listed. Opposite the site there are several further Grade II Listed Buildings – 33 London Street, 35 London Street, 37 and 39 London Street, 41 London Street and 49-53 London Street.
- 2.4. The site is within the Air Quality Management Area and an Area of Archaeological Potential.
- 2.5. The site is allocated in the Local Plan as site CR14h:

CR14h CENTRAL CLUB, LONDON STREET

Development for residential with potential for ground floor community provision.

Development should:

- ***Make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area and the setting of nearby listed buildings;***
- ***Retain the iconic mural on the northern frontage;***
- ***Take account of potential archaeological significance;***
- ***Address noise impacts on residential use; and***
- ***Address air quality impacts on residential use.***

Site size: 0.05 ha 8-12 dwellings with community use provision

2.6. The site location plan is below:



3. The proposal

- 3.1. This application seeks to partially demolish the existing building and construct a four storey building which would contain a community facility and 17 residential units. The Black History Mural on the southern elevation of the building would be retained and restored as part of the proposals. The front section of the existing Central Club building facing onto London Street would also be retained.
- 3.2. The proposal would include a landscaped residents' courtyard on the southern side of the site and an arrival courtyard on the north-eastern corner. The community space would be towards the London Street frontage and would be 134sqm in area. Cycle and bin storage would be within the central core of the site, with visitor cycle parking in the arrival courtyard. No car parking is proposed.
- 3.3. The proposed residential unit mix would be as follows:

Type	Market	Affordable	Total
1 bedroom flat	6	1	7
2 bedroom flat	7	0	7
3 bedroom flat	2	1	3
Total	15	2	17

- 3.4. 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 £99,743.62 based on £156.24 (2022 indexed figure) per sqm of Gross Internal Area (GIA).
- 3.5. The applicant has submitted the following documents for consideration:

- Affordable Housing Statement
- Air Quality Assessment
- Contaminated Land Statement
- Ecology Statement
- Noise Assessment
- Acoustic Design Review
- SUDS Strategy
- Energy Statement
- Mural Risk Assessment
- Heritage Impact Assessment
- Art Condition Survey
- Art Protection Proposal
- Planning Statement
- Daylight/Sunlight Assessment
- Viability Report
- Design & Access Statement
- Existing Plans and Elevations
- Proposed Plans and Elevations

4. Planning history

- 4.1. There have been no relevant planning applications made at the site, although pre-application advice has been supplied before submission of this planning application.

5. Consultations

- 5.1. The following consultation responses were received:

Historic England

- 5.2. Historic England is a Statutory Consultee where a major proposal involves demolition on land owned by a Local Authority in a conservation area. Historic England welcomes the retention of the mural and façade of the existing building. Several conditions were suggested to ensure that the conservation and restoration of the mural is undertaken appropriately. No objections to the built form of the proposed building or its impact on the setting of the nearby Listed Buildings or the Conservation Area. A response was not received from the Council's Conservation Officer.

Thames Water

- 5.3. Thames Water raised no objections and suggested an informative related to nearby waste water assets.

RBC Transport

- 5.4. The Transport team raised no objection to the proposals. The car free nature of the scheme is considered acceptable given the accessible location. Further information relating to waste and recycling, cycle parking and access rights was requested and received. Conditions relating to the restriction of residents parking permits, servicing, waste and recycling collection and a construction management plan were suggested.

RBC Housing Development

The Housing Development Team appreciate the complicated nature of the site and that viability constraints result in an 11% affordable housing offer. A larger unit than the studio being offered would be preferable, but given the complex nature of the site and development, it would be acceptable. It is unlikely that a Registered Provider would take the two units on, so a cascade clause should be included in the legal agreement to ensure that the units are first offered to the Council for purchase before seeking the financial contribution agreed as a last resort.

RBC Waste & Recycling

- 5.5. Further information was requested relating to the collection of waste and recycling, which was provided. Waste management would be secured by suggested condition.

RBC Environmental Protection

- 5.6. Additional information relating to noise and air pollution was required and has been provided. A variety of conditions relating to noise, air quality, land contamination, bin storage, hours of construction and a CMS were suggested.

RBC Ecology

- 5.7. The proposals would have no impact on protected species or priority habitats, therefore no objection to the proposals. Conditions relating to landscaping and biodiversity enhancements was suggested.

Berkshire Archaeology

- 5.8. No objection subject to condition relating to archaeological investigations.

Resident Groups

- 5.9. The Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee objects to the proposal as follows:
- Design of the residential accommodation
 - Unacceptable amenity for future occupiers
 - Useability of the community hall and arrival courtyard

Public/local consultation and comments received

- 5.10. 40 neighbouring properties were consulted by letter and two site notices were displayed at the application site.
- 5.11. Although no letters of objection were received, a petition from neighbouring properties was received, with eight signatures attached. It highlighted the below concerns:
- Impact on heritage assets is unacceptable
 - Impact on the street scene is unacceptable
 - Loss of privacy to 44 and 46 London Street
 - Unacceptable design
 - Lack of information relating to final use of community space

6. Legal context

- 6.1. Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority in the exercise of its functions to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.
- 6.2. 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'. However, the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making (NPPF paragraph 12).
- 6.3. In this regard, the NPPF states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the Local Plan 2019 according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (the

closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).

- 6.4. Accordingly, the latest NPPF and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

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

Section 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Reading Borough Local Plan 2019

Policies:

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

EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment

EN2: Areas of Archaeological Significance

EN3: Enhancement of Conservation Areas

EN4: Locally Important Heritage Assets

EN5: Protection of Significant Views with Heritage Interest

EN6: New Development in a Historic Context

EN7: Local Green Space and Public Open Space

EN9: Provision of Open Space

EN10: Access to Open Space

EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network

EN15: Air Quality

EN16: Pollution and Water Resources

EN17: Noise Generating Equipment

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

OU1: New and Existing Community Facilities

CR1: Definition of Central Reading

CR2: Design in Central Reading

CR3: Public Realm in Central Reading

CR14: Other Sites for Development in Central Reading

Supplementary Planning Documents

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

Other relevant documents:

Conservation Area Appraisal – Market Place/London Street

7. Appraisal

7.1. The main considerations are:

- Principle of Development
- Design, Heritage and Archaeology
- Affordable Housing
- Unit Mix, Housing Quality and Future Residents Amenity
- Neighbour Amenity
- Transport
- Ecology
- Sustainability
- S106 Legal Agreement

Principle of Development

7.2. Local Plan Policy OU1 seeks to protect community facilities. New facilities should be located where there is a choice of travel options, and proposals involving the redevelopment of existing facilities should re-provide community use on site where possible.

7.3. Local Plan Policy H1 sets out the pressing need for housing in Reading and the surrounding area. It goes on to identify that the appropriate use of previously developed land is an important way of meeting the housing needs in Reading.

7.4. The site is allocated in the Local Plan as CR14h. It is described as a site with potential for development for residential with ground floor community provision. It identifies that 8-12 residential units on site would be suitable.

7.5. The proposals would replace the majority of the existing building with a new building containing 17 flats and a community facility. The proposal exceeds the allocation suggestion, however, providing this is achieved in a manner that would not result in any unacceptable impact on other material considerations, this is considered acceptable.

7.6. Although the community floorspace would be reduced from the current 596sqm to 134sqm. The applicant has demonstrated that the facility in its current state is not fit for purpose and that the proposal would restore a useable community facility to a site which has not offered this for over 15 years. The use falls within use class F2 and opening hours would be secured by condition. Provision of community floorspace on site would meet the requirements of Policy OU1 and would be in accordance with the site allocation.

7.7. The site constitutes an underused brownfield site in Central Reading. The allocation in the Local Plan identifies it as an appropriate location for residential development, providing any proposal:

- Makes a positive contribution to the Conservation Area and the setting of nearby Listed Buildings
- Retains the iconic mural on the northern frontage
- Takes account of potential archaeological significance
- Addresses noise impacts on residential use
- Addresses air quality impacts on residential use

- 7.8. The following sections will discuss these criteria, and, providing the proposals meet them, development of the site for residential use is considered acceptable in principle.

Design, Heritage and Archaeology

- 7.9. Policy EN1 of the Local Plan seeks to protect heritage assets and their settings and where possible, enhance them. Proposals which affect heritage assets and their settings should seek to avoid harm in the first instance. Any harm identified requires clear and convincing justification, usually in the form of public benefits. Policies EN3 and EN6 of the Local Plan seek to ensure that the special interest, character and architecture of Conservation Areas is conserved and enhanced. Development proposals in conservation areas should make a positive contribution to the historic townscape and be sensitive to the historic context.
- 7.10. Policy EN2 of the Local Plan requires development to carry out appropriate assessments of archaeological impacts to ensure that adequate identification and investigation takes place.
- 7.11. 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)”.
- 7.12. The site is in an area of significant heritage value, given the number of nearby Listed Buildings and its position within the Market Square/London Street Conservation Area. The Conservation Area Character Appraisal identifies London Street as one of four character areas within the Conservation Area. The Appraisal identifies a variety of features which have a positive and negative impact on the historic character of the area. The positive features include the width of the street, the high concentration of historic buildings, the mix of architectural styles, the well proportioned relationship between taller buildings and the wide street, the predominance of brick and the strong vertical rhythm created by aligned windows and doors. Negative features include the proximity to the IDR, noise and fumes, lack of enclosure at the northern end of London Street, garish shopfronts and modern developments which detract from the historic appearance of the area.
- 7.13. The proposal would retain the existing building on the eastern elevation which faces onto London Street, where the majority of heritage assets are located and the views within the Conservation Area are most important. The retention of this part of the existing building would ensure continuity at street scene level, and a human scale retained. In particular, the existing façade is well constructed of brick, with Flemish bond, chamfered edges and a stone fascia, all of which is being retained. This is identified as a positive contributor to the historic character of the Conservation Area.



- 7.14. The new building would be set back from the front elevation of the retained ground floor façade by 3.5m. The setback would ensure that the gable end of the adjacent Grade II Listed number 44 London Street would remain visible in views looking southwards. The set back from the street frontage serves to disconnect the new building from the historic aspects of the street, and it would read as a separate entity in the street scene. Furthermore, the Character Appraisal discusses the lack of enclosure at the northern end of London Street as a negative feature. The proposal would help to create an enclosed end point to this section of the Conservation Area, shielding it somewhat from the impacts of the IDR and larger scale Oracle shopping centre beyond.
- 7.15. The scale of the building would be larger than most buildings on the western side of London Street, but would be of a similar scale to those on the eastern side. The Character Appraisal identifies that well-proportioned taller buildings and their relationship with the wide London Street constitutes a positive feature of this part of the Conservation Area. The Appraisal also discusses the importance of brick as a material in this location and the strong vertical rhythm of the street. The proposal would be of brick construction and would maintain a pronounced verticality which would be juxtaposed with the existing horizontal appearance of the retained mural and façade of the Central Club. The proposed building would be similar in scale to many of the larger buildings on London Street, in particular on the eastern side. The scale of the building, combined with its set back from the front elevation, materials and design would ensure that the character of the Conservation Area is preserved.
- 7.16. The proposed building would be visible in the setting of many of the Listed Buildings, especially when looking north towards the IDR. When viewing the Listed Buildings on the western side of London Street in their current context, the Oracle shopping centre is highly visible behind them. The proposal would sit between the Listed Buildings and the Oracle and would be a more appropriate backdrop when viewing the setting of these Listed Buildings given the proposed materials (brick) when compared to the grey cladding of the shopping centre. Whilst the proposal would have an impact on the setting of several Listed Buildings, as well as the Conservation Area, it is considered that this impact would be moderate, and would result in less than substantial harm.
- 7.17. The Local Plan requires proposals which cause harm to heritage assets to provide adequate justification to overcome this harm, usually through public benefits. The proposal would restore and preserve the Black History Mural on the northern side of the site. Whilst not Listed, the mural is of significant interest and its retention, restoration and preservation would be beneficial to Reading. Several conditions are proposed to ensure that the preservation of the mural is appropriate and secured. Other benefits of the scheme include the provision of housing including affordable housing, the re-use of a long-vacant town centre site and the reintroduction of a community use.
- 7.18. Berkshire Archaeology were consulted as part of the application, who identifies the site as of archaeological interest. A condition for site investigation has been recommended.
- 7.19. Overall, it is considered that the proposal would provide adequate mitigation to overcome the less than substantial harm to the heritage assets, and would be of a design that would ensure that the character of the Conservation Area is preserved. The proposal would therefore comply with Local Plan policies.

Affordable Housing

- 7.20. Local Plan Policy H3 requires development to make an appropriate contribution towards affordable housing to meet the needs of Reading Borough. For a development of this size, 30% of the total dwellings are expected to be provided as affordable housing. If proposals fall short of the policy, then the developer should clearly demonstrate the circumstances justifying a lower contribution through an open-book viability assessment.

- 7.21. The proposal would provide two affordable housing units on site, a one bedroom unit and a three bedroom unit, which equates to 11.8%. They would both be Affordable Rented units. This % falls short of the policy requirement, and so the applicants have submitted a viability assessment to justify the shortfall.
- 7.22. The viability assessment has been reviewed by BPS Surveyors on behalf of RBC Valuation, and found to be robust, and Valuation accepts that no additional on-site provision or financial contribution could be justified at this point. However, the applicant has further agreed to both a pre-implementation and late stage review to re-check the viability of the scheme. This would ensure that at these future points, if any positive gains were made in viability due to lower construction costs and/or an expected uplift in values, the developer would pay an enhanced further contribution. The Update Report shall set out the precise points for these reassessments and the nature of calculation of the costings and therefore how any additional contribution(s), as relevant, would be achieved. The 'cap' for these contributions would be equivalent to the Gross Development Value derived maximum contribution for the development which could mean that the equivalent financial contribution of 30% affordable housing could be achieved. The mechanism for this will be set out in the legal agreement to ensure that the viability can be re-assessed at these stages.
- 7.23. The Housing Development team were consulted as part of the application and have identified that given the complex nature of the site the offer above is acceptable. It is suggested by Housing Development that it may be difficult to secure a Registered Provider who would take on two units, so a robust 'cascade' clause is proposed to be included within the legal agreement to ensure that if Registered Providers are not interested in managing them, the units would be offered to the Council in the first instance, with a further option of a commuted sum in lieu of on-site provision.
- 7.24. Given the above package, the proposal is considered to be acceptable and complies with policies H3, CC9 and the Affordable Housing SPD.

Unit Mix, Housing Quality and Future Residents' Amenity

- 7.25. Local Plan 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 of the Local Plan, in particular for family homes.
- 7.26. Local Plan Policy H5 states that new build housing will need to comply with the nationally prescribed space standards. Policy H10 requires dwellings to be provide with functional private or communal open space where possible. Homes should also have adequate natural light, outlook and privacy.
- 7.27. The proposal would provide 17 units at the following mix:

Type	Market	Affordable	Total
1 bedroom flat	6	1	7
2 bedroom flat	7	0	7
3 bedroom flat	2	1	3
Total	15	2	17

- 7.28. Ten family sized units would be provided (59%), with the remainder of the mix being one bedroom units. Provision of this level of family housing significantly exceeds the policy requirements.
- 7.29. Each new unit would meet or exceed the relevant internal space standards. Some of the units would be single aspect, mainly due to the need to retain the mural on the northern elevation. Two of the units benefit from private balconies, and a communal courtyard

space is provided at ground floor level. Given the constrained nature of the site and its central location, this arrangement is considered acceptable.

- 7.30. Within the site, there would be no overlooking between flats, and the orientation of the windows, introduction of the courtyard and position in relation to number 44 London Street would ensure that there would be no direct overlooking. The ground floor units would have frosted windows to 1.5m in height to ensure that their privacy is retained (to be the subject of a condition). Every unit within the scheme would achieve daylight and sunlight levels in excess of the British Standards recommendations.
- 7.31. The proposal would include adequate mitigation, with regard to air quality, through the implementation of an appropriate ventilation arrangement. Conditions are recommended to ensure that this is secured.
- 7.32. The proposal includes adequate noise mitigation to ensure that there would be no impact on future residents from external noise. Further mitigation is proposed to ensure that there would be no adverse impact as a result of noise between the two uses or from mechanical plant. Conditions securing these are recommended.
- 7.33. Overall, officers consider that the proposal would provide suitable future living conditions for residents on a constrained site in the town centre and is therefore considered to comply with the Local Plan policies above.

Neighbour Amenity

- 7.34. 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.
- 7.35. The closest residential use is at first floor level at number 44 London Street. Given the existing relationship between the two buildings, the set off from the boundary and the inclusion of the courtyard, the proposal would not have any increased impact on the living conditions at this property. There would be no direct overlooking between the two sites due to the position of windows. Furthermore, the site is located to the north which ensures that there would be no unacceptable loss of sunlight, as identified within the submitted daylight and sunlight report. No other properties are considered to be adversely affected.

Transport

- 7.36. 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.
- 7.37. The proposed development would be car free, which falls below the Council's car parking standards. Given the sustainable location of the site as well as its constrained nature, the proposed change of use would not have a significant impact on trips generated. Parking nearby is restricted, therefore any increase in parking demand would not be accommodated on street. Parking permits would be restricted for future residents. Given the excellent pedestrian, cycling and bus routes nearby, a car free development is considered acceptable in this instance.
- 7.38. Adequate levels of cycle parking have been provided, both for the residential units and the community facility, with visitor spaces being provided in the arrival courtyard.
- 7.39. Waste and recycling storage has been provided in an appropriate location, but would need to be brought to the kerb on collection day. A condition requiring a waste management plan to secure this has been recommended.
- 7.40. Overall, the proposals would represent an appropriate development in transport terms, and it would comply with the Local Plan.

Ecology

- 7.41. 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.
- 7.42. The proposal is accompanied by an ecological survey which demonstrates that there would be no impact on existing species at the site. Several conditions are recommended to ensure that the proposals would provide landscaping details and the installation of swift bricks is carried out to ensure adequate biodiversity net gain on site.

Sustainability

- 7.43. 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.
- 7.44. 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 35% carbon reduction through higher fabric standards and the low carbon and renewable energy systems, namely photovoltaic panels and air source heat pumps. These would be positioned behind the parapet at roof level and would not be readily visible from views within the Conservation Area.
- 7.45. 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."
- 7.46. Residual emissions would be offset with a carbon offset payment of £1,800 per tonne, in accordance with Policy H5 and the SPD. This contribution will be confirmed in the update report, and would be secured in the legal agreement.
- 7.47. Given the significant parts of the building which are being retained, achieving zero carbon on this site would be difficult. The retention of existing building fabric at the front of the site and along the northern side would be a positive benefit in terms of waste minimisation (Policy CC5 is relevant). Although it is unfortunate that the proposed development cannot achieve Zero Carbon, the submitted Sustainability Statement demonstrates that the development achieves a 35% 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.
- 7.48. 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.

Legal Agreement

7.49. 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 two units (11.8% provision) on site, to be 1 no. one-bedroom unit and 1 no. 3 bedroom units. Both would be Reading Affordable Rent (RAR) tenure, capped at 70% of market rent as per published RAR levels. Although the offer is below the policy requirements, this has been confirmed as the maximum offer achievable through assessing the viability information submitted. The Housing Development team have confirmed that the offer is acceptable.
- 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.
- A pre-implementation review and a late stage review would be included to ensure that the viability can be assessed as the development moves forwards to ensure that a maximum amount of affordable housing is provided as part of the proposals.
- Zero carbon offset financial contribution will be calculated and reported in the update report based on the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD formula
- Employment, Skills and Training and Construction financial contribution of £2,192.60.
- A clause to ensure that the rent of the community facility would not exceed a peppercorn rent per annum for at least 25 years. This would ensure that the community use is retained as such, at minimal cost to future users.

8. Equality implications

8.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

8.2. 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

9. Conclusion & planning balance

- 9.1 As with all applications considered by the Local Planning Authority, the application is required to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise, as per Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- 9.2 Any harmful impacts of the proposed development are required to be weighed against the benefits in the context of national and local planning policies, as detailed in the appraisal above. Having gone through this process officers consider that the impacts of the scheme on the heritage assets nearby would be outweighed by the benefits of the scheme in providing housing, affordable housing, restoring the mural and providing a community facility on a vacant brownfield site.
- 9.3 It is considered that officers have applied a suitable planning balance when reaching this conclusion. As such, this application is recommended for Approval subject to completion of a legal agreement and relevant conditions.

Ground floor plan



Proposed north elevation

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PROPOSED NORTHERN ELEVATION

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Proposed first floor plan

