

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT - Application No. 211614FUL

Address: 9 Upper Crown Street

Proposal: Demolition of existing buildings and structures, associated reuse of frame with basement level used for car parking & servicing, erection of 3 no. residential blocks containing 46 no. dwellings above, associated parking (including replacement), access works and landscaping, relocation of substations & associated works to rear of indigo apartments to facilitate pedestrian access

Case officer: Matt Burns

Site Description and Surrounding Area

The application site consists of a data storage facility with roof deck car park above. The existing building is utilitarian in appearance and constructed from a mix of red brick and concrete frame. The site is accessed from Upper Crown Street and ground level via two ramps, one which slopes down to provide access to the data storage facility and to provide a servicing area for the building and three electrical substations on the site and one which slopes upwards to access the roof top car park. The ground floor site level of the data storage facility is set down below the level of that of adjacent surrounding buildings to the south on Upper Crown Street and to the west on Southampton Street.

To the south and east of the site are modest two storey terraced residential dwellings on Upper Crown Street and Newark Street. To the west of the site is the rear of the properties fronting Southampton Street which are a mixture of commercial and residential ranging from single storey to five storeys in scale. To the north of the site is the rear of the large Indigo apartments building which ranges from four to six storeys in scale.

The application site is located outside of but adjacent to the Reading Central Area as defined by Policy CR1 (Definition of Central Reading). The site is also located within an area of potentially contaminated land and within an air quality management area.

Proposal

The application seeks planning permission for partial demolition of the existing buildings and structures and erection of three residential blocks containing forty-six dwellings with basement level used for car parking and servicing, revised access, landscaping, relocation of substations and associated works to the rear of Indigo apartments to facilitate pedestrian access.

Amended plans have been submitted for consideration during the course of the application which revised the building layout from four residential blocks to three but maintained the number of dwellings proposed as forty-six (21 x 1 bed units, 11 x 2 bed units and 14 x 3 bed units). It is proposed that 30% of the units would be in the form of affordable housing.

The proposed development includes the provision of four townhouses of two storeys plus roof in the roof space which would front on to Upper Crown Street with the rest of units being in the form forty-two flats across two blocks of between five and six storeys. The existing building is proposed to be largely demolished but some of its frame and brick would be reused.

Vehicle parking spaces within the existing roof top car park are leased to a variety of commercial and residential occupiers of buildings which surround the site but also located

further afar within the town centre. The existing car park contains 74 spaces, 8 of which are allocated to the on-site data storage facility and the applicant advises that these are no longer required as a result of the proposed development whilst the remaining 68 spaces, which are leased to surrounding properties, are proposed to be re-provided on-site within the proposed development. A further 20 vehicle parking spaces are also to be provided on-site to serve the development meaning a total of 88 parking spaces are proposed. 86 of the parking spaces would be located at basement level within the development access via the down ramp from Upper Crown Street, whilst 2 spaces would be located to the Upper Crown Street frontage to the front of the proposed small terrace of dwellings.

A separate pedestrian access point into the site is also proposed from Upper Crown Street providing access to cycle and bin store areas of landscaping and communal open space.

The planning application is for a major category development.

Plans Considered

- P001 Rev A - Site Location Plan
- P008 Rev B - Site Plan
- P009 Rev B - Basement
- P010 Rev B - Ground Floor
- P011 Rev B - First Floor
- P012 Rev B - Second Floor
- P013 Rev B - Third Floor
- P014 Rev B - Fourth Floor
- P015 Rev B - Roof Plan
- P016 Rev A - Building 1 Floor Plans
- P017 Rev A - Building 1 Floor Plans
- P018 Rev A - Building 2 Floor Plans
- P019 Rev A - Building 2 Floor Plans
- P020 Rev A - Building 2 Floor Plans
- P021 Rev A - Building 2 Floor Plans
- P022 Rev A - Building 3 Floor Plans
- P023 Rev A - Building 3 Floor Plans
- P024 Rev A - Building 3 Floor Plans
- P025 Rev A - Building 3 Floor Plans
- P026 Rev B - Site Elevations Sheet 1
- P027 Rev C - Site Elevations Sheet 2
- P028 Rev B - Site Elevations Sheet 3
- P029 Rev B - Site Elevations Sheet 4
- P031 Rev B - Site Sections Sheet 1
- P032 Rev A - Building 1 Elevations
- P033 Rev A - Building 1 Sections
- P034 Rev A - Building 2 Elevations
- P035 Rev A - Building 2 Elevations
- P036 Rev A - Building 2 Elevations
- P037 Rev A - Building 2 Sections
- P040 Rev A - Building 3 Elevations

- P041 Rev A - Building 3 Elevations
- P042 Rev A - Building 3 Sections
- P043 Rev A - Indigo House Stairs
- P090 Rev A - Landscape Principles and External Lighting Strategy

Received on 24th March 2022

Syntegra Car Park Management Plan ref. 20-7496
WB Planning Planning Statement Addendum ref. TR/24Jan/7847
Received on 24th March 2022

Base Energy External Daylight and Sunlight ref. 8349 Rev 2
Received on 31st May 2022

Woolf Bond Planning Planning Statement WBP Ref. 7847
Colony Affordable Housing Statement ref. 222
Syntegra Air Quality Assessment ref. 20-7496
Arbtech Preliminary Root Assessment Survey Issue 1.2
Ark Environmental Consultancy Ltd Flood Risk Assessment & SuDS/Drainage Assessment for Planning
Syntegra Energy and Sustainability Statement ref. 20-7496
Syngenta Transport Statement ref. 20-7496 Rev B
Colony Feasibility Study ref. 222/DAS/REV1

Received on 28th September 2021

Irongate Archaeological Impact Assessment ref. AH_T-DBA_Report
Received on 12th November 2021

Enviroscreen Property Assessment - ref. 222_EPO2
Received on 19th October 2021

Planning History

950613 - Change of use from warehouse unit to children's play zone - Refused.

Prior to submitting the planning application the Applicant sought pre-application advice in relation to the application site.

Consultation Responses

RBC Transport - No objection to the level of car parking space provision for the development or proposed vehicular access to the site but further clarification required in respect of the location of the parking bays for the proposed terraced dwellings fronting Upper Crown Street, location of disabled access parking bays and cycle storage required.

RBC Natural Environment - No objection, subject to a condition to secure submission, approval and implementation of a detailed scheme of hard and soft landscaping.

RBC Environmental Protection - No objection subject to conditions to control construction hours, submission and approval of a construction method statement, bin store details, contaminated land assessment/remediation scheme and noise assessment and mitigation scheme.

RBC Waste Services - No comments received.

RBC Valuations - No comments received.

RBC Housing - The application proposes 30% on site affordable housing (14 units). As per the Affordable Housing SPD (2021), 8/9 of the units should be rented, with the rent capped at 70% Market rent including service charges, and the rest can be shared ownership or another affordable tenure of the Applicant's choice. Further clarification required on the proposed mix and location of the affordable housing within the development.

RBC Conservation and Urban Design - No comments received.

Ecology Adviser - No objection, subject to conditions to secure submission, approval and implantation of a scheme of biodiversity enhancements and a hard and soft landscaping scheme including full details of the propose green roof.

Berkshire Archaeology - No objection, subject to a condition to secure implementation of archaeological investigation works in accordance with a written scheme of investigation to be submitted and approved.

Thames Valley Police Crime Prevention Design Adviser - No comments received.

Thames Water - No objection subject to a condition to secure submission, approval and implementation of a piling method statement detailing the depth and type of piling to be undertaken given the site is located within 15 metres of a strategic sewer.

Public Consultation

The following neighbouring properties were notified by letter and a site notice was displayed at the application site on 18th November 2021.

- Regents Gate 25-41 Crown Street
- 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18 Newark Street
- Flat 1, Flat 2 no. 20 Newark Street
- 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30 Upper Crown Street
- Flat 1, Flat 2 no. 4 Upper Crown Street
- Flats 1 to 12 Priors Court Newark Street
- 12A Priors Court Newark Street
- 1 to 20 City Gate 96-107 Southampton St
- Office Suites 1 and 2 City Gate 96-107 Southampton Street
- 1 to 17 Indigo Apartments 45 Crown Street
- The Studio Indigo Apartments 45 Crown Street
- 53 Crown Street
- 75-81, 87, 89 Southampton Street

- Ground floor, First floor & Second floor flat no. 89 Southampton Street
- Flats 1 to 6 Ibex House 85 Southampton Street
- Flats 1 to 7 New Tudor Lodge 109 Southampton St

18 letters of objection have been received. The issues raised can be summarised as follows:

- The development is too large for the site and is an overdevelopment
- The surrounding roads cannot cope with the addition parking spaces and vehicular movements associated with the development
- No information on the interim arrangements for leaseholders of existing parking spaces on the site during construction phase of the proposed development
- No information on the interim arrangements for bin and cycle stores of occupiers of surrounding buildings which are located on the existing deck level car park
- The proposed demolition work may interfere with the structural integrity of surrounding buildings
- The scale of the proposals would have an adverse impact on the residential amenity of surrounding occupiers in terms of loss of light, overbearing impacts, overlooking and loss of privacy, noise, disturbance and air quality impacts
- The proposed construction works would have an adverse impact on the residential amenity of surrounding occupiers in terms of traffic, noise, disturbance and air quality impacts.
- Negative impact surrounding property prices
- No detail on disabled access within the development
- The additional car parking spaces proposed do not align with the Councils climate change and ecological pledges
- Why was the existing site permitted for use as car parking in the first place when it is not under the ownership of the majority of users of the car park
- The planning application on the adjacent site at 75-81 Southampton Street (ref. 211636) should have been flagged to local residents under this application
- Nearby bus services are already overstretched and cannot cope with additional users
- There are insufficient shops nearby to serve the development
- There are insufficient doctor's surgeries nearby to serve the development
- Clarification on servicing and delivery arrangements for the site required
- Surrounding roads are small and cannot cope with large construction vehicles

1 letter of support has been received which can be summarised as follows:

- Improved street-scene along Upper Crown Street
- Improved rear access and retained parking spaces on the site for surrounding buildings
- Sustainable location and provision of much needed residential development of a high quality and sympathetic design

Equality Act

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

Therefore, in terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

Relevant Planning Policy and Guidance

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.

Accordingly, the National Planning Policy Framework and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

Reading Borough Local Plan 2019

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

EN1: PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

EN2: AREAS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

EN9: PROVISION OF OPEN SPACE

EN10: ACCESS TO OPEN SPACE

EN12: BIODIVERSITY AND THE GREEN NETWORK

EN14: TREES, HEDGES AND WOODLANDS

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

TR1: ACHIEVING THE TRANSPORT STRATEGY

TR3: ACCESS, TRAFFIC AND HIGHWAY-RELATED MATTERS

TR5: CAR AND CYCLE PARKING AND ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING

Supplementary Planning Documents

SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION SPD 2019

REVISED PARKING STANDARDS AND DESIGN SPD 2011

SECTION 106 PLANNING OBLIGATIONS SPD 2013

Appraisal

Principle

In terms of land uses principles the proposed redevelopment of the site would align with the general principles of the NPPF which states that the use of previously developed land, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist. However, this is subject to the more detailed considerations of relevant Local Plan policies and the context of the application site.

The application site is not an allocated site for development within the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

Loss of the existing data storage use on the site must be considered. Whilst the site is not located within a designated Core Employment Area Policy EM3 (Loss of Employment Land) seeks that any loss of employment land is assessed against the following matters:

- (i) Is access by a choice of means of transport, including access to the strategic road network, poor, and likely to remain poor?
- (ii) Is the continued use of the site for employment, including the potential for redevelopment for employment uses, viable?
- (iii) Is there a surplus of a similar size and type of accommodation in Reading?
- (iv) Would continued employment use of the site detrimentally affect the amenity and character of a residential area?
- (v) Is the need for alternative uses stronger than the need for the retention of employment land?
- (vi) Would the proposal result in a piecemeal loss of employment land where there is potential for a more comprehensive scheme?

Given the site is surrounded by residential type uses and accessed via Upper Crown Street which is a modest narrow road there is no objection to the loss of employment land in this instance given continued use of the site for other employment related uses could be detrimental to the road network, residential amenity of existing surrounding occupiers and the predominant residential character of the surrounding area.

The existing data storage building is utilitarian in appearance and is not considered to be of any architectural merit. In the context of Policies CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) any replacement building would need to maintain or enhance the character of the surrounding area in order to justify removal of the existing building. Whilst not of architectural merit the existing building as a result of its siting and massing is not prominent to views from the surrounding area. The design merits of the proposed development will be assessed elsewhere in this report.

The proposed replacement of the existing employment use on the site with residential development would provide additional dwellings to the Borough's housing stock on previously developed land - the principle of which aligns with the broad objectives of Policy H1 (Provision of Housing) in assisting meeting annual housing targets. The application site is also situated within a predominately residential area, whereby its location and accessibility are considered to accord with Policy CC6 (Accessibility and the Intensity of Development).

Development Density, Unit Mix and Affordable Housing

The proposal is for 46 dwellings on a site of 0.346ha resulting in a development density of 133 dwelling per hectare. Policy H2 (Density and Mix) provides indicative density ranges for development relative to its location within the Borough as shown in the table below:

Figure 4.5: Indicative density ranges (dwellings per hectare)

Town Centre	Urban	Suburban
Above 100	60-120	30-60

The supporting text to the Policy also states that indicative density ranges will not be applied as hard-and-fast rules, and the particular characteristics of a site when judged against the criteria in the policy may well mean that a density outside these ranges is appropriate. Given the site's location outside of but directly adjacent to the designated central area the built density proposed appears in-keeping with the site location. Notwithstanding this, Policy H2 states that the capacity of each site will depend on various factors that need to be addressed at application stage, including detailed design and layout and therefore the acceptability of the development density will be full informed by the more detailed assessments in the following sections of this report.

In terms of unit mix 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 below:

Figure 4.6: Estimated size of accommodation type required in Reading (Source: SHMA 2016)

	1 bedroom	2 bedroom	3 bedroom	4+ bedroom
Market	10.3%	29.6%	41.5%	18.5%
Affordable	43.4%	32.9%	21.6%	2.1%
Overall	18.6%	30.5%	36.5%	14.4%

The Policy goes on to state that as a minimum, on new developments for 10 or more dwellings outside the central area and defined district and local centres, planning decisions will ensure that over 50% of dwellings will be of 3 bedrooms or more, having regard to all other material considerations. The proposed used mix of units is 21 x 1 bed units (46%), 11 x 2 bed units (24%) and 14 x 3 bed units (30%). Given the site's location directly adjacent to the defined Reading Central Area and character of developments surrounding the site which are also predominantly flat-led it is considered that the development proposes an appropriate unit mix.

Character and Appearance

Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) requires that new development is of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of surrounding area including is layout, landscape, scale, height, massing and architectural detail and materials.

In terms of the development layout there are fundamental concerns regarding the level of car parking proposed within the development particularly given the very significant majority of these spaces are unrelated to the proposed development; being leased and used by occupiers of surrounding off-site residential and commercial buildings. The development proposes 86 spaces, 68 of which are re-provision of the spaces leased and used by the existing surrounding residential

occupiers and not related to the proposed development or its future occupiers. This detrimentally impacts on the proposed layout and appearance of the development with such extensive parts of the site taken up by hardstanding and parking spaces. This is considered to fail to meet key urban design objectives of Policy CC7 in terms of character and failing to provide a place with its own identity and sense of place and quality of public realm and also in terms of provision of green infrastructure, landscaping and development which maintains or enhances the character of the area. Whilst the majority of parking spaces are covered by the basement (ground level) of the building 24 of the spaces are located around the eastern and northern boundaries of the site which together with the access ramp and way to these spaces results in a significant area of hardstanding with no defined pedestrian routes and minimal very minimal landscaping. These areas are considered to fail to make best use of the available space within the application site and to result in overdevelopment of the site and poor-quality development layout.

Furthermore, the extent of on-site parking proposed for off-site users also raises significant concerns about accessibility and security matters given the level of car movements directly into the site which are not associated with the proposed development and the with people from various surrounding buildings coming and within the residential development to access car parking spaces. This is also considered to fail further design objections of Policy CC7 in terms of creating safe and accessible environments and creating development with suitable access arrangements which is legible and easy to understand for users.

It is considered that the need to re-provide the existing 68 on-site spaces used by occupiers of surrounding buildings within the development places a substantial burden on the proposed development and is a significant barrier which prevents the development providing a high-quality residential layout. Whilst a car park management plan has been submitted in respect of the interim arrangements for the existing leaseholder during construction of the proposed development this issue should be addressed up front to avoid the need for such extensive interim arrangements. It is strongly considered that comprehensive redevelopment of the site should be taken as an opportunity to address and resolve the leasehold parking situation rather than a new development being focused and designed around this significant constraint, which it is considered results in a number of shortfalls in meeting key design aspirations for new development in the Borough. Within and close to the town centre, it is common for developments to be served by limited on site car parking or to be 'car free' which aligns with the Council's sustainable transport objectives and Climate Change Emergency declaration, taking advantage of the good accessibility of the town centre and access to public transport links, whereas this would not be the case with the proposed development.

The massing of the proposed buildings within the development is also considered to result in a cramped and visually dominant form of development which further exacerbates the overdevelopment of the site. Building 3 of the proposed development would be located directly on the western boundary of the site at 6 storeys in height. Whilst it is acknowledged that the existing data storage and roof top car park also sit directly on this boundary, the proposed building would be significantly greater in scale and between 4m and 5m taller in overall height than the existing level of the roof top car park. Furthermore, redevelopment of the site represents an opportunity improve this relationship and ensure a building of the scale of existing or proposed is not sited directly on a boundary in close proximity to existing surrounding buildings at 75-81 and 85, 87 and 89 Southampton Street.

As a result, the proposal is considered to present a cramped layout in terms of the scale and separation of buildings within the site. Buildings 2 and 3 which would present as 4 and 5 storey from street-level within the site, separated by only 8m, resulting in visual dominance, overbearing and tunnelling impacts to the pedestrian walkway and communal landscaped amenity areas in this part of the site. Whilst introduction of the dedicated pedestrian route into the site is welcomed in terms of accessibility into the site and enlivening the public areas of the site, the scale of buildings and their limited separation would reduce the usability, quality and function of these areas within the development, further contributing to providing a poor standard of residential accommodation within the proposed development. Building no.2 at 4 storeys from street level within the site would also be set just 1m from the rear boundary of the small private garden areas of the terrace of dwellings proposed to be sited on the Upper Crown Street frontage of the site, also presenting a cramped and relationship between buildings and spaces within the site.

Notwithstanding the above significant concerns, the proposed introduction of a terrace of 4 x two storey (with accommodation in the roof space) to the Upper Crown Street frontage is considered to be an enhancement to the street-scene to this part of the site. The terraced form of the dwellings is reflective of the predominant character of Upper Crown Street and would replace the current utilitarian and out of keeping form of the flat roof data storage building which is visible from the street.

Materiality and the appearance of existing buildings surrounding the site is mixed and the proposed use of materials and architectural form of the larger buildings 2 and 3 within the site is considered to be appropriate for the site with predominant use of red brick and recessed mansard elements to the top storeys.

Residential Amenity

Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) states that development proposals should safeguard the amenity of both existing and future occupiers and Policy EN16 (Pollution and Water Resources) seeks that development will only be permitted where it would not be damaging to the environment and sensitive receptors in terms of pollution. Policy H5 (Standards for New Housing) sets out the standards to which new dwellings shall be constructed. Policy EN15 (Air Quality) seeks to protect existing and future occupiers from the impact of poor air quality.

Future Occupiers

All the proposed dwellings would meet the size standards set out in the Nationally Prescribed Space Standards under Policy H5 and all dwellings are considered to be served by adequate outlook and daylighting. The application also confirms that all the proposed dwellings will meet the M4(2) standards of Building Regulations 2013 for accessibility and adaptability standards and that 5% will meet the M4(3) standards for wheelchair users also required by Policy H5.

In terms of privacy for future occupiers within the proposed development there is considered to be an unacceptable relationship between buildings 2 and 3 where the facing elevations of the buildings would be separated by a distance of 9m. This is considered insufficient separation and would result in direct overlooking between facing habitable room windows, harmful to the

residential amenity of the occupiers. The presence of balconies to the facing elevations of both buildings further exacerbates this unacceptable relationship.

The area of the site between buildings 2 and 3 is also where a significant proportion of the communal landscaped outdoor amenity space for the flats within the development would be located. Policy H10 (Private and Communal Amenity Space) states that *dwelling will be provided with functional private or communal open space, including green space wherever possible. Houses will be provided with private outdoor space whereas flats may be provided with communal outdoor space, balconies and/or roof gardens. The design of outdoor areas will respect the size and character of other similar spaces in the vicinity, clearly identify whether they are private or communal spaces, ensure that they are appropriately related to main entrances, enhance safety and the perception of safety for future residents and the general public, and not be compromised by the relationship of other buildings which may be detrimental in terms of overlooking, overbearing or overshadowing.* The supporting text to the Policy sets out that *Development in central Reading will not always be expected to comply with the standards set above. Open space is nonetheless required, unless exceptional circumstances prevail, to accommodate modest sitting out areas and clothes drying facilities.*

Each of the proposed flats would be provided with a private balcony in addition to the communal areas. As discussed above, whilst the site is located outside of the Reading Central Area it is situated directly adjacent to it. In this respect it is considered that the provision of balconies together with the communal areas is sufficient quantity of amenity space provision for future occupiers of the development. However, there are significant concerns regarding the functionality and usability of the communal amenity space areas and some of the private balconies. The limited separation and scale of proposed building 2 and 3 where a large proportion of the communal amenity space would be located, as well as the northerly outlooks from the Indigo Apartments building 12m to the north are considered to result in a visually overbearing relationship to the amenity space which would be detrimental to its quality and usability. Furthermore, as discussed above the balconies to the facing elevations of buildings 2 and 3 would be subject to direct overlooking with separation distances between facing balconies of as little as 6m.

Furthermore, the functionality and usability of the private rear garden areas of the proposed four terraced dwellings to Upper Crown Street is considered to be detrimentally affected by the siting of building 2 which at 4 storeys would be positioned just 1m from the rear boundary of the private gardens. This is considered to result in unacceptable overbearing and overshadowing impact to these gardens. Whilst the separation between the rear facing windows of the dwellings and the windows to the facing elevation of building 2 is also minimal it is noted that the facing windows to building 2 would be obscurely glazed which is considered sufficient to ensure no overlooking or loss of privacy to the occupiers of the proposed terraced dwellings. If permission were to be granted, then the windows could be secured as obscurely glazed by way of condition.

As a result of the off-set siting of buildings 2 and 3 in relationship to the closest element of the Indigo Apartments building to the north, the separation distance of 12m and absence of projecting balconies to the north elevation of these buildings is, on balance, considered sufficient to prevent any direct overlooking and unacceptable loss of privacy to future occupiers of buildings 2 and 3 from the Indigo Apartments. The scale of buildings surrounding the other

boundaries of the site to Newark Street, Upper Crown Street and Southampton Street, their siting in relation to the boundary and position of windows is considered sufficient to prevent any overlooking to habitable rooms of the proposed development.

A noise assessment has been submitted with the application. This has been reviewed by RBC Environmental Protection Officers who are satisfied that the glazing specification proposed would be sufficient to protect future occupiers of the development from the external noise environment at the site. Mechanical ventilation is also proposed to those dwellings most affected by the surrounding noise environment. Environmental Protection Officers consider this to be an acceptable approach

However, it is considered that the extent of on-site car parking spaces and associated vehicle movements on the site in relation to vehicle parking spaces not connected or used by occupiers of the development would result in undue noise and disturbance that would be detrimental to the residential amenity of future occupiers as result of associated engine noise, vehicle movements, lights and noise from closing of car doors.

An air quality assessment has also been submitted with the application. RBC Environmental Protection Officers are satisfied that this demonstrates that pollutant levels at the new dwellings would be below threshold values such that further assessment or mitigation is not required, and future occupiers would not be subject to poor air quality. RBC Environmental Protection Officers are also satisfied that the air quality assessment demonstrates that the development itself would not detrimentally impact on air quality levels at and surrounding the application site.

The proposed development is on the site of a historic factory which pre-dates the current data storage and car park use of the site. RBC Environmental Protection Officers have reviewed the submitted desk top contamination study and agree with the conclusion of the study that further investigation is required. Therefore, should planning be granted a series of pre-commencement conditions are recommended to secure submission and approval of a more further contamination study and a subsequent remediation scheme if required.

A condition is also recommended to secure submission and approval of details of the bin storage arrangements for the developments including measures to protect the bins from pests and vermin.

Surrounding Occupiers

The siting of proposed building 3 directly on the west boundary of the site together with its scale is considered to result in an overbearing relationship with the adjacent buildings at 85, 87, 89 Southampton Street which are either in residential use or have been granted via 'prior approval' permission for conversion to residential use. The presentation of a blank façade of two storeys higher than these adjacent buildings is considered to present a visually dominant and overbearing form of development, particularly to no.s 85 and 89, whereby the building would obscure the outlook of existing windows which look past no. 87 towards the application site. Whilst acknowledging the existing car park building is also sited directly on the boundary the greater scale and massing of the proposed development is considered to result in harm to the adjacent occupiers.

It should be noted that there is a current planning application ref. 211636 on the site of no. 75-81 Southampton Street (former COOP Funeral Care building) to demolish an existing single storey building and construct a four-storey building of 19 flats. At the time of writing this report, this adjacent application has not been determined and is still under consideration by the Local Planning Authority. The rear of this neighbouring site directly abuts the north west corner of the application site. It is considered that the scale and siting of block 3 directly on the site boundary (as described above) would adversely impact on this site in terms of overbearing and introduction of a visually dominant structure on the boundary. Whilst the adjacent site, similar to the application site, is not allocated for development within the Reading Borough Local Plan, it is considered that siting of a building of the scale proposed directly on the shared boundary would be detrimental to and prejudice any development of the neighbouring site. Should the adjacent application be permitted, then it is considered that building 3 would adversely affect future occupiers of the site in terms of overbearing and overshadowing impacts.

Proposed building 3 also incorporates upper floor windows directly on the shared boundary facing into the sites of no. 75-81 Southampton Street and nos 85, 87 and 89 Southampton Street. Whilst these windows are shown to be obscurely glazed, siting of such windows directly on a shared boundary is considered to be unacceptable and to result in a perception of overlooking to existing and future occupiers of the neighbouring sites.

The siting and scale of building 2 and the terrace of dwellings is considered such that these buildings are not considered to result in any overbearing or loss of privacy impacts to surrounding buildings on Newark Street, Upper Crown Street, Southampton Street and Indigo Apartments to the north.

A daylight sunlight assessment has been submitted with the application which assesses the impact of the development upon existing surrounding properties. The conclusions of the report set out that the impact of the proposed development upon the significant majority of habitable room windows to surrounding buildings would be negligible and would receive no less than 80% of the amount of daylight than existing, which is within recommended BRE standards. A small number of neighbouring habitable room windows have been identified as likely to receive less than 80% the amount of daylight than existing. Four windows to the Indigo Apartments building have been identified as likely to receive between 65% and 73% of their former daylight levels as a result of the proposed development (the report classifies this as a minor impact on daylighting) whilst two side facing windows to the end of terrace dwelling at no. 11 Crown Street located adjacent to the entrance to the application site has been identified as likely to receive between 49% and 61% of their former level of daylight levels (the report classifies this as a 'moderate' to 'major' impact). Whilst the above small number of infringements of daylight levels to existing surrounding buildings have been identified, overall it is considered that the impact of the development on receipt of daylight to surrounding dwellings is small. The small number of infringements identified are not considered so adverse as to warrant refusal of the application on this basis.

The unacceptable relationships identified above are considered to further demonstrate that the proposals are an overdevelopment of the site.

The construction phase of the proposed development also has potential to impact on the amenity of surrounding occupiers. RBC Environmental Protection Officers have recommended conditions to secure a submission and approval of a construction method statement and to control construction hours to mitigate potential noise and dust impacts on the surrounding area.

Transport

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 related matters relating to development.

The site is located within the Zone 2, primary core area but on 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.

The site is currently in use as a warehousing unit with a private car park providing 74 car parking bays on the roof provided on a lease basis to occupiers of buildings surrounding the proposed site. This existing parking is on a 999-year leases. The submitted Car Parking Plan confirms that leased spaces cannot be removed, and it is proposed to be provided off-site during the construction phase. These interim arrangements would be a civil matter between the Applicant and the leaseholders and not a matter for consideration as part of the planning application.

In accordance with the adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD, the development would be required to provide parking provision of 2 parking spaces for each of the 4 town houses, 1 for each 1- and 2-bedroom flat and 1.5 for each 3-bedroom flat. This equates to a total 58 parking spaces (rounded up from 57.5). In addition to this visitor parking is also required at a ratio of 1 per 10 dwellings, therefore the total requirement for the development is 62 (rounded up from 61.5). The development will provide a total of 88 car parking spaces at basement level of which 67 would replace the existing leased parking spaces and 21 spaces will be provided for residents of the proposed development

The proposed parking provision falls below the Council's current adopted standards for a Zone 2 development. However, given the locality of the development and its close proximity to town and transport networks a lower parking provision can be considered, and, in this instance, the proposed 21 spaces are considered to be acceptable level of provision. Furthermore, the surrounding road network has extensive parking restrictions in place preventing unauthorised on-street parking and therefore any overflow in parking would not affect the flow of traffic on the classified road network. As the development site is located in an area where the Council's Residents Parking Permit Scheme operates, under the Borough's current parking standards, this proposal would generate additional pressure for parking in the area, therefore there should be an assumption that any future occupants of the town houses and flats will not be issued with resident or visitor parking permits. Should planning permission be granted this would be secured by an appropriately worded planning condition.

RBC Transport Officers advise that the proposed parking layout and size of the space is acceptable in accordance with adopted standards within the Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD.

In accordance with Policy H5 and the Council's Local Transport Plan 3 Strategy 2011 - 2026, each parking space for the proposed terrace of dwellings and 10% of the communal spaces for the flats are required to provide electric vehicle charging infrastructure. The application proposes that 12 parking spaces will be provided with electric vehicles charging points which exceeds the policy requirements. Detailed specification of the charging points and their implementation would be secured by condition should planning permission be granted.

The existing vehicular access to the site from Upper Crown Street is to be retained which will lead to the ramp to the basement parking area. The width of the access is at least 4.8m which would allow vehicles using the access to pass each other as they enter and exit and is considered to be acceptable. Any unrequired part of the existing dropped crossing will need to be reinstated and realigned with the footway. Should planning permission be granted, details of this would be secured by way of condition.

In accordance with the adopted Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD, the development should provide 0.5 cycle parking spaces per unit and 2 storage spaces for each of the proposed terraced houses. The communal bike store for residents has been illustrated on the ground floor for 36 cycle which is considered to be acceptable. Full specifications of the cycle store would be secured by conditions if planning permission is granted. It is considered that cycle storage for the town houses can be satisfactorily accommodated within each of the dwellings and their private garden areas as opposed to a communal area.

Bin storage should comply with the Council's Waste Management Guidance's (available on the Council's website) and British Standard 5906: 2005 for Waste Management in Buildings to avoid the stationing of service vehicles on the carriageway for excessive periods. The bin store has been illustrated at basement level car park area. Tracking diagrams have been submitted demonstrating that refuse collection vehicles can access the store.

The construction phase of the proposed development is likely to impact of the surrounding highway network and therefore if planning permission were to be granted a condition would be attached to secure submission, approval and implementation of detailed Construction Method Statement.

Sustainability

Policy CC3 (Adaptation to Climate Change) requires that development proposal incorporate sustainable design practices to take account of climate change and Policy CC4 (Decentralised Energy) states that new development of the scale proposed should include provision of on-site decentralised energy provision where feasible/viable or where existing decentralised energy provision is present within the vicinity of the site connect to this network where feasible.

An energy and sustainability report has been submitted with the application. This proposes a number of design measures intended adapt to climate change including use of low embodied materials, on-site biodiversity enhancements, net gain in on-site landscaping, provision of a site waste management plan to ensure construction waste is recycled and re-used where possible, orientation of rooms to maximise natural daylighting to habitable spaces and use of low volume high efficiency water fittings.

In terms of on-site decentralised energy provision the submitted energy and sustainability report explores a range of options and proposes provision of air source heat pumps (ASHPs) within the development. ASHP's are one of the preferred decentralised energy options set out within the adopted Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2019). Provision of Ground Source Heat Pumps has been discounted due to the spatial constraints of the site's foundations and existing utilities.

In accordance with Policy H5 (Standards for New Housing) all major category new build housing is required to achieve the 'zero carbon homes' standard. The policy goes on to set out that as a minimum development should achieve a 35% improvement over the carbon emission rate set out in Building Regulations with a financial contribution to offset any remaining carbon emissions to zero. The submitted energy and sustainability report projects that the development would achieve a 39.53% improvement of carbon emission rate set out in building regulations which complies with the requirements of policy H5. If the Officer recommendation was to grant planning permission for the development, then a s106 obligation would be required to secure a financial contribution to off-set carbon emissions to zero. However, given the officer recommendation is to refuse planning permission for other reasons, completion of a s106 agreement is not being pursued and lack of such an agreement to off-set carbon emissions to zero would represent a further reason for refusal of the application.

Natural Environment

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. Policy EN14 (Trees, Hedges and Woodland) seeks that the Borough's vegetation cover is extended and that new development makes provision for planting within the application site.

Ecology

An ecological report and bat survey was submitted with the application which has been revised by the LPA's Ecology Adviser who agrees with the conclusions of the report that the existing building is unlikely to host roosting bats and therefore bats, a protected species, would be unlikely to be adversely impact by the proposed development.

The existing site consists of a building and hardstanding and does not contain any vegetation. The LPA's Ecology Adviser is satisfied that the proposed development would not adversely impact on any other protected or priority species. The submitted ecological report includes a nesting bird survey which did not identify any nests on site.

The application proposes a series of on-site biodiversity enhancements including soft landscaping, incorporation of swift bricks on the buildings and provision of green roofs to buildings 2 and 3.

The LPA's Ecological adviser raises no objection to the application subject to conditions to secure provision of the on-site biodiversity enhancements outlined above.

Trees

The application is accompanied by landscaping principles details which include domestic planting and hedging, communal lawned areas, green roofs, paved pedestrian and communal areas, grasscrete parking spaces and tree planting (4 x medium sized native specimen trees and 5 x ornate domestic trees). The site does not contain any existing greenery or vegetation and therefore would not affect any existing trees and the additional landscaping and tree planting proposed results in a net gain in green cover on the application site.

The proposed wildflower green roofs are particularly positive element of the proposed landscaping given it both extends the green coverage on site but it also a biodiversity enhancement, being especially helpful for bees.

Retention of the vehicle access ramp access along the eastern boundary down to the basement car park of the site limits landscaping to the western part of the site only which is considered to be a shortfall of the proposals. This together with the cramped layout in terms of the scale of buildings 2 and 3 and their limited separation (8m) in the western part of the site is considered to result in visual dominance, overbearing and tunnelling impacts to the pedestrian walkway and communal landscaped amenity areas in this part of the site. This is considered detrimental to the usability, quality and function of these areas within the development contributing to providing a poor standard of residential accommodation within the proposed development. Building no.2 at 4 storeys from street level within the site would also be set just 1m from the rear boundary of the small private garden areas of the terrace of dwelling proposed to be sited on the Upper Crown Street frontage of the site also presenting a cramped and overbearing relationship to the private rear gardens of the terraced dwellings detrimental to the functionality and usability of these spaces. The proposals are considered to fail to provide the high-quality built forms and spaces, including landscaping, required by Policy CC7.

Affordable Housing

Policy H3 (Affordable Housing) requires that within new residential development of 10 more dwellings 30% of the dwellings provided are in the form of on-site affordable housing. The proposed development is policy compliant in this respect proposing 14 dwellings (30%) as affordable housing in a mix of 1-, 2- and 3-bedroom units.

If the Officer recommendation was to grant planning permission for the development, then provision of the affordable housing would be secured by way of a section 106 agreement. However, given the officer recommendation is to refuse planning permission for other reasons, completion of a s106 agreement is not being pursued and lack of such an agreement to secure a policy compliant level of on-site affordable housing provision would represent a further reason for refusal of the application.

Archaeology

Policy EN2 (Areas of Archaeological Significance) requires that the archaeological impacts of development are adequately assessed by the Applicant and that where identified remains cannot be preserved in situ they must be properly excavated and recorded in situ. A desk based archaeological assessment of the site has been submitted with the application which sets out that whilst a large proportion of the site has been disturbed there is still potential for

archaeological remain to be preserved within parts of the site. Berkshire Archaeology have reviewed the submitted desk-based assessment and concur with its conclusion. If planning permission were to be granted for the proposed development, then a condition is recommended to secure a scheme of archaeological fieldwork is carried out in accordance with a written scheme of investigation to be submitted and approved by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of development on site.

Employment Skills and Training

In accordance with the adopted Employment Skills and Training SPD (2013) and Policy CC9 (Securing Infrastructure) a development of this nature and scale is required to demonstrate how it is utilising local labour and contributing to skills and training for local labour in the form of a construction phase employment and skills plan associated with the development. Provision of such plan, or equivalent financial contribution, would be secured by way of section 106 legal agreement should it be recommended that planning permission be granted. However, given that planning permission is recommended to be refused for other reasons preparation and signing of a section 106 agreement has not been progressed and therefore this would represent a further reason for refusal.

Community Infrastructure Levy

In accordance with the Council's adopted CIL charging schedule residential accommodation would be liable for the levy which would be based upon the proposed floor space of 3,200m². If the applicant can demonstrate that the existing parts of the building to be demolished have been within a lawful use for a minimum continuous period 6 months within the last 3 years, then the levy required could be reduced and off-set against the floor space of the existing building.

Other

Thames Water have commented that the application site is located within 15m of a strategic sewer. Should planning permission be granted then a condition is recommended to secure submission, approval and implementation of a piling method statement prior to the commencement of development on site with the method statement to be agreed in consultation with Thames Water.

Matters Raised in Representations

Concern has been raised regarding the impact of the construction works on the structural integrity of surrounding buildings. This is not a material planning consideration and would be civil matter between neighbouring landowners. It is the responsibility of the developer to carry out construction works in a safe manner in accordance with other non-planning related legislation and adopted working practices.

Concerns have also been raised that the proposed development would negatively impact on the surrounding property values. Property values are not a material planning consideration.

Comment has been received that neighbouring properties should also have been notified of the planning application at no. 75-18 Southampton Street. Neighbour consultation has been carried out separately for this application as per the requirements of the Development Management Procedure Order. The sites have different adjoining neighbours and therefore neighbours notified will differ.

Some objectors comment that there are insufficient doctors' surgeries nearby to serve the development. As set out above the development would be CIL liable with the levy going towards infrastructure within the Borough. Lack of shops near to the development site is not a material planning consideration nonetheless the application site is located close by and within walking distance of the town centre.

All other matters raised are considered to have been addressed in the assessment section of this report above.

RECOMMENDATION:

REFUSE Planning Permission for the following reasons:

1. The development, as a result of the re-provision of significant number of on-site vehicle parking spaces unrelated to the proposed residential use, results in a significant proportion of the site being taken up by parking spaces and hardstanding. This, together with the scale and siting of proposed buildings 2 and 3, results in a development which appears cramped in terms of the proposed buildings within it but also in relation to existing buildings surrounding the site at no.s 75-81, 85, 87 and 89 Southampton Street. The extent of hardstanding and parking spaces proposed, together with the scale and cramped layout of buildings 2 and 3 results in provision of poor-quality areas of on-site landscaping and communal open space. The layout and scale of the proposed buildings is detrimental to the usability of these spaces and provision of suitable landscaping. The re-provision of the significant number of on-site vehicle parking spaces for off-site users unconnected to the development also fails to provide a safe environment for future occupiers of the development due to the level of pedestrian and vehicle movements that would occur within the development and its buildings that would be unrelated to the residential occupiers of the site. The proposals are considered to be an overdevelopment of the site and to fail to create a safe or high-quality residential layout contrary to Policies CC7, EN14, and H10 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

2. The siting and the layout of proposed buildings 2 and 3 would result in direct overlooking between facing habitable rooms windows to the two buildings creating a loss of privacy and overbearing form of development for future occupiers. The presence of balconies to the facing elevations exacerbates this unacceptable relationship and inadequate separation distance between the two buildings. The siting and scale of proposed building 2 would result in an overbearing form of development for future occupiers of the proposed terrace of four dwellings (building 1) to the site frontage on Upper Crown Street and would be detrimental to the usability of their private amenity spaces. The proposed development would fail to provide future occupiers with an acceptable standard of residential amenity or amenity spaces contrary to Policies CC8 and H10 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

3. The siting of proposed building 3 directly on the west boundary of the site together with its scale is considered to result in an overbearing visually dominant relationship with the adjacent buildings at 85, 87, 89 Southampton Street which are either in residential use or have been granted prior approval for conversion to residential use. The siting of large windows directly on the boundary, whilst indicated on the proposed plans to be obscurely glazed, would result in a perception of overlooking to occupiers of these neighbouring buildings. The proposed

development would be harmful to the residential amenity of both existing and future occupiers of nos 85, 87 and 89 Southampton Street contrary to Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

4. In the absence of a completed legal agreement to secure provision of a construction phase and end user phase employment skills and training plan or equivalent financial contribution, provision of a policy compliant level of on-site affordable housing and a carbon off-setting contribution, the proposals fails to adequately contribute to local labour and training needs, the housing needs of the Reading Borough and to achieve zero carbon homes standards contrary to Policies CC9, H3 and H5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019, the adopted Employment Skills and Training Supplementary Planning Document 2019, Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document 2021, Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document 2019 and Planning Obligations Under Section 106 Supplementary Planning Document 2015.

Informatives:

1. This decision relates to the following plans:

- P001 Rev A - Site Location Plan
- P008 Rev B - Site Plan
- P009 Rev B - Basement
- P010 Rev B - Ground Floor
- P011 Rev B - First Floor
- P012 Rev B - Second Floor
- P013 Rev B - Third Floor
- P014 Rev B - Fourth Floor
- P015 Rev B - Roof Plan
- P016 Rev A - Building 1 Floor Plans
- P017 Rev A - Building 1 Floor Plans
- P018 Rev A - Building 2 Floor Plans
- P019 Rev A - Building 2 Floor Plans
- P020 Rev A - Building 2 Floor Plans
- P021 Rev A - Building 2 Floor Plans
- P022 Rev A - Building 3 Floor Plans
- P023 Rev A - Building 3 Floor Plans
- P024 Rev A - Building 3 Floor Plans
- P025 Rev A - Building 3 Floor Plans
- P026 Rev B - Site Elevations Sheet 1
- P027 Rev C - Site Elevations Sheet 2
- P028 Rev B - Site Elevations Sheet 3
- P029 Rev B - Site Elevations Sheet 4
- P031 Rev B - Site Sections Sheet 1
- P032 Rev A - Building 1 Elevations
- P033 Rev A - Building 1 Sections
- P034 Rev A - Building 2 Elevations
- P035 Rev A - Building 2 Elevations

- P036 Rev A - Building 2 Elevations
- P037 Rev A - Building 2 Sections
- P040 Rev A - Building 3 Elevations
- P041 Rev A - Building 3 Elevations
- P042 Rev A - Building 3 Sections
- P043 Rev A - Indigo House Stairs
- P090 Rev A - Landscape Principles and External Lighting Strategy

Received on 24th March 2022

Syntegra Car Park Management Plan ref. 20-7496
WB Planning Planning Statement Addendum ref. TR/24Jan/7847
Received on 24th March 2022

Base Energy External Daylight and Sunlight ref. 8349 Rev 2
Received on 31st May 2022

Woolf Bond Planning Planning Statement WBP Ref. 7847
Colony Affordable Housing Statement ref. 222
Syntegra Air Quality Assessment ref. 20-7496
Arbtech Preliminary Root Assessment Survey Issue 1.2
Ark Environmental Consultancy Ltd Flood Risk Assessment & SuDS/Drainage Assessment for Planning
Syntegra Energy and Sustainability Statement ref. 20-7496
Syngenta Transport Statement ref. 20-7496 Rev B
Colony Feasibility Study ref. 222/DAS/REV1

Received on 28th September 2021

Irongate Archaeological Impact Assessment ref. AH_T-DBA_Report
Received on 12th November 2021

Enviroscreen Property Assessment - ref. 222_EPO2
Received on 19th October 2021

2. The local planning authority has worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive by advising of the concerns with proposal and providing for the opportunity for the application to be withdrawn. The applicant chose not to withdraw the application, hence the issuing this refusal notice
3. Without prejudice to any future application or appeal, the applicant is advised that reason for refusal 4 could be overcome by entering into a Section 106 Legal Agreement.
4. The applicant is advised that the refused scheme, had it been able to be approved, would have been a CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) liable development.