

01 November 2023



Reading
Borough Council
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Title	PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT
Ward	Redlands
Planning Application Reference:	230279
Site Address:	The Willows, 2 Hexham Road, Reading, RG2 7UG
Proposed Development	Full planning application for the erection of a building containing a day centre providing social care services (Use Class E(f)) and 42 residential units including specialist housing (Use Class C3) with landscaping, car parking and access.
Applicant	Reading Borough Council
Report author	Tom Bradfield
Deadline:	05/06/2023
Recommendations	Delegate to the Assistant Director for Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services (AD PTPPS) to (i) GRANT full planning permission subject to the satisfactory completion of a Section 106 legal agreement or (ii) to REFUSE permission should the Section 106 legal agreement not be completed by the 1 st February 2024 (unless officers on behalf of the AD PTPPS agree to a later date for completion of the legal agreement).
S106 Terms	<p>To secure affordable housing on site consisting of fourteen units (30% provision) on site, to be 14 one bedroom units of Reading Affordable Rent. Reading Affordable Rent (RAR) tenure would be capped at 70% of market rent as per published RAR levels. The Housing Development team have confirmed that the offer is acceptable.</p> <p>Employment, Skills and Training and Construction financial contribution of £10,577.50, or a ESTC Plan.</p> <p>Applicant to enter into a S278 agreement in relation to the reconfiguration of the vehicular access on to Hexham Road, including closures of existing vehicular access points as may be required.</p> <p>Contribution towards monitoring costs plus a separate commitment to pay the Council's reasonable legal costs in connection with the proposed Legal Agreement will be payable whether or not the Agreement is completed.</p> <p>Any unexpended contributions to be repaid within ten years beginning with the start of the Financial Year after the final (including phased contributions) obligation payment for each obligation is received. In accordance with Policy CC9.</p> <p>All financial contributions index-linked from the date of permission.</p>

	<p>In order for Officers to work efficiently and effectively, it is suggested that minor changes to the Heads of Terms and details of the legal agreement during the negotiations, where necessary, are delegated to officers.</p>
Conditions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Full - time limit - three years 2. Approved Plans 3. Materials (samples to be approved prior to above ground works) 4. Use Restriction to Class E(f) 5. EV Charging Points 6. Cycle Parking (pre-commencement) 7. Refuse Collection (to be approved prior to occupation) 8. Construction Method Statement 9. Noise Mitigation (as specified) 10. Noise Mitigation Scheme (internal) (To be submitted prior to above ground works) 11. Contaminated Land Assessment 12. Remediation Scheme (To be submitted prior to commencement) 13. Remediation Scheme (Implement and Verification) 14. Unidentified Contamination 15. Hours of Construction/Demolition 16. No Bonfires 17. Waste Storage 18. Sustainable Drainage (To be approved) 19. Sustainable Drainage (As Specified) 20. Biodiversity Enhancements 21. Hard and Soft Landscaping 22. Hard and Soft Landscaping (Implementation) 23. Green Roofs 24. Off Site Tree Planting Scheme 25. SAP Assessment – Design Stage 26. SAP Assessment – As Built
Informatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive and Proactive • Pre-commencement conditions • Highways • Terms and Conditions • Building Regulations • Complaints about construction • Encroachment • Contamination • Noise between residential properties • CIL

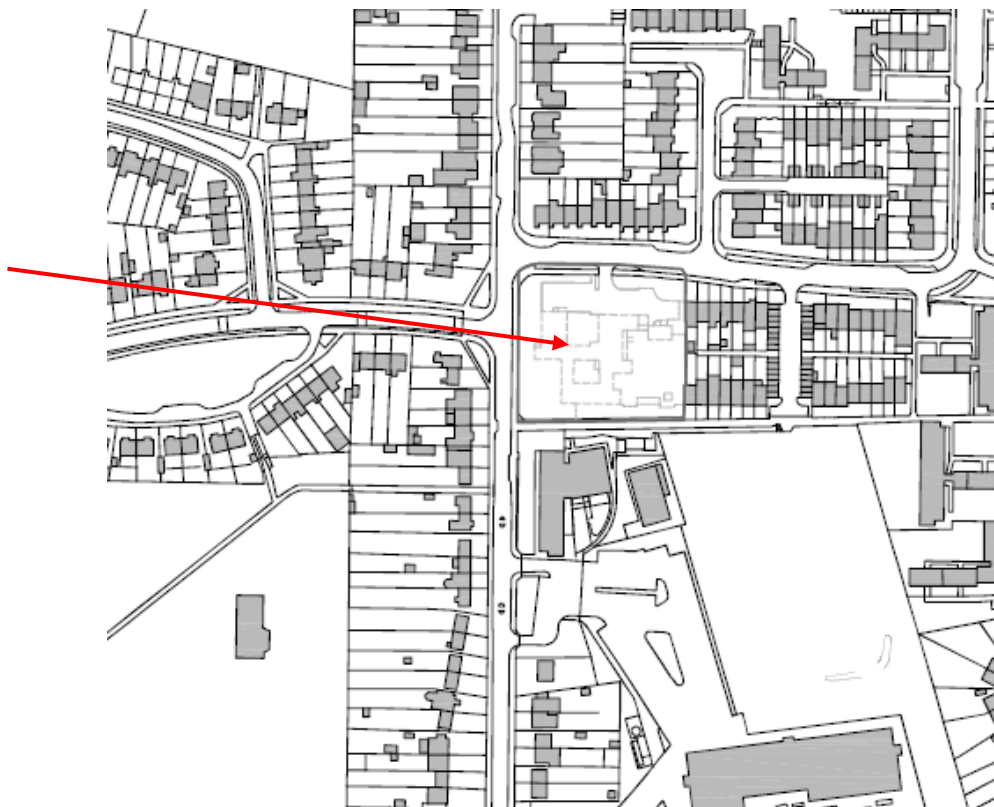
1. Executive summary

- 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 a previously developed site which is currently vacant/cleared. It would provide a policy compliant affordable housing offer (30% on site), as well as a day centre to serve adults with Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities.

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 application is therefore recommended to the Planning Applications Committee for approval.

2. Introduction and Site Description

- 2.1. The site is on the corner of Hexham Road and Northumberland Avenue, in Redlands ward. To the south of the site is a footpath with Reading Girls' School beyond, to the north is Hexham Road with terraced houses beyond. To the east are two storey terraced houses on Bede Walk and to the west is Northumberland Avenue, with a mix of terraced, detached and semi-detached properties beyond. The predominant character of the immediate area is 1960s/1970s housing, with a mixture of two, three and four storey houses and maisonettes.
- 2.2. The site was previously occupied by a residential care home known as The Willows. It was built in the late 1970s and comprised a sixteen bedroom residential care home for people with dementia and ten flats to provide intermediate care and rehabilitation following an injury or illness (Use Class C2). In 2020 Reading Borough Council's closed the residential care home and moved the intermediate care/rehabilitation beds to another site in the Borough. The Willows was demolished in November 2022. The application site is currently vacant, with all buildings demolished and consists of overgrown scrubland and hardstanding.
- 2.3. The plan below shows the location of the site, with a dashed/lighter outline of the previous building.



3. The proposal

- 3.1. The application seeks permission for the erection of a building between one and four storeys which comprises a day centre to provide social care services (Use Class E(f)) and 42 one bedroom flats, which include 36 specialist units aimed at people over 55 (sheltered housing), and 6 units for general needs (Use Class C3). 30% of the housing is proposed to be affordable housing, with the intention for the entirety (42 units) to be

affordable. Although it is the intention of the applicant to provide 100% affordable housing, this proposal must be assessed on the 30% provision that is being proposed and can be secured through a legal agreement, and not what may happen in the future.

- 3.2. The day centre would comprise of numerous rooms which provide enough space to serve adults with Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities. It would be located on the ground floor, and would have access to external space within the courtyard area.
- 3.3. Sixteen car parking spaces are proposed, with 10 available for the residential units and 6 for the day centre. Access would be from Hexham Road, into the car parking area on the northern side of the site. The existing access is at a single point, with the proposal changing this to an in-out access route onto Hexham Road.
- 3.4. The building would be four storeys where it faces onto Northumberland Avenue, dropping to one, two and three storeys towards Hexham Road and Bede Walk to the north and east. A courtyard area would be created in the centre of the site. The building would be set off from Northumberland Avenue, retaining trees and creating a green area.



- 3.5. The applicant has submitted the following documents for consideration:

- Planning Statement
- Archaeological Assessment
- Contaminated Land Statement
- Ecology Statement & BNG Report
- Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy
- Lighting Strategy
- Daylight/Sunlight Report
- Refuse and Waste Strategy
- Noise Impact Assessment
- Daylight/Sunlight Study
- 3D Visuals
- Energy Assessment

- Energy & Sustainability Report
- Design & Access Statement
- Utilities Statement
- Transport Assessment
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment
- Arboricultural Method Statement
- Existing and Proposed Drawings

4. Planning history

221019	Application to determine if prior approval is required for a proposed Demolition. The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) – Schedule 2, Part 11, Class B
	Approved 13/10/2022

5. Consultations

- 5.1. The following consultation responses were received from statutory and internal consultees:

RBC Transport

- 5.2. The Transport Strategy Team have requested some additional information regarding the visibility splays of the access. This will be discussed in the Update Report. The parking layout would also be acceptable. The number of parking spaces would be suitable. Cycle parking provision would be acceptable.

RBC Waste & Recycling

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

RBC Environmental Protection

- 5.4. 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

- 5.5. The risk of impacting on protected species is minimal. An appropriate mitigation strategy has been proposed and would be secured by condition.

RBC Natural Environment

- 5.6. A number of issues were raised relating to tree protection measures, phasing, off site planting, green roofs and utility installation. Amendments and additional information were requested and received, which satisfied the concerns. Several conditions relating to trees and landscaping were requested.

Public Consultation

- 5.7. 41 neighbouring properties on Hexham Road, Bede Walk and Northumberland Avenue were consulted by letter and four site notices were displayed at the application site.

5.8. One response was received and raised the below points:

- Loss of light to properties on the northern side of Hexham Road
- Increase in noise as a result of roosting birds on the flat roofs

6. Legal context

- 6.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) – among them the ‘presumption in favour of sustainable development’. However, the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as ‘the starting point for decision making (NPPF paragraph 12).
- 6.2. 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).
- 6.3. Accordingly, the latest NPPF and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

National Policy – National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023

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 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

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

EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network

EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodland

EN16: Pollution and Water Resources

EN17: Noise Generating Equipment

EN18: Flooding and Drainage

H1: Provision of Housing

H2: Density and Mix

H3: Affordable Housing

H5: Standards for New Housing

H6: Accommodation for Vulnerable People

H10: Private and Communal Outdoor Space

OU1: New and Existing Community Facilities

TR1 Achieving the Transport Strategy

TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters

TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging

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)

7. Appraisal

7.1. The main considerations are:

- Principle of Development
- Design, Character and Appearance of the Area
- Neighbour Amenity
- Future Residents Amenity
- Unit Mix and Affordable Housing
- Transport
- Ecology
- Sustainability
- Legal Agreement

Principle of Development

7.2. The NPPF and the Local Plan encourage the use of previously developed land where suitable opportunities exist. Local Plan Policy H6 seeks to make provision for an additional 253 residential care bedspaces for elderly people between 2013 and 2036, as well as providing other specialist accommodation for vulnerable people with additional needs, and should allow for occupants to live as independently as possible. It goes on to suggest that specialist accommodation should incorporate relevant community facilities or day care.

7.3. The previous use of the site was for a care facility. The proposals would retain this use, with some diversification and intensification. The proposed day care facility and specialist care residential properties on the site would meet a need for this type of provision, as identified in the Adult Social Care Asset Review and Capital Strategy 2021 (ASCARCS). The current location for this type of care is at Strathy Close, and is no longer fit for purpose, and so its relocation is important.

7.4. As well as being identified within the Local Plan Policy H6, the benefits of combining Adult Social Care day centres and specialist housing on the same site is also addressed in the ASCARCS. It identifies that:

“Developing new homes for older people alongside the provision of older persons day services provides an opportunity to provide a dynamic and exciting new model of delivery with a level of cross fertilisation of services that improves the wellbeing of customers of both services.” (Section 4.9)

7.5. The proposal would provide a combined day care and residential facility which would be in close proximity to the Whitley district centre, approximately 400m to the south. Local Plan Policy CC6 also encourages development to be accessible in its context. It would represent an appropriate use in an acceptable location, and is therefore considered acceptable.

Design, Character and Appearance of the Area

7.6. Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) 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)”.

- 7.7. The site previously housed a two storey building which contained a care facility. The building was brick built, with a pitched roof. The proposal would extend to four storeys on the western side of the site closest to Northumberland Avenue, before stepping down to one, two and three storeys across the site. The building would have a flat roof, with regular fenestration and brick detailing.
- 7.8. The buildings to the north, west and east are primarily two storey terraced, semi-detached and detached properties. Generally the surrounding houses have pitched roofs and are a mixture of brick and tile hung on the front façades. To the south is a school, which has buildings between two and four storeys and of a significantly larger floorplate and scale. Further to the east there are three and four storey blocks of flats and maisonettes. Although the scale of the proposal would be larger than the immediate surroundings, given the corner plot, set backs and step-downs within the site, it is considered that the scale of the proposed building would be acceptable for the site. Furthermore, the main mass of the building would be screened by the existing mature trees along Northumberland Avenue.
- 7.9. When viewed from Northumberland Avenue, the four storey element of the building would be read in conjunction with the larger scale school buildings to the south, whilst the lower rise elements would relate well to the more residential scale to the north and east. The stepping up to the four storey height on Northumberland Avenue from the surrounding two storey buildings would provide visual interest and break up the mass of the building when viewed from the surrounding streets to the north and east.
- 7.10. The design would take inspiration from the brick patterns, scalloped tile patterning and recessed bays which are prevalent in the surrounding area. The proposals would represent a modern design which marries traditional features with a functional building which would relate well to the immediate area. The flat roof, whilst not a feature of the areas to the north, west and south, would relate to the larger, flat-roofed buildings to the south of the site, and would be an appropriate addition to the roofscape in this area.
- 7.11. The proposal would include a significant area of landscaping with mature trees on the western side of the site, facing onto Northumberland Avenue. There would also be a landscaped courtyard in the centre of the site. The landscaped surrounds would contribute to the layout and design of the scheme, providing breaks in the built form and an attractive frontage to the street scene.
- 7.12. The proposals are considered to comply with Local Plan Policy CC7 with regards design, scale and the impact on the character and appearance of the area.

Neighbour Amenity

- 7.13. 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.
- 7.14. The site has residential properties to the north, east and west. The properties to the north and west are on the other sides of Hexham Road and Northumberland Avenue respectfully, and are between 27m and 43m from the proposed buildings. It is not considered that there would be any harm to these properties through loss of light, privacy or the increase in scale on the site.
- 7.15. There are two terraces of houses directly to the east of the site. The stepped nature of the proposals reduces any impact on the living conditions of the residents of these properties in terms of overshadowing. Shadowing models have been presented which show that given the orientation, scale and design of the proposals, there would be no adverse impact as a result of overshadowing. A Daylight/Sunlight report has also been submitted, which demonstrates to officers' satisfaction that there would be no unacceptable impact on neighbour's living conditions.
- 7.16. The proposals would have some windows and walkways which face towards the gardens of the properties to the east, but there would be no window-to-window overlooking due to the orientation of the proposal and the neighbouring properties. Given the 12m gap

between the nearest proposed window and the site boundary, combined with the use of obscure glazing and screening, there would be no loss of privacy as a result of the proposal.

- 7.17. The three storey element of the proposal would step beyond the rear elevation of number 8 Hexham Road, but given the set off of 7m, it is not considered that there would be any resultant harm through the creation of a sense of enclosure or overbearing presence.
- 7.18. Overall, the proposals would ensure that there would be no harm to neighbour's living conditions, in accordance with Local Plan Policy CC8.

Future Residents' Amenity

- 7.19. Local Plan Policy H5 (Standards for New Housing) states that new build housing will need to comply with the nationally prescribed space standards. Policy H10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space) requires dwellings to be provide with functional private or communal open space where possible. Local Plan Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) requires that homes should also have adequate natural light, outlook and privacy.
- 7.20. The proposals would provide 42 flats which would meet the floorspace standards. Some of the units would also benefit from private external amenity space, and there is a significant amount of communal space in the courtyard and as a roof terrace.
- 7.21. The courtyard would ensure window-to-window distances between properties of 22.5m, which is acceptable in terms of privacy and overlooking.
- 7.22. Overall, officers consider that the proposal would provide suitable future living conditions for residents and is therefore considered to comply with the Local Plan policies above.

Unit Mix and Affordable Housing

- 7.23. 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.
- 7.24. The proposal would provide 42 one bedroom, two person units. Although this does not meet the requirements of Policy H2 in terms of housing mix, the proposal is providing specialist housing which meets an identified need for this type and size of unit within the Borough. The units would be used by individuals or couples who have learning disabilities rather than general market or affordable housing, and so a wider mix of unit sizes is not considered to be required in this instance. Given this, the unit mix is considered acceptable.
- 7.25. 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 required to be provided as affordable housing.
- 7.26. The proposal would provide 30% affordable housing, with the intention for this to rise to 100%. The proposal should be assessed on the basis that 30% of the units would be Affordable, rather than the intentions of the developer. All affordable units would be at Reading Affordable Rent levels. The proposals would provide a policy compliant level of Affordable Housing, and therefore is acceptable in terms of Policy H3.

Transport

- 7.27. 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.

- 7.28. 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.
- 7.29. The site would provide 10 car parking spaces for the residential units and 6 for the day centre. An assessment of the car parking data provided shows that this level of provision would be acceptable given the nature of the use and the location of the development.
- 7.30. The access as proposed would be acceptable in principle and would not result in any harm to highway safety or the free movement of vehicles and pedestrians. Visibility splays to confirm this are required, and will be commented on in the Update Report.
- 7.31. The proposal would include 21 cycle parking spaces serving the residential use and the day centre in an appropriate location, which is considered to be acceptable.
- 7.32. Servicing, waste and recycling storage would be appropriately located.
- 7.33. Overall, the proposals would represent an appropriate development in transport terms, and it would comply with the Local Plan.

Ecology

- 7.34. 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.
- 7.35. The proposal is accompanied by an ecological survey which demonstrates that there would be no impact on existing species at the site. Swift boxes and a hedgehog refuge are proposed to be included. Conditions are recommended to ensure that the proposals would provide landscaping details, the installation of swift bricks and details of green roofs to ensure adequate biodiversity net gain on site.

Sustainability

- 7.36. 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.
- 7.37. An energy and sustainability statement was submitted as part of the application. This demonstrates that the proposal would meet zero carbon targets, and be a 'Passivhaus' design through higher fabric standards and the low carbon and renewable energy systems, namely photovoltaic panels and air source heat pumps.
- 7.38. 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

- 7.39. 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 fourteen units (30% provision) on site, to be 14 one bedroom units of Reading Affordable Rent. Reading Affordable Rent (RAR) tenure would be capped at 70% of market rent as per published RAR levels.

- Employment, Skills and Training and Construction financial contribution of £10,577.50, or a ESTC Plan.
- Applicant to enter into a S278 agreement in relation to the reconfiguration of the vehicular access on to Hexham Road, including closures of existing vehicular access points as may be required.

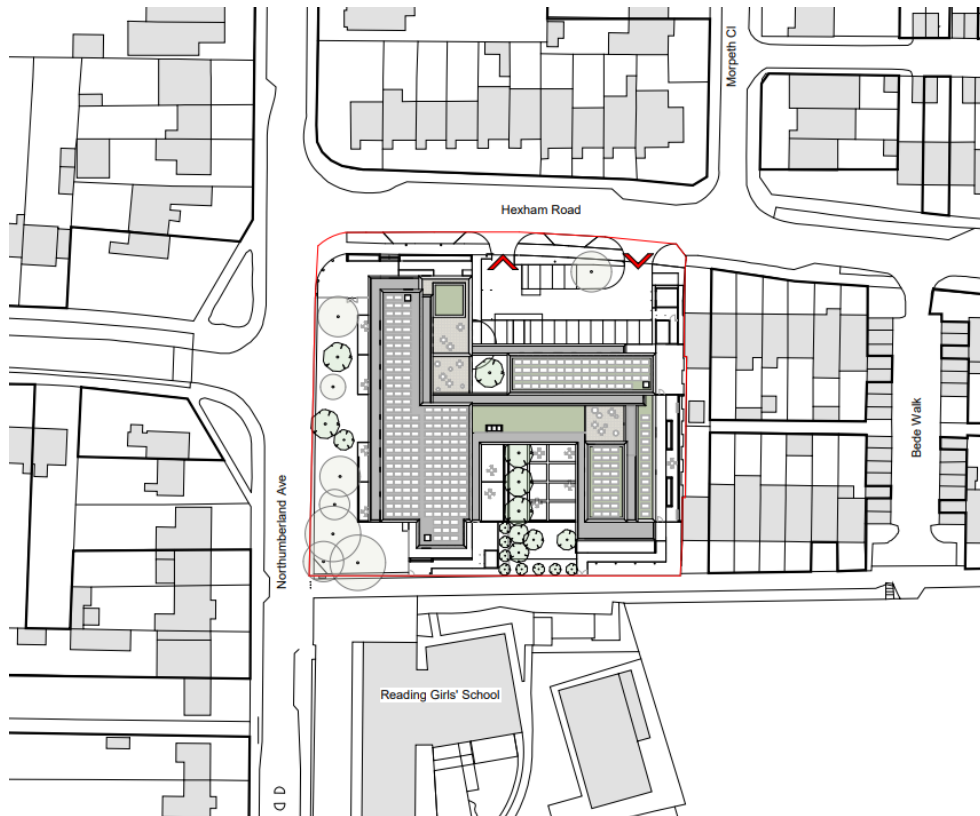
8. Equality implications

- 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. Furthermore, the proposal would be a positive addition to Reading in terms of its use and the complementary nature of the uses.

9. Conclusion & planning balance

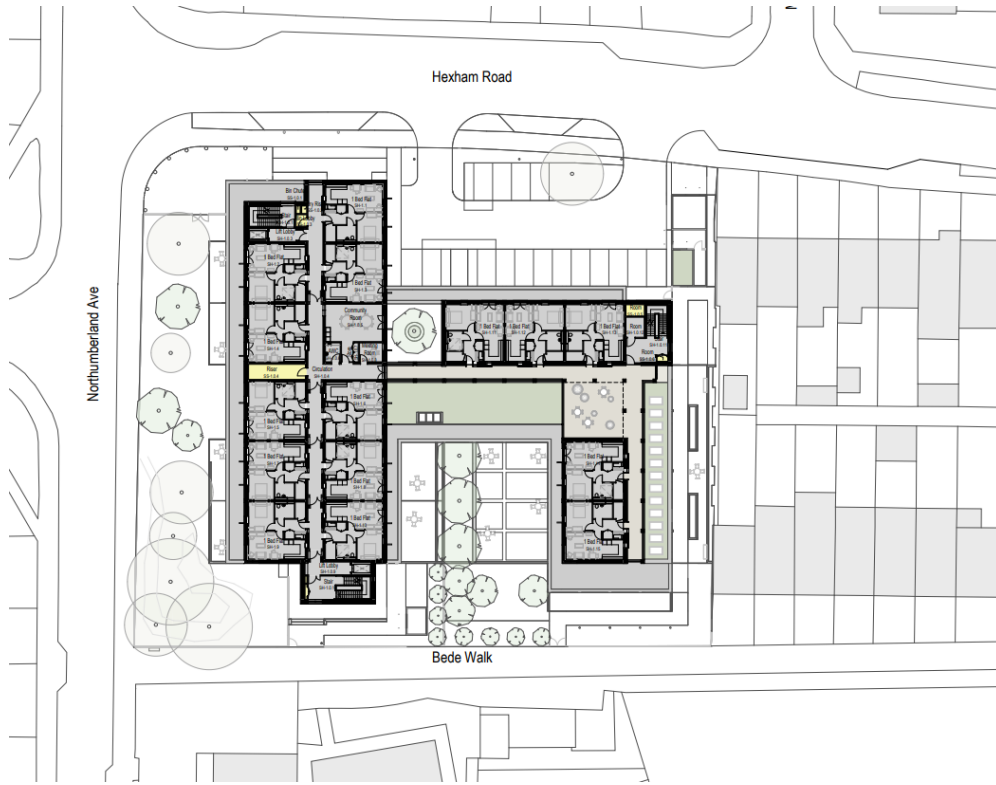
- 9.1 As with all applications considered by the Local Planning Authority, the application is required to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise, as per Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- 9.2 Officers consider that the benefits of the scheme in providing housing, affordable housing, redeveloping an underused brownfield site and providing a sustainable development would be sufficient to recommend the proposals for approval.
- 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.

Appendix – Selected Plans

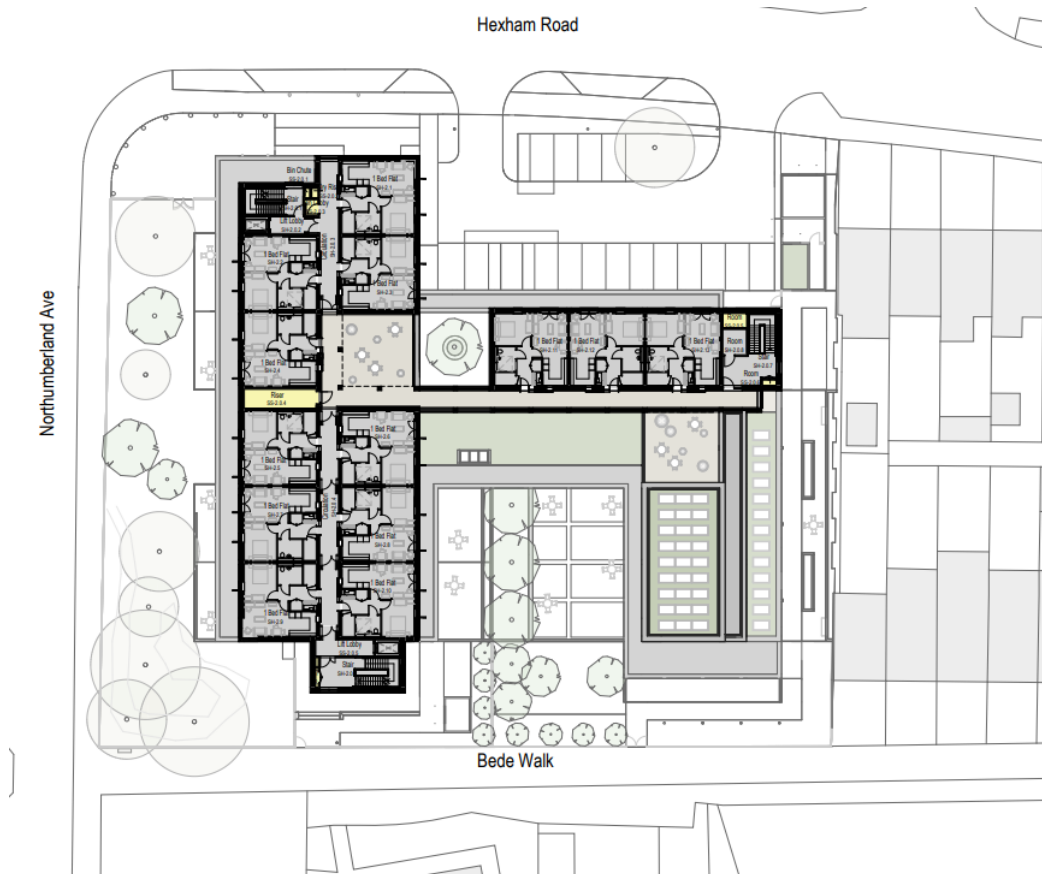


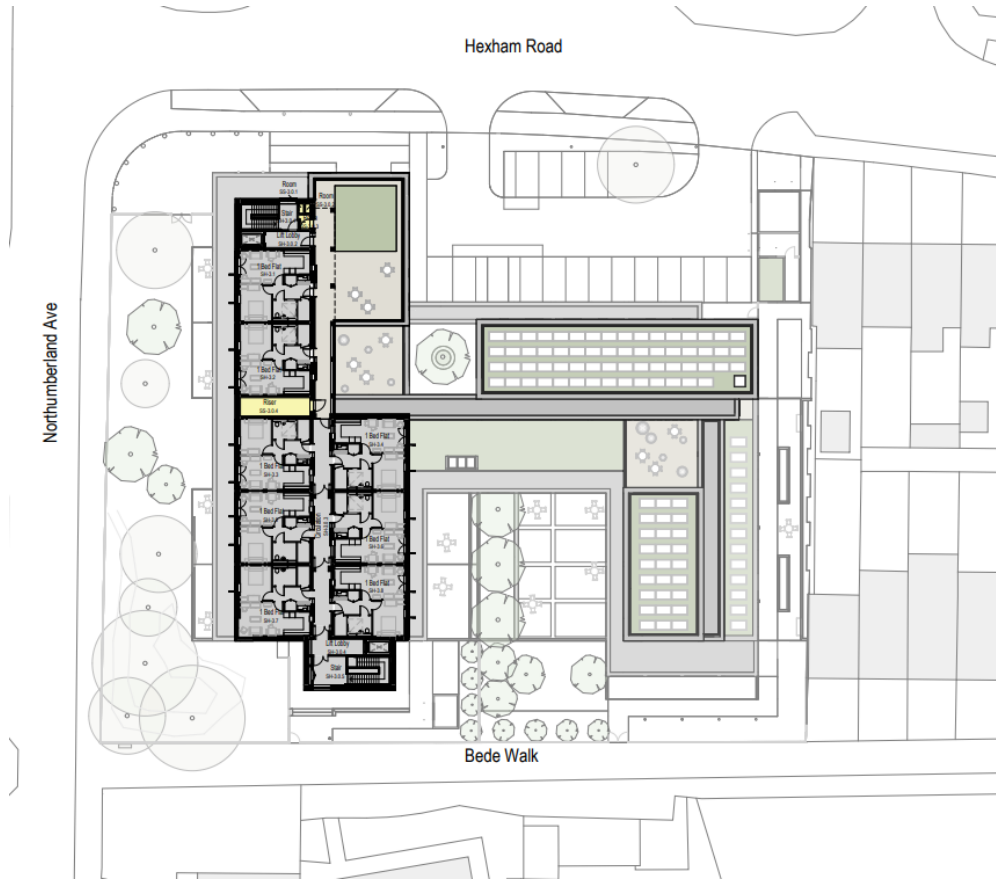
Proposed Block Plan (above), Proposed Ground Floor Plan (below)





Proposed First Floor Plan (Above), Second Floor Plan (Below)





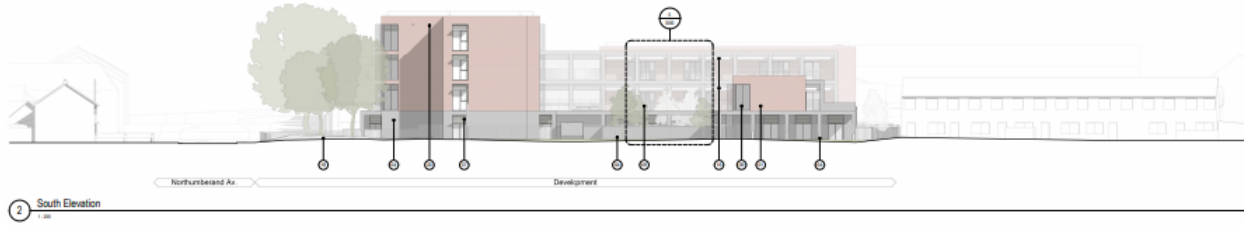
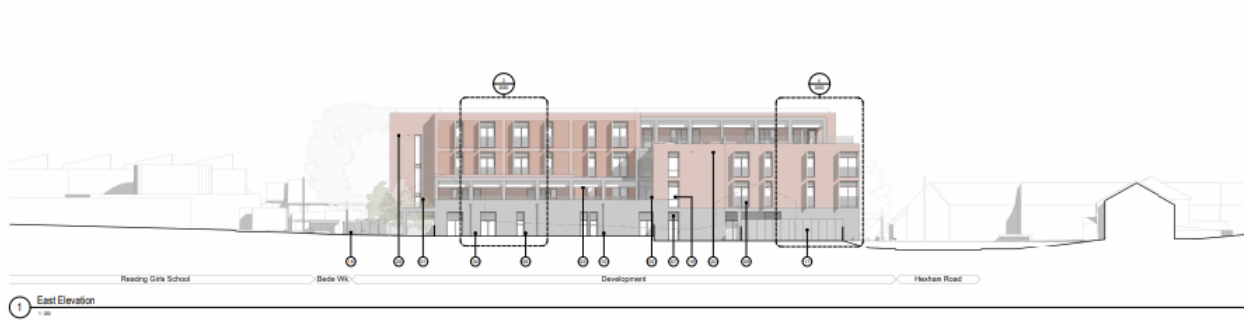
Proposed Third Floor Plan (Above)
 Proposed West and North Elevations (Below)



1 West Elevation



2 North Elevation



Proposed East and South Elevations