

06 December 2023



Reading
Borough Council
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Title	PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT
Ward	Southcote
Planning Application Reference:	230613
Site Address:	Amethyst Lane, Reading
Proposed Development	Demolition and redevelopment of the Site at Amethyst Lane to deliver a new respite care facility alongside 17 new houses, soft and hard landscaping, parking and ancillary works.
Applicant	Reading Borough Council
Report author	Nicola Taplin
Deadline:	28/07/2023
Recommendations	<p>Subject to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(i) Confirmation of receipt of satisfactory arrangements in relation to the Sustainable Urban Drainage System; and(ii) Confirmation of satisfactory on-site, off-site or a combination arrangement in terms of Bio-diversity Net Gain (BNG); <p>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 (unilateral undertaking) or (ii) to REFUSE permission should the Section 106 legal agreement not be completed by 1st February 2024 (unless officers on behalf of the AD PTPPS agree to a later date for completion of the legal agreement).</p>
S106 Terms	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To secure affordable housing on site consisting of 100% of the units on site to be Reading Affordable Rent (RAR)tenure, which would be capped at 70% of market rent as per published RAR levels.2. Employment, Skills and Training Plan for the construction stage of development, or a financial contribution in accordance with the calculations as set out in the Employment, Skills and Training Supplementary Planning Document (2013). <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</p>

	<p>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>
<p>Conditions</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Full - time limit - three years 2. Approved Plans 3. Materials (samples to be approved prior to commencement of above ground works) 4. Housing mix to be retained 5. Use Restriction of respite centre to Class E(f) (creches, nurseries, day centres) only 6. Provision of access and parking including lockable bollard 7. EV Charging Points (pre-commencement) 8. Cycle Parking (pre-commencement) (both uses) 9. Refuse details for respite centre (to be approved prior to occupation) 10. Construction Method Statement (pre-commencement) 11. Noise Mitigation for mechanical plant (as specified) 12. Noise Mitigation Scheme (internal) (to be submitted prior to above ground works) 13. Contaminated Land Assessment 14. Remediation Scheme (To be submitted prior to commencement) 15. Remediation Scheme (Implement and Verification) 16. Unidentified Contamination 17. Hours of Construction/Demolition (standard) 18. No Bonfires 19. Submission of lighting scheme 20. Waste Storage for residential (pre-occupation) 21. Biodiversity Enhancements 22. Arboricultural Monitoring Scheme (to be approved) 23. Hard and Soft Landscaping 24. Submission of boundary treatments with maximum height of 1.6m (pre-occupation) 25. Details of Green Roofs (pre-commencement) 26. Off Site Tree Planting Scheme 27. SAP Assessment – Design Stage 28. SAP Assessment – As Built 29. Submission of heat pump and PV details (including noise characteristics)
<p>Informatives</p>	<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

1. Executive summary

- 1.1. Subject to satisfactory confirmations in respect of sustainable drainage and ecology, 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. It would provide a policy compliant affordable family housing offer (in fact it would deliver all the houses as affordable), as well as a replacement respite care facility. 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.
- 1.3. Officers have identified some harm with the proposals, which is discussed in detail within the report. However, when balanced against the benefits of the scheme, including all the units being family sized housing – for which there is a critical need within the Borough – the proposal is considered acceptable in the planning balance.
- 1.4. The application is therefore recommended to the Planning Applications Committee for approval.

2. Introduction and Site Description

- 2.1 The site contains a now vacant Day Centre facility consisting of two building at the northern end of Amethyst Lane, which is a cul-de-sac accessed from Liebenrood Road. The existing buildings are between one and two storeys in height and cover much of the site. There are some trees on site, particularly around the edges, but the majority of the open parts of the site are hardstanding with the exception of a larger area in the western part of the site. The surrounding area is primarily residential, with a mixture of two and three storey houses and flats. Prospect Park is in close proximity to the site, within one minute walking distance. The site is allocated for residential use in the Local Plan under policy WR3n.



Figure 1 – Site location Plan (Not to scale)

3 The proposal

- 3.1 The proposal is for the demolition of the existing buildings and redevelopment of the site at Amethyst Lane to deliver a new respite care facility alongside 17 new houses, soft and hard landscaping, parking and ancillary works. To the south and at the entrance a replacement single storey respite centre is proposed with access fronting Amethyst Lane. The proposal includes a new street, with 17 homes arranged within three terraces to the east and west facing each other and a further terrace located to the north. The

application is being reported to Planning Applications Committee as this is a Council-own application.

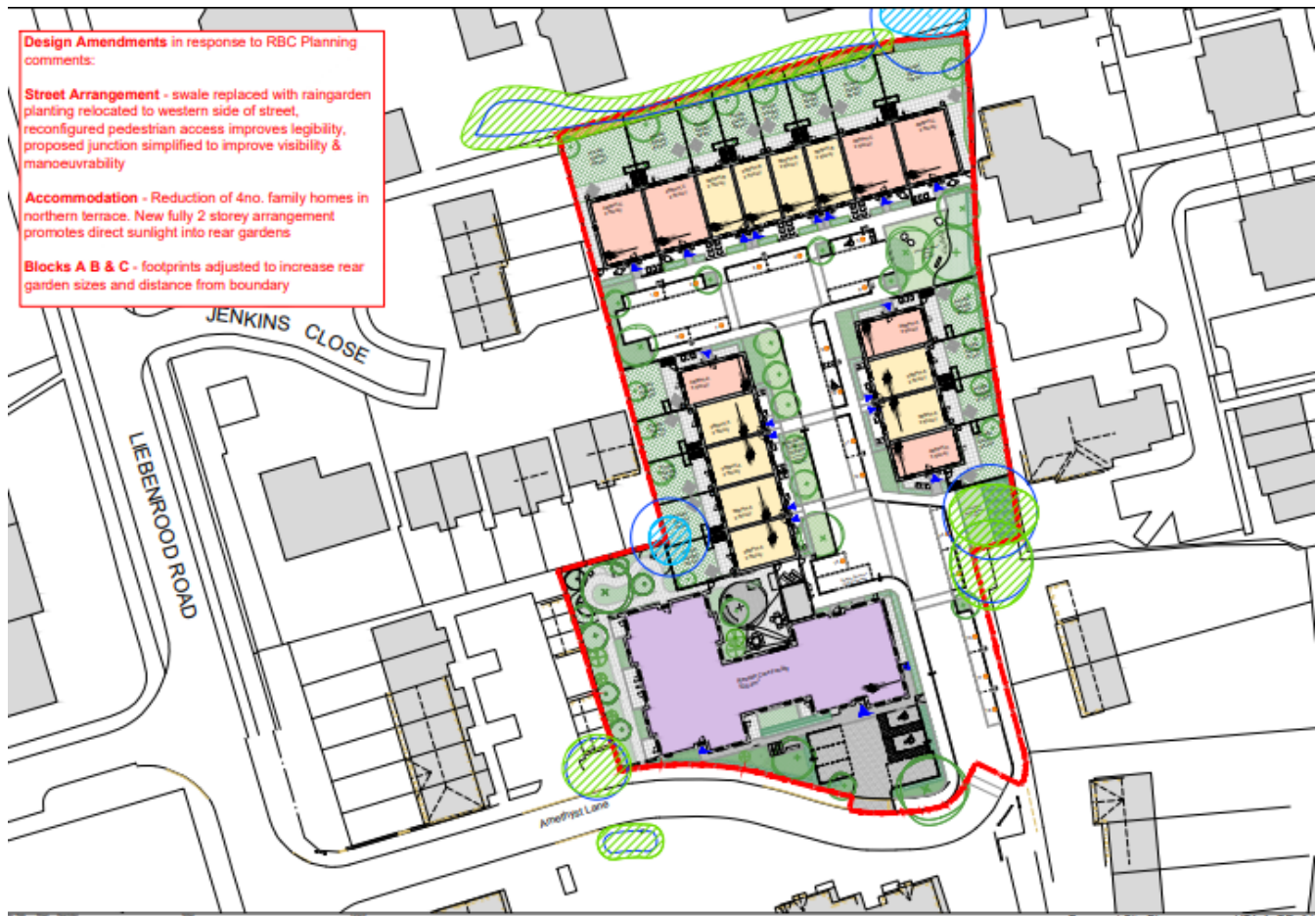


Figure 2 – Proposed Site Plan (Not to scale)



Figure 3 – Applicant's visualisation of the proposed scheme

3.2 The applicant has submitted the following documents for consideration:

RBC-DRR_HTA-A_DR_0101- Proposed Site Plan Rev L
RBC-DRR_HTA-A_DR_0110 - Proposed Roof Plan Rev A
RBC-DRR_HTA-A_DR_210 - Proposed Respite Centre Plan Rev K
RBC-DRR_HTA-A_DR_211 - Proposed Respite Centre Roof Plan Rev C
RBC-DRR_HTA-A_DR_250 - Proposed Elevation - Block A Rev C
RBC-DRR_HTA-A_DR_251 - Proposed Elevation - Block B Rev C
RBC-DRR_HTA-A_DR_252 - Proposed Elevation - Block C Rev C
RBC-DRR_HTA-A_DR_253- Proposed Elevation - Block D - Sheet 1 Rev C
RBC-DRR_HTA-A_DR_254 - Proposed Elevation - Block D - Sheet 2 Rev C
RBC-DRR_HTA-A_DR_301- Proposed Unit Plan - 3B5PH Type B Rev E
RBC-DRR_HTA-A_DR_302 - Proposed Unit Plan - 3B6PH Type A Rev E
RBC-DRR_HTA-A_DR_303 - Proposed Unit Plan - 4B7PH Type A Rev E
RBC-DRR_HTA-A_DR_304 - Proposed Unit Plan - 4B7PH Type C
RBC-DRR_HTA-A_DR_600 - House Type 4B8PH Type C 3B5PH Type B
Elevation / Sections Rev A
RBC-DRR_HTA-A_DR_601 - House Type 3B6PH Type A 4B8PH Type A
Elevation / Sections Rev A
RBC-DRR_HTA-A_DR_602 - Respite Centre Elevation / Sections Rev A
RBC-DRR_HTA-A_DR_SC_0010 - Schedule of Accommodation Rev G
RBC-DRR_HTA-A_DR_SC_0011 – Room Schedule Rev A

- Planning Statement
- Archaeological Assessment
- Contaminated Land Statement
- Ecology Statement & BNG Report
- 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

4 Planning history

There is no relevant historical planning history, however, pre-application advice was sought before submission of this planning application.

At the time of writing, application 231591/DEM has been submitted for the separate ability to demolish (only) the buildings on site. The status of this application is currently under consideration and is anticipated to be dealt with by officers under delegated powers.

5 Consultations

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

RBC Transport

- 5.2 The Transport Strategy Team have been discussing concerns raised over shortfall in parking for the respite centre. Agreement has been reached in terms of the provision of 6 spaces (to include disabled parking bay and mini-bus parking) and at the time of writing, amended plans are due to be submitted to secure this provision. With regard to the parking layout and number of parking spaces for the residential units, the Transport Team have advised that the provision (one space per dwelling) is acceptable. Conditions to secure CMS, cycle parking details, access and vehicle parking to be provided.

RBC SUDS Manager (Lead Local Flood Authority)

The SUDS Manager has been discussing the details of the SUDS with the applicant's specialist flooding adviser and is satisfied that this technical matter could be resolved and delegated authority is sought to finalise these details.

RBC Waste & Recycling

- 5.3 The Council's Environmental Health Officer has requested details of the waste and recycling provision. Amended plans have been submitted which detail the provision of acceptable waste and recycling provision.

RBC Environmental Protection

- 5.4 No objection subject to recommended conditions relating to noise, air quality, land contamination, bin storage, hours of construction and a CMS. Discussed below.

RBC Ecology

- 5.5 Further to revisions, no objection subject to conditions relating to ecological enhancements and obligation to secure off-site tree planting. Discussed below.

RBC Natural Environment

- 5.6 A number of issues were raised relating to tree protection measures, landscaping and SUDS. The Council's Natural Environment Officer has advised that following the submission of amended details, sufficient principles have been provided in order that the application is supported in tree & landscape terms subject to the imposition of conditions.

Public Consultation

- 5.7 Notification letters were sent to nearby occupiers on 6 June 2023. Site notices were displayed.

Dellwood Community Hospital, 22 Liebenrood Road, Reading, RG30 2DX
10 Parkhurst Drive, Reading, RG30 2BG
Various addresses, Tamar Court, Amethyst Lane
37 Ashdene Gardens, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 2EP
59 Ashdene Gardens, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 2EP
5 Jenkins Close, Reading, RG30 2EQ
1 Jenkins Close, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 2EQ

Two responses were received and raised the below points:

- Concerns about construction noise and disturbance
- Parking concerns
- Concerns raised about possible linking of development to Jenkins Close. ***Officer comment: the application proposal does not include an access to Jenkins Close.***

6 Legal and Planning Policy 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
 Section 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

National Planning Policy Guidance (2014 onwards)

Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019) policies are:

CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
 CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction
 CC3: Adaptation to Climate Change
 CC4: Decentralised Energy
 CC5: Waste Minimisation and Storage
 CC6: Accessibility and the Intensity of Development
 CC7: Design and the Public Realm
 CC8: Safeguarding Amenity
 CC9: Securing Infrastructure
 EN9: Provision of Open Space
 EN10: Access to Open Space
 EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network
 EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodland
 EN15: Air Quality
 EN16: Pollution and Water Resources
 EN17: Noise Generating Equipment
 EN18: Flooding and Drainage
 EM3: Loss of Employment Land
 H1: Provision of Housing
 H2: Density and Mix
 H3: Affordable Housing
 H5: Standards for New Housing
 H10: Private and Communal Outdoor Space
 H14: Suburban Renewal and Regeneration
 OU1: New and Existing Community Facilities
 TR1: Achieving the Transport Strategy
 TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
 TR4: Cycle Routes and Facilities
 TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging

WR3n: Amethyst Lane

RBC Supplementary Planning Documents

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

Other relevant documentation

Reading Tree Strategy (2021)
Reading Biodiversity Action Plan (2021)
The National Design Guide (2019)
The National Model Design Code (2021)
Adult Social Care Asset Review and Capital Strategy (approved by Policy Committee 8 January 2021)

7 Appraisal

7.1 The main considerations are:

- Land Use Considerations
- Provision of Affordable Housing and Unit Mix
- Design Considerations – Layout, Scale and Appearance
- Residential Amenity
- Impact on Parking/Highways
- Natural Environment – Trees and Landscaping
- Ecology
- Sustainability and Energy
- Sustainable Drainage Systems
- Environmental Protection Matters – Contaminated Land
- Legal Agreement

Land Use Considerations

7.2 Policy CC1 (Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development) requires a positive approach to development proposals that reflect the presumption in favour of sustainable development, which lies at the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). To achieve sustainable development a proposal needs to meet economic, social and environmental objectives.

7.3 A key Government objective is to significantly boost the supply of new homes (Section 5 of the NPPF) and the local housing requirement as set out within Policy H1 (Provision of Housing) which confirms that there is a pressing need for additional housing in Reading and the surrounding area.

7.4 The site is allocated for residential use within the Local Plan, under allocation WR3n, which states:

Development for residential. Site size: 0.57 ha 32-48 dwellings

Development should:

- *Ensure appropriate back-to-back separation from existing residential*
- *Take account of the potential impact on water infrastructure in conjunction with Thames Water, and make provision for upgrades where required.*

7.5 The proposal would provide 17 houses and also includes a respite centre. Whilst a respite centre use is not included within the allocation, there is a demonstrable need for this type of accommodation, and given the previous use of the site, it is considered to be an

appropriate element of the proposal. The relocation of the Respite Centre formed part of the Adult Social Care Asset Review and Capital Strategy approved by Policy Committee on 18th January 2021. The respite service provides regulated activity which necessitates a requirement to be registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC). Initial engagement took place with CQC in summer 2021 to discuss the provision of respite services at Hexham Road. CQC raised some concerns about the size, setting and layout of the building. They felt that it deviated from guidance for Services for Autistic People and People with a Learning Disability (Right Support, Right Care, Right Culture), as the proposal also included a day service and sheltered accommodation on the same site. They described this as having a ‘campus feel’ which in their view was not aligned to best practice in the guidance. The respite facility is therefore proposed to be located at Amethyst Lane on the site of the former respite centre. The provision of a respite centre reduces the number of residential units which the allocation site is able to provide, but would represent an effective use of the land for an appropriate use. The proposed residential accommodation schedule is as follows:

Block	3B5P	3B6P	4B8P	Total
Block A	4		4	8
Block B		4	1	5
Block C		2	2	4
Total	4	6	7	17
%	24%	35%	41%	100%

Figure 4 – Residential Accommodation Schedule

Principle of Housing and Respite Centre

- 7.6 The proposed development, providing 17 residential units on previously developed land, would contribute towards meeting the Council’s housing need requirements in accordance with Policy H1. Given the above, the principle of providing residential accommodation at the site is supported by the site allocation. The provision of a respite centre was not envisaged in the allocation. However, the Local Plan makes specific reference to such opportunities, as they arise (at paragraph 7.3.15, the supporting text to Policy WR3):

“On some sites identified for housing, there may be potential for community uses, such as meeting spaces, healthcare or education to be provided which have not been anticipated by this plan. There may also be potential for specialist housing provision for specific groups, outside the C3 dwellinghouse use class. This could potentially reduce the amount of housing which could be provided on specific sites. Depending on other policies in the plan, this can be appropriate, provided that it does not harm the chances of delivering sufficient housing to meet the targets set out in local policy -his decision will be informed by the most up-to-date housing housing trajectory”.

- 7.6a The Planning Policy Manager advises that the latest available (2021-22) Annual Monitoring Report confirms that as a Borough, Reading will be over-delivering against Policy H1 over the plan period. The proposal is considered to represent a valuable development opportunity which can positively contribute to meeting the Borough’s ongoing housing need, but given the general positive situation with regard to meeting overall housing numbers, the opportunity of realising/retaining a respite centre is appropriate in principle, subject to other planning considerations below.

Provision of Affordable Housing and Unit Mix

Affordable Housing

- 7.7 Affordable Housing is a key identified priority within the Borough. Policy H3 (Affordable Housing) seeks to ensure that development proposals of more than 10 dwellings should provide the equivalent of 30% on-site provision of affordable housing.
- 7.8 It is relevant to note that affordable housing in the borough can only be secured through s106 legal agreements.
- 7.9 The applicant has confirmed that 100% of the homes would be social rent affordable (Reading Affordable Rent) 3 and 4 bed housing units which significantly exceeds the 30% on-site policy requirement. The proposed provision of an 100% affordable housing scheme would be significantly more than the Policy H3 30% on site affordable housing requirement. As such, any provision above the required 30% amount would be considered to be an additional planning benefit of the proposals, in the assessment of the overall planning balance for the scheme as a whole. It follows that, where proposals conflict with other policies in the plan, securing a higher percentage can be justified in order to outweigh other areas of harm identified.
- 7.10 In this instance, officers consider that there are a number of factors which justify a higher than 30% affordable housing requirement. As set out elsewhere in this report, there are some areas of harm arising from the proposals, which officers consider need to be mitigated. These include shorter/smaller garden sizes and shortfall in open space and landscaped areas within the site.
- 7.11 It is not possible to provide an exact amount of affordable housing that would outweigh the harm. However, securing the proposed 100% affordable housing, well in excess of the policy minimum, would carry significant weight given the critical need for affordable housing in the Borough and the existing shortfall in provision. This remains to be weighed in the overall planning balance at the end of this report.

Unit Mix

- 7.12 Policy H2 (Density and Mix) identifies that wherever possible, residential development should contribute towards meeting identified needs in respect of housing mix, and in particular, for family homes of 3 or more bedrooms. The Policy seeks that at least 50% of the homes outside centres will be 3 bedrooms or larger.
- 7.13 The proposal would exceed this by providing 10 three-bedroom houses and 7 four-bedroom houses, meaning 100% of the overall mix is 3 bed or larger and the proposal is therefore in accordance with Policy H2 in this respect. The overall mix would address the critical need for housing across Reading, including a sizeable amount of 4 bedroom properties. This is considered to be a key benefit of the proposed development, providing family sized housing to meet identified housing needs. The proposed mix of dwellings will be secured by way of condition.

Design Considerations – Layout, Scale and Appearance

- 7.13 Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) seeks to ensure that new development enhances and preserves the local character. The policy places importance on the layout of the urban structure and urban grain, stipulating that development should respond positively to the local context and create safe and accessible environments. The policy requires, “...*high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located*”.
- 7.14 Paragraph 130 of the NPPF 2023 details that decisions should ensure that developments are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping and are sympathetic to local character including the surrounding built environment.

- 7.15 The National Design Guidance identifies 10 key components for good design and of particular note is the characteristic of 'Context' and it states that, "*well designed new development responds positively to the features of the site itself and the surrounding context beyond the site boundary. It should enhance positive qualities and improve negative ones.*" Additionally, there is specific reference to 'views inwards and outwards'.

Demolition

- 7.16 In relation to the demolition of the existing buildings at the site, these are not considered to be of any architectural merit to warrant their retention either individually or cumulatively. Their loss would not result in any harm to the character and appearance of the area, providing they are replaced with buildings of high-quality design. Demolition is, therefore, considered acceptable subject to the proposed replacement buildings being suitable in design and related matters detailed below.

Layout and Scale

- 7.17 The scale and layout of the proposal is the result of detailed discussions at pre-application and application stage. The application proposal as originally submitted was for 21 dwellings. During the course of the application, this has been reduced to 17 dwellings. The current proposal includes the reduction in the number of units in block A by 4; Block B has been moved 2m east; Block C moved 1.5m west and the reconfiguration of pedestrian movement, planting and parking which improves legibility across the site. The reduction in number of units was considered necessary to allow for better quality private amenity spaces for each dwelling and to introduce a better arrangement of streets and spaces, and improve soft landscaping as well as achieving a less cramped appearance overall. Whilst the overall arrangement would appear of a compact, intimate cul-de-sac, such arrangements are not uncommon in this area of the Borough and suitable levels of amenity would be achieved.

ly proposed layout





Proposed layout

7.18 The respite centre would be single storey only. The houses would generally be 2 storeys in height with 3 storey townhouses located on gable ends at the centre of the site to minimise their impact. The respite centre has a ridge height of 5.35m in height, the two storey houses have a pitched ridge height of 8.7m in height and the 3 storey houses have a flat roof of 9.6m in height. The 2 storey houses are proposed to have pitched roofs, creating more surface area for PV (photovoltaic array) provision, and allowing 'book ends' at the termination of the terraces. Flat roofs are proposed in order to reduce the overall massing of the 3 storey elements, and also to maximise the opportunity for biodiverse green roofs. Height is used to create articulated roof lines across the terraces.

7.19 The proposed low rise respite centre will be sited to the south of the site. The building is proposed to be constructed from brick with a number of pitched roofs linked by flat roofs. The building must be single storey to maximise the usability of accommodation for the users. It would provide to provide wheelchair accessible bedrooms (x6), communal spaces and associated ancillary spaces. The applicant has carried out extensive engagement with the RBC Adult Care and Health Team and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) which has informed the design development of the respite care facility, in order to ensure it will meet the needs of building users and management.

7.20 It is considered that the proposed layout has successfully maximised the use of the site, whilst ensuring that the proposal includes sufficient distances between buildings and that the areas between buildings have been suitably designed to integrate vehicle parking whilst maintaining a pleasant residential environment. The proposed dwellings, when seen from all nearby vantage points, are considered to acceptably respond to its context and the constraints of the site in terms of their scale and appearance. The overall design

of the development is considered to create a pleasant, unified scheme, with the proposal considered to provide a good balance between site density and an appropriate layout and landscaping.

Appearance

- 7.21 The houses would be modern, energy-efficient terraces in a contemporary style and the architectural focus has been on maximising useability and energy efficiency with the family end users in mind.
- 7.22 The respite centre is considered to sit comfortably within the site, relating to the scale of the adjacent development to the south and west.
- 7.23 In overall terms, the proposed scheme is considered to represent good quality design that will enhance the character and appearance of the area and which will successfully integrate into the surrounding area. The proposed scale of the new buildings at 1, 2 and 3 storeys would sit comfortably within the surrounding context and the palette of materials would be appropriate. However, to ensure the design quality, it is considered reasonable and appropriate to secure further details of all external materials will be secured via condition, including the provision of sample panel on site prior to commencement, to guarantee the design quality of the scheme in accordance with Policy CC7.

Residential Amenity

- 7.24 Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) of the 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.
- 7.25 Officers originally raised concerns about the proximity of Block B to the rear garden of No. 12 Jenkins Close and the resultant impact upon outlook and privacy to the occupants of that property. The amended plan has increased the distance to the rear boundary which forms the side boundary of 12 Jenkins Close. The garden depth proposed is 8.5m (6.5m as originally proposed). Officers consider that the relationship of the first-floor bedroom windows to the rear of houses in Block B, at a distance of 8.5m from the boundary, with an intervening boundary fence, is not an atypical relationship in this locality. The Silver Birch tree along this boundary will aid in the sense of screening in summer months. It is considered, on balance, that the proposal would not result in an unacceptable loss of amenity to the occupants of 12 Jenkins Close. The layout, separation distances and orientation of the proposed buildings, as amended, within the site would avoid overbearing effects or unacceptable loss of privacy to properties surrounding the site.
- 7.26 The terraces within Blocks B and C would achieve a front-to-front separation distance of 16.5m. The flank to front separation distance of Block B and with Block A would be 16.9m. In overall terms, the scale and position of the proposed buildings would also ensure that there would be no increased sense of overbearing or enclosure. The proposals would have no unacceptable impact on the living conditions of future occupiers in accordance with Policy CC8.

Standard of Accommodation for Future Occupiers

- 7.28 In addition to Policy CC8 above, policies H5 (Standards for New Housing) and H10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space) also apply. Policy H5 states that new build housing will need to comply with the nationally prescribed space standards. Policy H10 sets out that, *“Dwellings will be provided with functional private or communal open space wherever possible, that allows for suitable sitting-out areas, children’s play areas, home food production, green waste composting, refuse storage, general outdoor storage and drying space. Houses will be provided with private outdoor space whereas flats may be provided with communal outdoor space, balconies and/or roof gardens.”*

- 7.29 All dwellings would meet the nationally described space standards (as outlined in Policy H5) for the type of dwelling/number of bedrooms and the internal layout of the proposed units are arranged so as to create a suitable standard of living accommodation for future occupiers. It is considered that all dwellings would generally have good levels of outlook.
- 7.30 All the proposed houses would have their own private outdoor garden of modest but sufficient size which would offer a reasonable standard of amenity for future occupiers as well as providing welcome greenery within the site. Officers originally raised concerns about the quality and scale of the rear gardens. The amended scheme has allowed for more spacious gardens for all the proposed homes. The range of garden sizes has expanded from 31.8sqm to 83.0 sqm, as outlined in the May 2023 submission, to now range from 53.9 sqm to 114.7 sqm. It is considered reasonable and necessary in this case to impose a condition to restrict the height of boundary fencing of rear gardens, given the relatively modest depth of the rear gardens to ensure outlook from rear facing rooms is not compromised by the boundary treatments and to maximise light penetration to the gardens. Furthermore, the applicant has provided a daylight/sunlight report within the application. The report demonstrates that there have been significant improvements in the amount of sunlight available on the ground for the external amenity spaces in the revised scheme.

Impact on Parking/Highways

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

Car Parking Provision

- 7.32 The Council's Transport Officer has been in discussions with the applicants and amended plans are due to be submitted to provide 17 car parking spaces for the residential units (1 for each dwelling); and 3 spaces plus 2 disabled spaces and a mini bus space to the front of the respite centre, one additional space to the side of the respite centre and 1 space to the rear for deliveries. The space to the side, adjacent to the residential parking, will be secured by way of a lockable bollard. The Council's Transport Officer has confirmed that the layout is acceptable. An assessment of the car parking data provided shows that this level of provision would be acceptable to serve future residents and respite centre given the nature of the site and the location of the development.

Access

- 7.33 Vehicular access to the residential element of the site will be taken from a continuation of Amethyst Lane. The properties will be accessed from an internal road that routes north-south through the site. The entrance to the small car parking area for the respite centre will be from the existing section of Amethyst Lane. The Council's Transport Officer has confirmed that the access arrangements are considered acceptable.

Cycle Parking Provision

- 7.34 Cycle parking provision is to be provided in line with requirements in the Reading Borough Council Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD. The standard for 3 and 4 bed dwellings is for 2 spaces. It is proposed that these spaces will be provided for each property in a covered lockable store within the boundary of each property. The Council's Transport Officer has confirmed that this is acceptable subject to a condition specifying the exact type of cycle storage. The respite centre cycle provision will be provided in accordance with local standards which equates to 3 spaces.

Construction

7.35 A condition requiring a Construction Method Statement (CMS) will be attached to any approval, requiring submission and approval before any works commence on-site to regulate the amenity effects of construction. As well as demonstrating a commitment to ensuring the number of HGV movements are managed and controlled, the CMS must demonstrate that appropriate measures will be implemented to ensure the safety of pedestrians and cyclists on the road network around the construction site.

7.36 Servicing, waste and recycling storage would be appropriately located.

Natural Environment - Trees and Landscaping

7.37 Policy EN14 (Trees, Hedges and Woodland) seeks to extend the Borough's vegetation cover and that development should make provision for tree planting whilst Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) seeks proposal should include appropriate landscaping. Proposals should demonstrate an appropriate level of greening and/or net gain in the tree number.

7.38 The application is supported by an Arboricultural Impact Assessment which identified fifteen individual trees and ten groups of trees. An Arboricultural Method Statement is also submitted. The Council's Natural Environment Officer has requested the retention of tree T5, a Norway maple, located in the south east corner of the site adjacent to the access road (a B category tree). The revised plans confirm the removal of this tree which is an identified harm which is considered in the planning balance as discussed above. The Council's Natural Environment Officer has raised some concerns with regard to issues of clarity with the submitted Arboricultural Method Statement and officers consider it reasonable to secure an appropriate Arboricultural Method Statement via condition. Further details relating to soil and tree pit details have been submitted and are considered acceptable.

7.39 A landscape plan has been submitted with the application. This includes the provision of a total of 43 new trees on site. The Council's Natural Environment Officer has confirmed that the principles of the proposed landscape layout and planting, particularly trees, are considered acceptable. Detailed clarification is required within the AMS, the landscape maintenance arrangements and detailed specifications of the green roof and turf. A pre-commencement landscaping condition is recommended which will secure planting details to include the species, maintenance, and management schedule. Officers are satisfied that the overall scheme is acceptable in principle, subject to clarification of these points and therefore complies with policies CS7 and EN14.

Ecology

7.40 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.

7.41 In this instance, it is considered likely that in terms of the calculation base, the site should be regarded as 'brownfield'/previously developed. The Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Metric therefore seeks that on sites such as this, the necessary increase in biodiversity is under normal circumstances, to be required on site. In this instance and at the time of writing, the compact nature of the site is meaning that the applicant may need to at least partly off-set the need for BNG in an off-site location.

7.42 The Biodiversity Net Gain calculation is being considered further and is currently in the process of being re-calculated. Officers consider that it is likely that there are no feasible options for delivering full net gain on the site and officers will therefore update the Committee on this matter in the Update Report.

- 7.44 A condition is also recommended to be attached by the Ecologist to ensure that a wildlife friendly lighting scheme is provided so that excessive or poorly designed lighting does not affect bats, given proximity to tree canopy areas in Prospect Park.

Sustainability and Energy

- 7.45 Policy CC2 (Sustainable Design and Construction) and Policy CC3 (Adaption to Climate Change) seeks that development proposals incorporate measures which take account of climate change. Policy CC4 (Decentralised Energy) seeks that developments of more than 20 dwellings should consider the inclusion of combined heat and power plant (CHP) or other form of decentralised energy provision.
- 7.46 Policy H5 (Standards for New Housing) and the Council's Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2019) identify that, as a minimum, new dwellings should achieve 35% improvement in regulated emissions over the Target Emissions Rate (TER) in the 2013 Building Regulations, with financial contribution required to off-set any remaining carbon emissions to zero.
- 7.47 In bringing this proposal forward, the applicant (RBC Housing) has been clear that minimising energy consumption and carbon emissions for the benefit of the residents was a high design priority for the houses.
- 7.48 An energy and sustainability assessment 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. Details of these additions are to be secured by way of conditions.
- 7.49 Officers are satisfied that the proposals demonstrate a good standard of energy sustainability and, subject to conditions, the development accords with relevant policy in this regard.

Sustainable Drainage Systems

- 7.50 Policy EN18 (Flooding and Sustainable Drainage Systems) requires all major developments to incorporate Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) with runoff rates aiming to reflect greenfield conditions and, in any case, must be no greater than the existing conditions of the site.
- 7.51 The applicant has submitted a revised Surface Water Drainage Strategy. However, this does not yet demonstrate that run-off rates and method of attenuation would be acceptable. Discussions are on-going in this respect and there is no evidence to suggest that this technical matter could not be resolved and at this time delegated authority is sought to finalise details. It is also noted that part of allocation WR3n includes that the capacity of Thames Water to be able to service the site is to be taken into account. An update on this matter is being sought and will be set out in the Update Report.

Environmental Protection Matters

Contaminated Land

- 7.52 Policy EN16 (Pollution and Water Resources) required that developments on land affected by contamination can be satisfactorily managed or remediated against so that it is suitable for the proposed use.
- 7.53 A contaminated land desk study has been submitted with the application. This concludes that further intrusive investigation is necessary to confirm the risk levels from

contamination. The Council's Environmental Protection officer recommends the standard four-stage conditions to ensure that the possible presence of contamination is thoroughly investigated and removed/mitigated if necessary (3 of the conditions are pre-commencement). In accordance with Policy EN16.

Noise

- 7.53a Should any external mechanical plant be required, a noise assessment will be required. This includes the provision of heat pumps. A condition is recommended.

S106 Legal Agreement (Unilateral Undertaking)

- 7.54 The majority of elements to be secured via s106 legal agreement, as per the Recommendation at the outset of this report, have already been detailed in earlier sections of this report. One matter not explicitly referenced is the requirement to secure an Employment and Skills Plan (ESP) for the Construction phases of the development. This is required in line with Policy CC9 (Securing Infrastructure) and the Employment, Skills and Training SPD. It is not yet known whether this will take the form of an actual ESP to be progressed by them on site, or payment of an equivalent financial contribution, as per the SPD formula. The legal agreement will be worded flexibly to enable either eventuality.
- 7.55 It is considered that the obligations referred to in the Recommendation would comply with the National Planning Policy Framework and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) in that it would be: i) necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, ii) directly related to the development and iii) fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development. These Head of Terms has been agreed by the applicant and a S106 Legal Agreement is in the process of being prepared to secure this contribution.

8 Equality implications

9

- 9.1 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.
- 9.2 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.

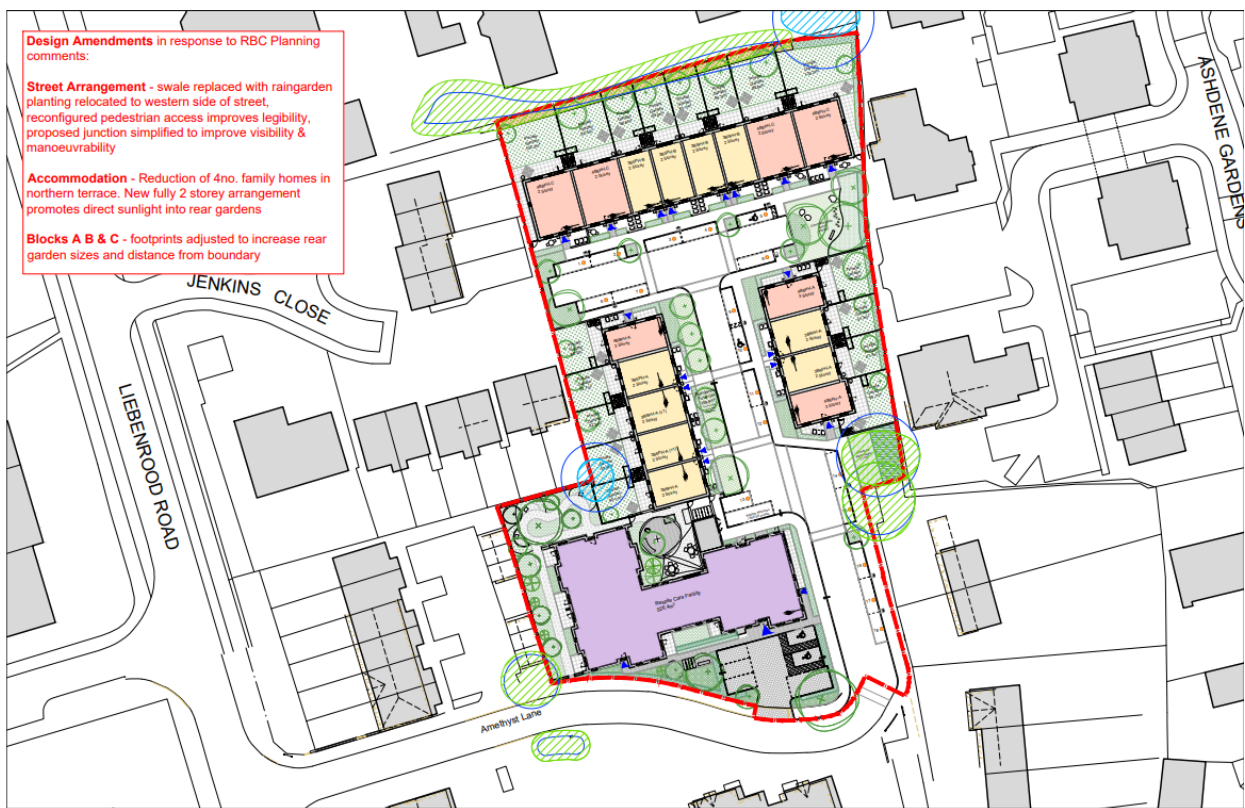
10 Conclusion & Planning Balance

- 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 there are substantial benefits in providing family sized accommodation on this site along with the provision of a replacement respite centre. The report does identify elements of harm, largely with respect to the modest private amenity space provision, loss of a category B tree, slight shortfall in car parking spaces and space needed to provide the ideal amount of tree planting and landscaping within the site. There

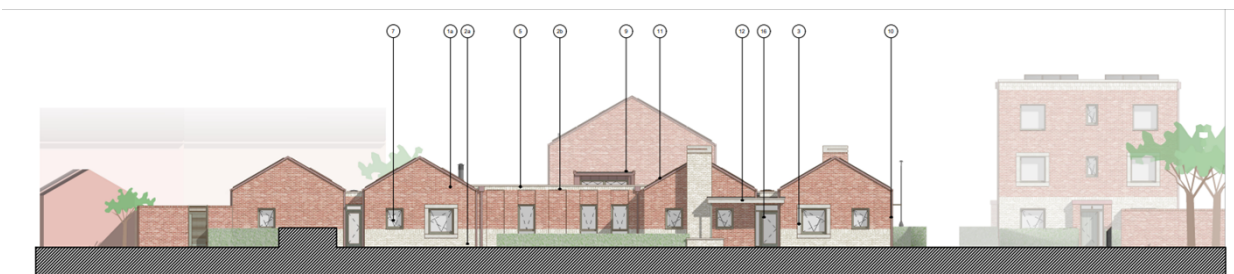
is a general concern that the proposals result in a tight layout of the site. This harm should therefore be considered against the benefits of the scheme.

- 9.3 A significant benefit is the proposed 100% affordable family-sized housing for which there is a critical need within the Borough. This, your officers advise, clearly outweighs the areas of harm identified. As such, it is necessary to secure all the dwellings as affordable housing. There is also a benefit of providing a replacement respite centre and a development scheme that demonstrates a good standard of energy sustainability.
- 9.4 On the basis of the above assessment, the application is recommended for Approval, subject to the recommendation above to include conditions, submission of further information relating to SUDS, BNG and satisfactory completion of the legal agreement.

Selected Plans:



Proposed site Plan



South Elevation 1

Proposed Respite centre



Proposed Block A



Proposed Block B



Proposed Block C