

COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 3rd April 2019

Ward: Abbey

App No: 181991/REG3

Address: ISIS Court, DeMontfort Road, Reading

Proposal: Conversion of redundant bin store, common room, back-office and lobby area to create a two-bedroom apartment.

Applicant: Reading Borough Council

Date validated: 19/12/2018

Target Date: 13/02/2019

Extension of time date: 05/04/2019

RECOMMENDATION

GRANT Full Planning Permission, subject to conditions

Conditions to include:

1. Three year time limit for implementation
2. In accordance with the approved plans
3. Materials to match
4. Construction hours
5. Cycle parking provision to be provided in accordance with the approved plans
6. Bin storage provision to be provided in accordance with the approved plans
7. No parking permits - notify Council of postal addresses of units
8. No parking permits - notify future occupiers of the units
9. In accordance with Flood Risk Assessment

Informatives to include:

1. Terms and conditions
2. Need for building regulations
3. Construction and Demolition subject to Environmental Health
4. Positive and proactive
5. Potential contaminated land
6. Highways legislation - damage to highway
7. No parking permits

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The application site comprises of a three storey building containing 25 flats located between De Montfort Road and Lynmouth Road. There is an associated off road parking area that provides 24 spaces and to the north east the site borders the River Thames.
- 1.2 The application site is located within Flood Zone 3. The application building is not listed, nor is it located within a conservation area.

- 1.3 The application is to be determined at Planning Applications Committee because the Council is the applicant.

Site Location



2. PROPOSALS

- 2.1 The application seeks full planning permission for the conversion of the redundant ground floor laundry room, common room, back office and lobby to provide a two bedroom flat. The flat would be used by Reading Borough Council to provide additional affordable housing for local people.
- 2.2 The proposed flat would be located to the south of ISIS Court (alongside Lynmouth Road).
- 2.3 The planning statement submitted with this application notes that the laundry room is now unused as each flat within ISIS Court is equipped its own washing machine. The equipment located within the office (with the exception of the meter cupboard) is no longer in use and the lobby is also unused by residents.
- 2.4 A separate access for the meter cupboard will be added to the rear elevation and this will be externally accessible and the meter cupboard would not form part of the interior of the proposed flat.
- 2.5 Four additional windows are proposed to the ground floor, two of which would serve the bedrooms. The proposed development would not alter the existing situation in respect to access of the remainder of ISIS Court.

- 2.6 The proposed flat would have access to the existing communal cycle and bin storage facilities.

3. PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 82/TP/0796 - Residential Development - Conditional Consent issued 15th November 1982
- 3.2 82/TP/0797 - Residential Development - Conditional Consent issued 15th November 1982
- 3.3 83/TP/0828 - Residential development consisting of 8 flats, 8 maisonettes and sheltered accommodation comprising 9 besitting rooms and communal facilities - Conditional Consent issued 25th November 1983

4. CONSULTATIONS

- 4.1 Transport Development Control - No objection, subject to conditions to secure provision of bin and cycle stores and restricting access of future occupants to parking permits.
- 4.2 Environmental Protection - No objection, subject to informatives.
- 4.3 Environment Agency - The Environment Agency have been consulted on this application. No response has been received at the time of writing of this report, however any response received will be reported at the committee meeting.
- 4.4 Neighbour Consultation - Flats 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 & 23 ISIS Court have been consulted and two site notices have been displayed at the site. No responses have been received.

5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy Framework, among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'.
- 5.2 The application has been assessed against the following policies:
- 5.3 National Planning Policy Framework (February 2019)
- 5.4 Reading Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2008) (altered 2015)
Policy CS4: Accessibility and the Intensity of Development
Policy CS5: Inclusive Access
Policy CS7: Design and the Public Realm
Policy CS14: Provision of Housing
Policy CS15: Location, Accessibility, Density and Housing Mix
Policy CS18: Residential Conversions
Policy CS20: Implementation of The Reading Transport Strategy
Policy CS24: Car/Cycle Parking
Policy CS35: Flooding

- 5.5 Reading Borough Local Development Framework Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012) (altered 2015)
 Policy SD1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
 Policy DM4: Safeguarding Amenity
 Policy DM6: Affordable Housing
 Policy DM8: Residential Conversions
 Policy DM10: Private and Communal Outdoor Space
 Policy DM12: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
- 5.6 Revised Parking Standards and Design Supplementary Planning Document (2011)
- 5.7 Supplementary Planning Document - Residential Conversions (2013)

6. APPRAISAL

The main issues relevant to consideration of this planning application are:

The main issues are considered to be:

- (i) Principle of Development
- (ii) Design and impact on the character of the surrounding area
- (iii) Amenity of future occupiers
- (iv) Amenity of surrounding occupiers
- (v) Transport
- (vi) Affordable Housing
- (vii) Flooding
- (viii) Other Matters

(i) Principle of development

- 6.1 Policies CS18 and DM8 (Residential Conversions) and the Residential Conversions Supplementary Planning Document (2013) are both relevant to applications for residential conversions, albeit in the context of converting existing larger residential dwellings to flats. The current proposal is slightly different in that it relates to conversion of the existing laundry room, common room, back office and lobby to a two bedroom flat; however some elements of both policies provide a useful guide for assessing such applications.
- 6.2 Policy CS18 seeks that conversion proposals are assessed against their impact on the character and amenity, intensification of activity, loss of privacy and external amenity space and provision of adequate on-site car parking and bin storage which will be discussed in the later sections of this report.
- 6.3 Policy DM8 also seeks that residential conversions should incorporate at least one unit of family sized accommodation with a minimum of two bedrooms. As it is proposed to create a two bedroom flat, it is considered that in this respect the proposal would accord with Policy DM8.
- 6.4 Given the above and that the specific policy requirements referenced are intended to relate to conversion of existing residential dwellings to flats which is not the case with this application, the provision of a two bedroom unit in this location is considered to be acceptable in principle.
- 6.5 In general terms the proposal would also provide an additional dwelling to the Borough's housing stock, the principle of which would align with the broad objectives of Policy CS14 (Provision of Housing) in assisting meeting annual housing targets, whilst the location and accessibility of the site for residential

development is considered to accord with Policy CS4 (Accessibility and the Intensity of Development). There are no concerns regarding the principle of the loss of the existing laundry room or other rooms as they are unused by residents for various reasons (including the proliferation of personal washing machines).

6.6 The principle of the proposed conversion is therefore considered acceptable, subject to the relevant material planning considerations below.

(ii) Design and impact on the character of the surrounding area

6.7 Policy CS7 (Design and the Public Realm) seeks that proposals should maintain or enhance the character of the area of Reading within which they are located.

6.8 The proposed conversion would be within the footprint of the existing building. Only minor external alterations are proposed with the addition of four windows, the removal of the existing doors that serve the lobby and laundry room and the addition of a door to serve the meter cupboard.

6.9 The proposals are considered to be in accordance with Policy CS7 and Policies CS18 and DM8 (Residential Conversions).

(iii) Amenity of future occupiers

6.10 The proposed flat would have independent access via a front door out onto the existing hardstanding areas surrounding the site. Whilst the proposed bedrooms would be single aspect, all habitable rooms would be served by good size windows providing adequate access to daylight, outlook and ventilation. The proposed flat would be at ground floor level with windows facing into the communal courtyard to the north west and Lynmouth Road to the south east. The window to the single bedroom would be located behind the existing iron railings and set back 3.2m from the pavement. It is not considered that the proposed flats would be subject to unacceptable overlooking or privacy impacts.

6.11 At 62.5m² the flat is considered to be of an acceptable size for a two bedroom unit as this exceeds the 61m² minimum gross internal floor area stated in the Technical housing standards. Adequate sound proofing would be required to be achieved under the relevant Environmental Health legislation. The proposals are therefore considered to provide a suitable standard of residential accommodation for future occupiers in accordance with Policy DM8 and the Residential Conversions SPD.

6.12 Occupants of the flat would have use of the existing communal outdoor garden amenity space within the site. This is considered acceptable and is in accordance with Policy DM10 (Amenity Space) which states that access to communal amenity space is suitable for flats. The site is also located in close proximity to Christchurch Meadows and has good access to existing public recreation facilities.

(iv) Impact on neighbouring amenities

6.13 Policy DM4 seeks that development proposals should protect the residential amenity of existing and future occupiers.

6.14 Neither the conversion of the redundant rooms or the minor elevational alterations are considered to cause harm to the amenity of neighbouring owners and occupiers. Any noise issues that might arise as a result of the conversion

could be reasonably controlled by separate Environmental Health legislation. The proposal is therefore in accordance with Policy DM4.

(v) Transport

- 6.15 Policies DM12 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012, 2015 and CS20 and CS24 of the Core Strategy seek to address access, traffic, highway and parking relates matters relating to development.
- 6.16 The site is located in Zone 2 but close to the boundary of Zone 1, Primary Core Area, of the Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD. In accordance with the adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD, the development would be required to provide a parking provision of 1 space for the 2 bedroom unit.
- 6.17 The development site is located in an area designated as a Residents Parking Permit Area; Zone 03R. Under the Borough's current parking standards, this proposal may generate additional pressure for parking in the area. Therefore there should be an assumption that any future occupants of the proposed flats will not be issued with resident parking or visitor permits which would be covered by condition and an informative applied. This will ensure that the development does not harm the existing amenities of the neighbouring residential properties by adding to the already high level of on street car parking in the area.
- 6.18 On-site parking is not proposed for the new dwelling, which given the site's central location and that the proposed flat is to be used for those at risk of being homeless (making it less likely that there would be a demand for parking), the addition of a new unit of accommodation with no off road parking provision is considered acceptable in this specific instance. The existing on-site parking provision for the ISIS Court flats would be unaffected.
- 6.19 The occupiers of the proposed flat would have access to the existing bin and cycle storage that is situated within the communal courtyard. This is considered sufficient to satisfy policy requirements relating to the provision of cycle storage.
- 6.20 The proposals are considered acceptable in transport terms subject to the conditions referred to above in accordance with Policies CS20, CS24 and DM12.

(vi) Affordable housing

- 6.21 West Berkshire District Council and Reading Borough Council applied for a judicial review of the Secretary of State's Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) to Parliament in 2014 on changes to national planning policy. Those changes sought to exempt developments of 10 or less dwellings from planning obligations for affordable housing and social infrastructure contributions and to introduce a new measure known as the Vacant Building Credit.
- 6.22 The High Court handed down its judgment on the case on 31st July 2015. The High Court found in favour of the challenge by the local authorities and quashed the amendments to the NPPG. The Secretary of State appealed the judgment and the Court of Appeal has now quashed the decision of the High Court.
- 6.23 At its meeting of the Strategic Environment Planning and Transport Committee on 13th July 2016, the Council discussed the outcome of the Court of Appeal's decision on its challenge (the report can be found here:

http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/5651/Item09-SEPT-C-Report-on-C-of-Appeal-judgement-05-16/pdf/Item09_SEPT_C_Report_on_C_of_Appeal_judgement_05_16.pdf.

- 6.24 The Committee agreed the following as the basis for determining planning applications where Policy DM6 of the SDPD is relevant:

To implement Policy DM6 as currently adopted in the SDPD but excluding proposals that solely involve the conversion of an existing property, where the conversion involves the provision of 10 or less dwelling units (i.e. not HMOs), or the replacement of dwellings by the same number of replacement dwellings where there is no net increase.

- 6.25 The proposal is itself intended to contribute towards the Council's offer of affordable housing within the borough and as this is largely a conversion of an existing building (some very minor infilling of an undercroft area is proposed) the proposal would not be required to provide an affordable housing contribution in accordance with Policy DM6.

(vii) Flooding

- 6.26 The application site is located within Flood Zone 3; as such a flood risk assessment has been submitted with this application. As the application effectively relates to a change of use of the communal rooms to form a new residential unit, the sequential and exception tests are not considered necessary in this instance.

- 6.27 The floor level of the proposed flat would be sited above the 1 in 100 year flood level, but 640mm below the predicted 1 in 100 year plus climate change flood level. The applicant has advised that it would not be practical to raise the internal floor level above the climate change flood level.

- 2.28 As the proposed internal floor levels are below the 1 in 100 year plus climate change level, mitigation measures consisting of raised electrical points, sealing existing vents below the floor level and the integration of a combined floor/wall damp proof course, are proposed.

- 2.29 Policy CS35 states that planning permission will not be permitted for development in an area identified as being at high risk of flooding, where development would reduce the capacity of the flood plain to store floodwater, impede the flow of floodwater or in any way increase the risks to life and property arising from flooding. Given that the proposed development relates to a conversion of rooms within the existing building, and having due consideration to the mitigation measures outlined above, it is considered that the proposal would accord with Policy CS35.

- 2.30 A condition is recommended requiring the development to be carried out in accordance with the submitted flood risk assessment.

(viii) Other Matters

Environmental Protection Issues

- 6.31 The development site may be affected by contamination due to previous engineering works.

- 6.32 The applicant is responsible for ensuring that development is safe and suitable for use for the intended purpose or can be made so by remedial action.
- 6.33 An informative is recommended advising the applicant of the potential of contaminated land being present and that ground or enabling works may bring receptors into contact with the aforementioned contaminants.
- 6.34 A condition is also recommended to control construction hours and to prevent burning of materials on site in the interests of the amenity of surrounding occupiers.

Access

- 6.35 To facilitate the conversion to a residential unit, the existing doors that serve the lobby would be infilled and removed. However these are not the primary access to the other flats in the block and as such the proposal would not have any significant detrimental impact upon the residents of ISIS Court.

Community Infrastructure Levy

- 6.36 The application relates to conversion of existing floor space only and as such would not be liable for the Community Infrastructure Levy.

Equalities

- 6.37 In determining this application the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. 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 the particular planning application. In terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The proposed development would provide an additional unit suitable to add to the Borough's affordable housing stock and is considered acceptable in the context of national and local planning policy, as set out in this report. The application is recommended for approval on this basis.

Case Officer: Tom French

Plans and documents considered:

- Flood Risk Assessment, Report Ref.: 21701-01, Date: November 2018
- Planning, Design and Access Statement, Ref.: P17-2364, Date: November 2018

As received by the Local Planning Authority: 14/11/2018

Drawing Title: General Arrangement, Project Number: 16/037/08A, Rev. A

As received by the Local Planning Authority: 19/12/2018

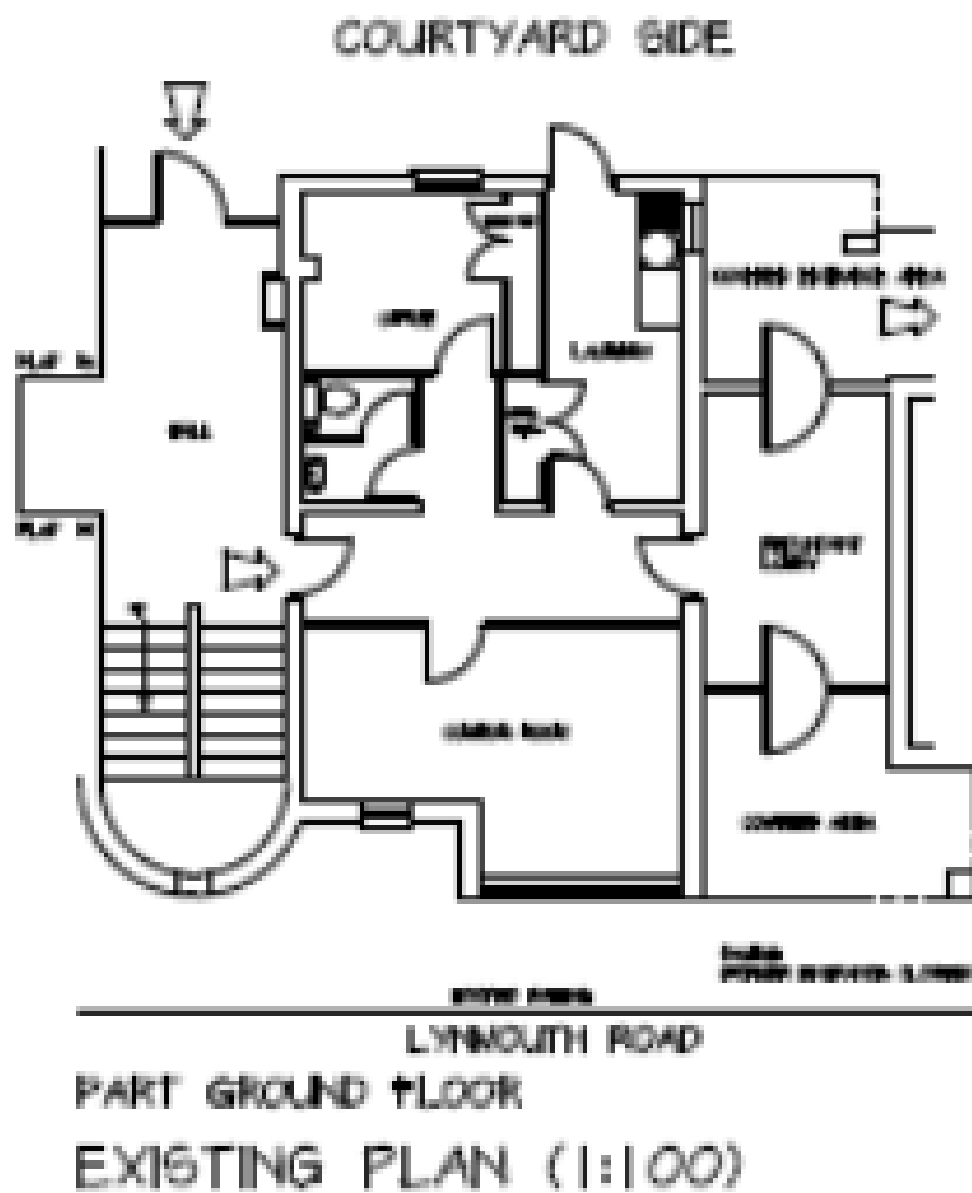
Existing Elevations



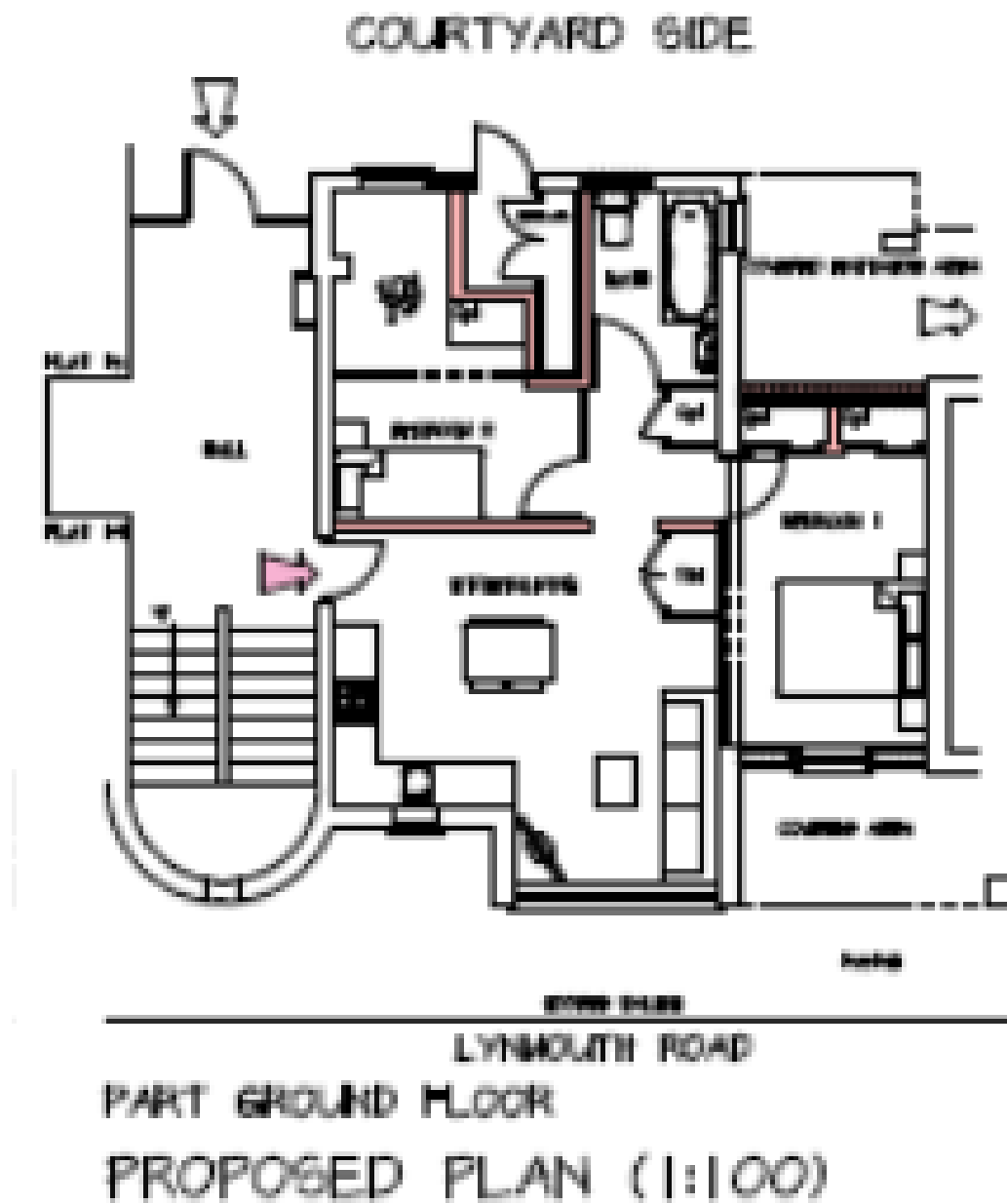
Proposed Elevations



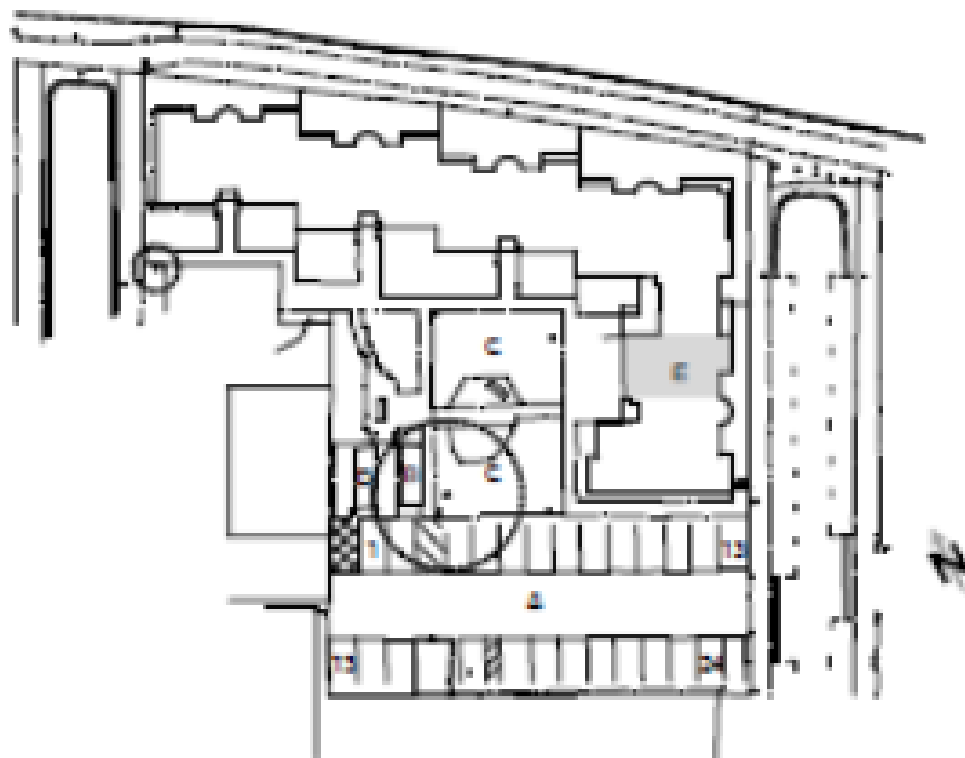
Existing Floor Plan



Proposed Floor Plan



Existing Block Plan



EXISTING BLOCK PLAN (1:500)

BLOCK PLAN KEY

25 NO EXISTING FLATS

A - PARKING

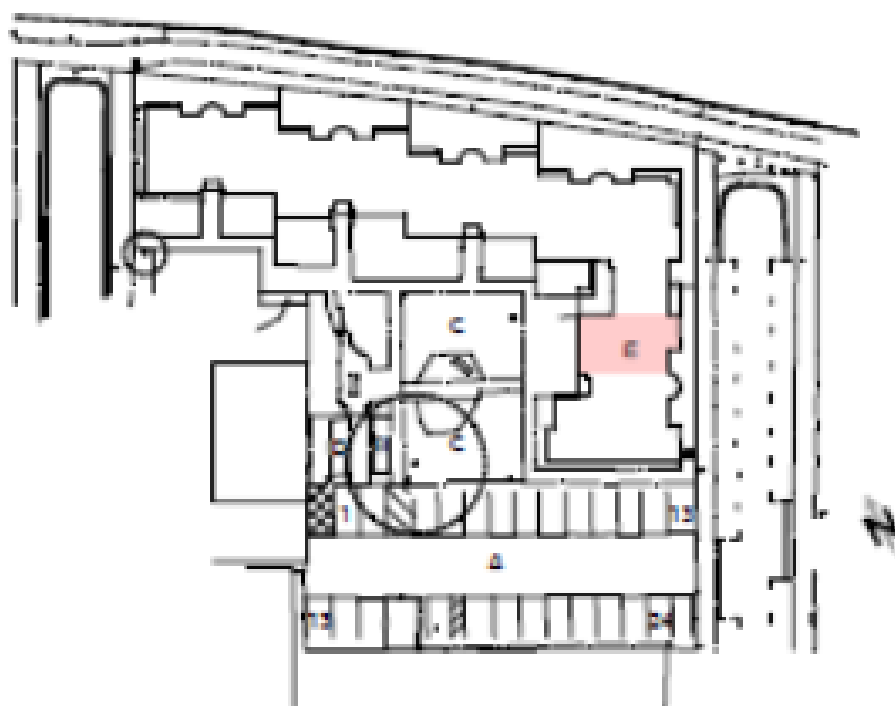
B - REFUSE STORAGE

C - AMENITY

D - CYCLE STORAGE

E - EXISTING LAUNDRY OFFICE/LOBBY

Proposed Block Plan



PROPOSED BLOCK PLAN (1:500)

- BLOCK PLAN KEY**
- 26 NO FLATS**
- A - PARKING**
- B - REFUSE STORAGE**
- C - AMENITY**
- D - CYCLE STORAGE**
- E - NEW FLAT IN EXISTING ENVELOPE**