

Ward: Minster

Appeal No: APP/E0345/W/18/3215708

Planning Ref: 171740/FUL

Site: 62-79 Armadale Court, Reading, RG30 2DF

Proposal: Extension of existing flat block with two additional storeys to accommodate 12 new apartments and provision of lift.

Decision level: Committee

Method: Written representations

Decision: Appeal dismissed

Dates Appeal Determined: 10 April 2019

Inspector: David Murray BA (Hons) DMS MRTPI

SUMMARY OF DECISION

The application site comprises a three storey block of 18 flats dating from the early 1980s, set in spacious grounds with its own private parking area, including a garage court. The main access is from Armadale Court, with a secondary pedestrian access to Bath Road.

The site has been the subject of a number of planning applications and appeals. In 2004, planning permission was granted for 4 flats on one additional storey. In 2004 and again in 2005, applications for development on the garages were refused and dismissed at appeal, and a further application was withdrawn in 2008. In 2009 an application for 8 flats in two additional storeys was withdrawn and then resubmitted in 2010 (10/00033/FUL) where it was refused planning permission, but was subsequently allowed on appeal. A scheme based on the appeal decision was subsequently approved under reference 131528/FUL but that permission has since lapsed.

Effect on Character and Appearance

The Inspector noted that it was common ground between the parties that the previously approved scheme with an additional storey plus accommodation in a mansard roof would have resulted in a building approximately 13.5 to 14 metres high whereas the appeal proposal for two complete storeys plus a roof would be of an overall height of 16.75m.

The Inspector found that the bulk of the appeal scheme would be materially greater than the previously permitted scheme and this bulk would be accentuated by the repetitive nature of the detailing and fenestration. The Inspector concluded that the bulk and scale of the building proposed would appear too large and overbearing and it would appear above its landscaped setting. He agreed with the Council that the scheme now proposed would dominate the street scene and would appear significantly out of place in the locality.

Turning to the impact on trees resulting from the proposed extended parking area, the inspector noted that a special no-dig and protective surface system had been proposed to protect tree roots. However, he considered that this did not overcome concerns about the proximity of the new spaces to the base of the mature trees or the extent to which the no dig system would cope with the change in ground level required. The Inspector concluded that it had not been demonstrated that the proposed scheme would avoid harming protected trees, which contribute to the character of the area.

Effect on Highway Safety and Traffic Flow

The Inspector noted that the number of parking spaces was agreed between the parties in general terms (24 for existing residents, 13 for the new flats) but that the Council was concerned that existing garages were too small and likely to be used for storage

rather than parking, and that around half of the proposed new spaces would be smaller than current standards. The Inspector decided that, whilst current parking standards should not be applied to older spaces (the garages), it had not been established that the parking needs of the 12 new flats could be accommodated appropriately and the proposals would be likely to add to the already high level of on-street parking and congestion in the area. He concluded that the proposal would not maintain a safe and functioning road system.

Provision of Affordable Housing

The Inspector found that the Council's evidence clearly shows that there is an on-going need for affordable housing and that this general policy requirement is economically viable. The Inspector noted that the scheme does not make provision for affordable housing either on or off site and the Appellant maintained that doing so would make the scheme financially unviable.

The Inspector noted that, even without affordable housing, the scheme would make a loss according to the appellant's figures. He concluded that the viability argument was not convincing and that the proposal would fail to meet affordable housing requirements.

HPDRS' COMMENTS ON THE DECISION:

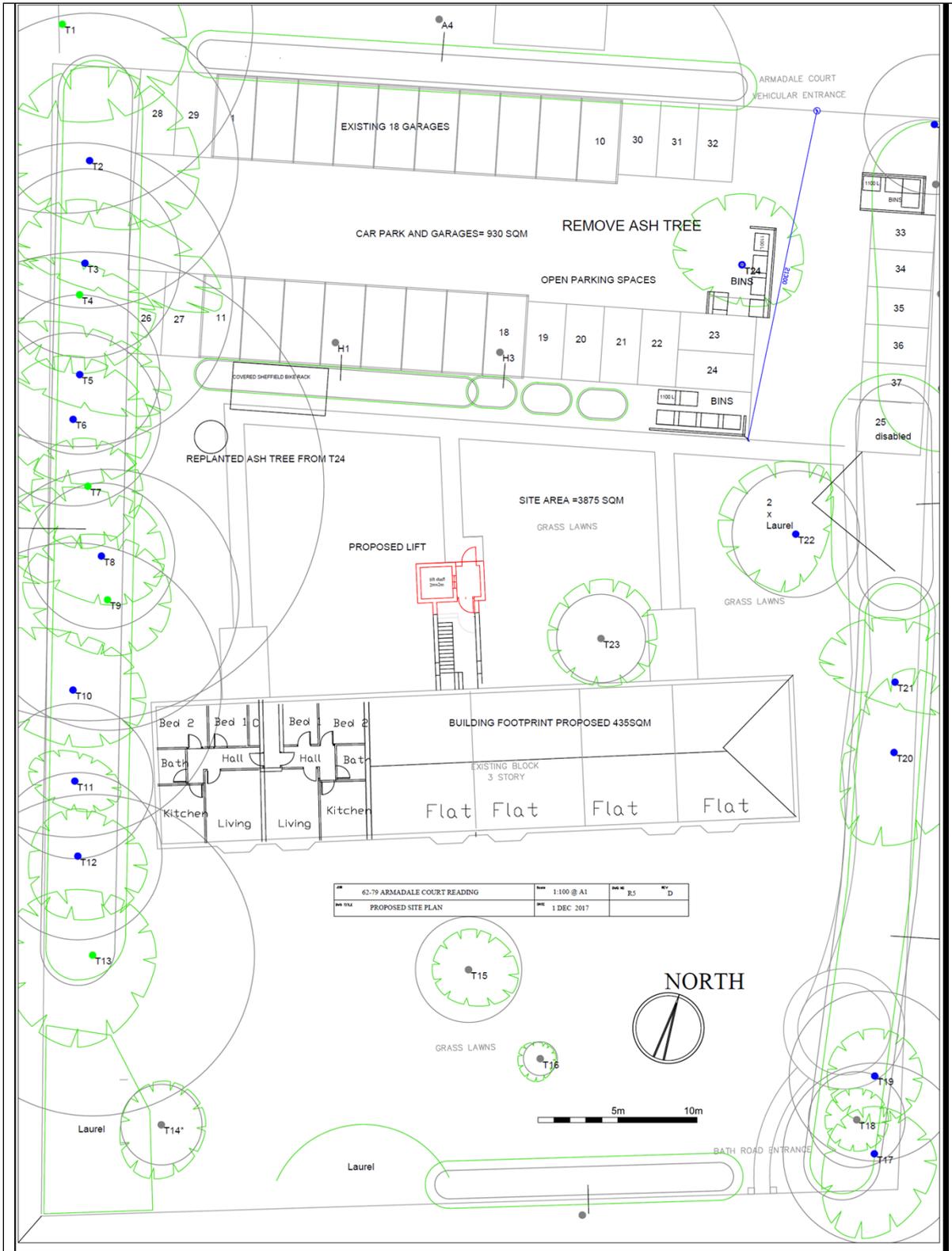
The Inspector made a clear and well-reasoned assessment of the harm of the proposal on the character of the area and the Inspector's support of the Council's approach to assessing the highways impacts of the proposal is welcome.

This is another good example of an Inspector supporting the Council's approach to securing affordable housing through smaller schemes.

Case Officer: Steve Vigar



Site Photograph (looking south across car park towards north façade of the building)



Proposed (refused) Site Plan

