

## COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 29<sup>th</sup> May 2019

Ward: Abbey

Application No.: 180876/FUL

Address: Battle Inn 2 Bedford Road Reading

Proposal: Demolition of public house (A4 use class) and erection of a part five/part four/part two storey building containing a single A1/A2/A3 use class unit at ground floor and 6 self-contained flats (C3 use class) above (4 x 1 bed & 2 x 2 bed units)

Date received: 25<sup>th</sup> May 2018

Application target decision date: 20<sup>th</sup> July 2018

Non-determination Appeal Hearing date: 25<sup>th</sup> June 2019

LPA Appeal Statement due: 31<sup>st</sup> May 2019

### RECOMMENDATION:

Had Planning Applications Committee had the opportunity to determine the planning application the reasons for **REFUSAL** of the application would have been as follows:

1. The proposal by way of its bulk and in particular its four storey massing directly on the Bedford Road frontage together with its block like form and roof design is considered to be a significant overdevelopment of the site which would appear as a visually dominant and incongruous addition to the Bedford Road and Oxford Road street-scene. The proposal would fail to adequately address the corner location of the site as it turns to Bedford Road and its forward siting and massing is considered to be harmful to and to fails to preserve the setting of the adjacent Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area. It is considered the proposal would be contrary to policies CS7, CS33 and RC5.
2. (Delegated to Officers sought, with input from the Council's Viability Consultant, to determine whether a nil provision of on-site affordable housing and a null financial contribution towards off-site affordable housing represents an additional reason for refusal of the application. See Update report.)

#### Informatives

1. Plans refused

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The site relates to an existing two storey (plus rooms in the roof space) vacant pub building located on the corner of Bedford Road with the junction of Oxford Road. To the east the building adjoins the three storey flat roof 'Richer Sounds' hi-fi shop building (no. 118a Oxford Road) and to the rear (north) is a large four storey flat-

roof building (Trinity Place) which contains sheltered housing. To the south, on the opposite side of Oxford Road, is a terrace of three and four storey Grade II listed buildings (no.s 149-169) whilst to the west on the opposite side of Bedford Road there is another three storey Grade II listed building (120-122 Oxford Road). The site is also located directly to the northern boundary of the Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area which runs along the middle of Oxford Road.

- 1.2 The adjoined building to the east (no. 118a Oxford Road) has planning permission for an additional storey and remodelling of its southern elevation (ref. 141780).
- 1.3 The site is located within the Reading Central Area as defined by the Reading Central Area Action Plan (2009) and within An Air Quality Management Area.
- 1.4 This report has been brought to Planning Applications Committee because the Applicant has lodged an appeal with the Planning Inspectorate against the Local Planning Authority's (LPA's) non-determination of the application. The planning application was submitted to the LPA on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2018 and the target decision date was 20<sup>th</sup> July 2018.
- 1.5 As part of the application, the applicant submitted and paid for a viability appraisal review by the Local Planning Authority to justify a zero/nil non policy compliant affordable housing offer. The applicant was advised that the viability review process would be likely to take the application beyond the target determination date (as with the majority of cases where a viability review is required).
- 1.6 On 10<sup>th</sup> August 2018, shortly after the target decision date of 20<sup>th</sup> July 2018, the applicant submitted an appeal against the non-determination of the application without agreeing to an extension of time. Given the applicant had paid the Council Valuations Officer's fee for review of the viability appraisal it was not considered reasonable to refuse the application once the target decision date has been passed without receiving the Valuations Officer's comments on the application.
- 1.7 The appeal was only validated by the Planning Inspectorate on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2019 due to a significant backlog of appeals. Given the length of time it has taken for the appeal to be validated by the Planning Inspectorate it is likely that if the applicant had chosen to work with officers on the relevant issues, a decision on the application would have been reached before now.
- 1.8 Notwithstanding, this report sets out the assessment of the proposal and what the officer recommendation would have been had the LPA had the opportunity to determination the planning application. Once the Applicant lodged the non-determination appeal the LPA could no longer issue a decision on the application with this responsibility now with the Planning Inspectorate. This report will form the basis of the Council's Appeal Statement and the recommendation seeks agreement from Planning Applications Committee to the proposed indicative 'reasons for refusal' upon which the Council's case will be based.
- 1.9 Officers have agreed an extension of time with the Planning Inspectorate to enable the indicative 'reasons for refusal' of the application to be agreed with the Planning

Applications Committee. The Council's appeal statement is required to be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate by 31<sup>st</sup> May 2019 with the appeal hearing to take place at the Council Offices on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2019.



*Location Plan*

## 2. PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The application seeks full planning permission for the demolition of the Battle Inn public house (A4 use class) and erection of a part five/part four/part two storey building containing a single A1/A2/A3 use class unit at ground floor and 6 self-contained flats (C3 use class).
- 2.2 The single ground floor commercial unit is proposed to be a flexible A1 (shop)/A2 (financial and professional services)/A3 (Restaurants and Cafes). The ground floor unit would present shop front windows to both the Oxford Road (south) and Bedford Road (west) elevations. The Oxford Road elevation would be set back 7m from the street frontage, in line with that of the front elevation of the adjoining building at 118 Oxford Road, with the proposal retaining the existing forecourt area between the building and the road. There would be a single access point to the commercial units from the Oxford Road elevation. There would be a shared commercial and residential bin store at ground floor level access to which would be obtained via the residential entrance door, also from Oxford Road.
- 2.3 Six self-contained C3 residential flats are proposed at first, second, third and fourth floor level above the ground floor commercial unit. Four x 1 bed and two x 2 bed units are proposed which would be accessed via a single internal stair core to the eastern side of the building. No on-site vehicle parking is proposed but cycle storage is proposed at ground floor level.

- 2.4 To the Oxford Road frontage the proposed building would primarily be five storeys with the uppermost storey formed from a recessed mansard roof style element with dormer window projections. A section of the Oxford Road frontage of the building would step down to four storeys where it meets the boundary with Bedford Road, again with the uppermost storey formed from a mansard roof style element. The building would present a part four and part two storey elevation to Bedford Road with the building stepping down to two storeys with a flat roof across the entire rear (north) elevation where the building projects closer to Trinity Place reflecting the massing of the existing building. In terms of materials the building is proposed to be redbrick with slate roof. Windows and doors are to be metal with a dark grey finish. Low profile roof lights are proposed to the flat roof areas of the building.

### **3. PLANNING HISTORY**

#### 2 Bedford Road

- 3.1 950157/FUL - New front entrance and alterations to rear including new flat roof. Granted 17/08/95.
- 3.2 160113/PREAPP - Pre-Application advice relating to a retail use at ground floor and residential use at upper levels. 2x retail units totalling 70sqm GIA and 49sqm storage for existing use. 9 residential units of total 560sqm GIA. Pre-application advice given.
- 3.3 180012/PREAPP - Pre-Application advice relating to demolition of pub and replacement with a 5 storey building containing a ground floor retail unit and 9 x 1 bedroom self-contained flats. Pre-application advice given.

#### 118a Oxford Road

- 3.4 020195 - Non-illuminated shop fascia signage with name on burgundy background & high level plain burgundy fascia. Granted 20/12/02.
- 3.5 121717 - Two storey extension above existing shop. Withdrawn 05/03/13.
- 3.6 130602 - Additional floor to existing two storey retail unit (re-submission of 12/01946/FUL) and associated alterations to the front elevation. Granted following completion of s106 legal agreement 03/07/14.
- 3.7 141780 - Additional floor to existing two storey retail unit and associated alterations to the front elevation without complying with conditions 4, 13 and 14 of planning permission 130602. Granted following completion of s106 legal agreement 30/03/15.
- 3.8 150022 - Application for approval of details reserved by condition. (130602) Part Granted / Part Refused 15/06/15.
- 3.9 150542 - Fascia sign, projecting sign, window signage. Granted 22/07/15.

#### **4. CONSULTATIONS**

##### **RBC Transport Strategy**

- 4.1 No objection subject to conditions to secure submission and approval of a construction method statement, deliveries and servicing plan, bin storage plan, provision of proposed cycle parking and restriction on access of future occupiers to on-street parking permits.

##### **RBC Environmental Protection**

- 4.2 No objection subject to conditions to secure implementation of the proposed noise mitigation scheme, control of construction hours (0800 - 1800 Monday - Friday and 0900 - 1300 on Saturdays and not at any time on Sundays or Bank Holidays), submission and approval of a scheme for the control of construction noise and dust and a condition to secure submission and approval of a plant noise assessment should any additional plant equipment be required as part of the proposed ground floor commercial unit.

##### **RBC Ecologist**

- 4.4 No objection based on the bat survey submitted as part of the planning application documents.

##### **RBC Licensing**

- 4.5 No objection to a proposed A1/A2/A3 use in this location. Given the close proximity to existing surrounding residential properties and also those proposed as part of the development itself, recommended that the hours of use of commercial unit do not go beyond 11pm to prevent public nuisance issues.

##### Public Consultation

- 4.7 Neighbouring properties at 118A Oxford Road, Flats 1-3 120 Oxford Road, Flats 1-6 120A Oxford Road, Flats A-C (&) 153 Oxford Road, nos 155, 157, 159, 161, 163 and 165 Oxford, Flats 1-4 8 Goldsmid Road and Flats 1-24 10 Trinity Place were notified of the application by letter. Two site notices were displayed outside the building on Oxford Road and Bedford Road.

- 4.8 No letters of representation have been received.

#### **5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT**

- 5.1 Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special interest which it possesses.

- 5.2 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).
- 5.3 In this regard, the NPPF states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the Local Development Framework (LDF) (Core Strategy and Sites and Detailed Policies Document) 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).
- 5.4 Accordingly, the National Planning Policy Framework and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

**Reading Borough LDF Core Strategy (Adopted January 2008 - amended 2015)**

- CS1 Sustainable Construction and Design
- CS2 Waste Minimisation
- CS4 Accessibility and the Intensity of Development
- CS5 Inclusive Access
- CS7 Design and the Public Realm
- CS14 Provision of Housing
- CS15 Location, Accessibility, Density and Housing Mix
- CS16 Affordable Housing
- CS20 Implementation of the Reading Transport Strategy (Local Transport Plan 2006-2011)
- CS24 Car/Cycle Parking
- CS26 Hierarchy of Centres
- CS33 Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
- CS34 Pollution and Water Resources

**Sites and Detailed Policies Document - (Adopted October 2012, - amended 2015)**

- SD1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- DM1 Adaption to Climate Change
- DM3 Infrastructure Planning
- DM4 Safeguarding Amenity
- DM5 Housing Mix
- DM6 Affordable Housing
- DM10 Private and Communal Outdoor Space
- DM12 Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
- DM15 Protection of Leisure Facilities and Public Houses
- DM19 Air Quality

**Reading Central Area Action Plan (Adopted January 2009)**

- RC5 Design in the Centre
- RC6 Definition of the Centre

- RC7    Leisure, Culture and Tourism in the Centre  
RC9    Living in the Centre

Supplementary Planning Document: Affordable Housing (July 2013)  
Supplementary Planning Document: S106 Planning Obligations (March 2014)  
Supplementary Planning Document: Parking Standards and Design (October 2011)  
Supplementary Planning Document: Sustainable Design and Construction (July 2011)  
Supplementary Planning Document: Employment Skills and Training (April 2013)

#### Emerging New Local Plan

- 5.5    The LPA's new Local Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State on Thursday 29th March 2018 and public hearings of the document took place week beginning 25<sup>th</sup> September 2018. The examination process is still on-going and adoption is not anticipated until towards the end of 2019. However, the Government has not advised on the weight which can be attached to any such emerging documents and officers advise that the adopted policies of the Core Strategy and the Sites and Detailed Policies Document shall continue to function as the Development Plan for the purposes of Section 38(6) of the Planning Act. Officers advise that the new Local Plan continues (rolls forward) many of the themes of the current LDF documents, but that little weight can be attached to it at this time.

## **6.    APPRAISAL**

The main issues raised by this planning application are as follows:

- Principle (loss of A4 pub/proposed A1/A2/A3 and C3 residential uses)
- Design and Impact on the Character of the Area
- Amenity of Surrounding Occupiers
- Standard of Residential Accommodation
- Unit Mix
- Sustainability
- Transport
- Affordable Housing

### **Principle**

#### Loss of Public House

- 6.1    The proposal would result in the demolition of the existing vacant public house. The building itself is not listed, nor within a conservation area (although it is opposite the boundary with a conservation area and adjacent/opposite a listed buildings).
- 6.2    Whilst the Council has a specific policy (DM15) which seeks to prevent the loss of public houses, this relates to sites outside of the Reading Central Area only as defined by the Reading Central Area Action Plan (2009). Given the application site is located within the Central Area there is no specific policy requirement

relating to retention of public houses in this location, as the central area provides a wide range of pubs and bars.

- 6.3 Officers identify no planning policy conflict with the principle of the loss of the A4 public house use.

Proposed Ground Floor A1/A2/A3 Unit

- 6.4 The proposal seeks to locate a new retail use outside of the Primary Shopping Area. Policy RC6 seeks that new retail development within the Central Area should take place within the Primary Shopping Area as defined by the Reading Central Area Action Plan. The application site is located within the Central Area but outside the Primary Shopping Area. Paragraph 86 of the NPPF and Policy RC6 seek that a sequential test should be applied to planning applications for main town centre uses which are not in an existing centre, stating that 'main town centre' uses should be located in town centre, then in edge of town centre locations and only if suitable sites are not available should out of centre sites be considered.
- 6.5 The application site is located 260m west of the Primary Shopping Area and on one of the main transport routes in and out of the town centre. In accordance with the NPPF the site would be classified as an 'edge of centre' location (edge of centre defined as any location that is well connected and within 300m from the Primary Shopping Area).
- 6.6 On this basis, the application has been supplied with a retail sequential test to test whether there are any feasible alternative locations for the retail unit within the Primary Shopping Area. The proposed retail unit would be 106m<sup>2</sup> and located at ground floor level. The applicant has considered alternative sites of between 75-150m<sup>2</sup> which are situated at ground floor level. The sequential test was carried out in May 2018, shortly before the application was submitted and using local estate agents, identified two potential alternative sites but discounts these on the basis that the proposal is for a flexible A1/A2/A3 use whilst the alternative sites identified did not have planning permission for the full range of commercial uses proposed. There is generally a high turnover of properties within town centre locations and therefore the results a retail sequential test will only provide a snapshot in time. Officers acknowledge that the sequential test was carried out in the some time ago (May 2018) however, this was the same time that the planning application was submitted and it is therefore considered reasonable.
- 6.7 Officers are satisfied that the sequential test has been carried out to an appropriate standard and given the site's well connected location in close proximity to the Primary Shopping Area and the Oxford Road West District Centre Area and modest size of the retail unit proposed consider that the test has been passed. It is not considered that the proposed A1/A2/A3 unit in this edge of centre location would be detrimental to the vitality of the Primary Shopping Area or District Centre and the proposal is considered to accord with Policy RC6.



### Proposed C3 residential use

- 6.8 The National Planning Policy Framework (2018) encourages the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land) and seeks that all housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The accessibility of the site is considered acceptable for the proposed development (CS4 of the Reading Core Strategy 2008, altered 2015) whilst the proposal would align with the broad objectives of Policy CS14, in assisting in meeting the Borough's annual housing targets.
- 6.9 Therefore the principle of a mixed residential and retail development is considered acceptable, subject to the following material planning considerations.

### **Design and Impact on the Character of the Area**

- 6.10 The site is located in a prominent corner location at the junction of Oxford Road and Bedford Road. This is a busy junction on one of the main transport routes in and out of the town centre (the A329). The surrounding area contains buildings of a variety of architectural styles. The applicant's DAS states that in relation to this context, "Regrettably, although these [areas] include a number of interesting and valuable buildings, the excessive variation fails to create a visually cohesive environment".
- 6.11 The site is located outside of but directly adjacent to the Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area the edge of which runs along the centre of Oxford Road with the conservation area including the buildings fronting the opposite side of the road and beyond to the south. The Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area Appraisal (2004) identifies that Oxford Road is more varied in development form than the rest of the conservation area with more commercial uses but does note that the western part of Oxford Road within the conservation area includes the best quality of listed terraces and notes that these retain their quite plain original wrought iron railings separating small front garden areas from the road frontage. Oxford Road forms part of Character Area 4 of the Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area Appraisal which again notes the value of the listed terraces and acknowledges the negative addition of a number of modern shopfronts. The Appraisal also notes that the most predominant material along Oxford Road is red brick with welsh slates.
- 6.12 The existing public house building is a mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century Building of 2½ storeys with lower level outer extensions. The applicant's Planning and Heritage Statement incorrectly describes the building as 'semi-derelect' and "...the building is of no architectural or historic merit and is having a negative impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area". The building is presently vacant and in a poor state of repair and for this reason does not currently contribute positively to the character of the area or setting of the adjacent conservation area and listed buildings along Oxford Road. However, the building does present elements of pleasing architecture that is characteristic of

the listed terrace of buildings opposite the site on Oxford Road (no.s 149-169) and also on the opposite corner of Bedford Road at no.s 120-122 Oxford Road; such as pitched roofs, timber sash windows, deep window sills as well as a decorative trim below the eaves of the roof. With some refurbishment the building could become a positive contribution to the street-scene and the character of the adjacent conservation area and listed buildings. Officers disagree with the applicant's design and access statement (DAS) and heritage statement which dismiss the present building's value due to its current state of repair, as being of little architectural merit. The existing pub also presently presents a barrier and part screen to Oxford Road and the Conservation area for the more utilitarian Trinity Place block of flats to the rear of the site. If simply considering the demolition of the pub in isolation (without a replacement building), your officers advise that the loss of the building would have a negative impact on the site and character of the surrounding area and would harm views into the adjacent conservation area.

- 6.13 Directly to the rear (north) of the site is Trinity Place which is a large 4 storey 1970s flat roof brick building containing sheltered housing flats. This building is plain in design and monolithic in form and appears visually dominant relative to the application site and the streets it sit between. Adjoining the application site to the east is no. 118a Oxford Road which is a three storey flat roof retail unit with ground floor shop front and glazed façade fronting Oxford Road to the first floor. This building also has planning permission (ref. 130602) for the addition of a second floor level of accommodation which would reflect the glazed appearance of the existing building (this permission has been part-implemented as confirmed by lawful development certificate ref. 171173, although there is little physical evidence of this). This building together with the Oddfellows' Hall which is a two storey flat roof community building adjacent to the east of no. 118 Oxford Road (on the east side of Trinity Place) are also not considered to be of particular architectural merit or to contribute positively to the character of the surrounding area.
- 6.14 Nearby buildings which do contribute positively to the character of the surrounding area include the Grade II listed building on the opposite side of Bedford Road at 120-122 Oxford which is a three storey red brick building with a front gable and side hipped roof which retains a setback of between 3.5 and 6m from the Bedford Road frontage. To the rear (north of this building) there is a larger block of flats which fronts much of Bedford Road. This is a newer two storey, red brick building with slate roof and rooms in the roof space which is set forward of the east flank elevation of no. 120-122 and much closer to the Bedford Road frontage. This development was implemented under planning permission ref. 07/00758FUL and listed building consent ref. 07/00759LBC which was allowed upon appeal under reference. APP/E0345/A/08/2067548.
- 6.15 The other buildings nearby which form the character of the surrounding area are the Listed terrace (Grade II) opposite the site at 149-169 Oxford Road which are located within the Conservation Area. These are a varied terrace of two storey red brick and gable/hipped roof buildings with lower ground floor basement accommodation. Many include residential accommodation to the upper floors

albeit a number incorporate modern shopfronts and signage at ground floor level. No.163-165 forms a three storey feature part of the terrace, also with a lower ground floor level and modern signage.

- 6.16 Also of note within the immediate surrounding area to the applications site is the Grade II listed Holy Trinity Church which is located further to the east along Oxford Road beyond the Oddfellows' Hall. This is a plain grey brick church oriented north-south with stone gable end capped by octagonal belfry and is the tallest building in the immediate surrounding area. Your officers are satisfied that any harm to the settings of the above Listed Buildings would be minor.
- 6.17 Any replacement building must be of high quality, reflecting the form and quality of the detailing and materials in areas local to the development site in accordance with Policy RC5. Policy CS7 seeks that development should maintain and enhance the character and appearance of the area in Reading in which it is located, responding positively to local context, reinforcing local distinctiveness and enhancing the historic environment of the Borough. Policy CS33 also requires that planning permission will only be granted for development which has no adverse impact on historic assets and their settings.

#### Massing and Siting

- 6.18 The proposal seeks to replace the existing public house building with a part five, part four and part two storey building. The replacement building would be adjoined to no. 118a Oxford Road. In terms of footprint, the proposed development would largely reflect the existing pub and continue to adjoin to no. 118a Oxford Road, whilst the separation distance to Trinity Place to the rear would remain as per the existing situation. The proposal would also maintain the building line and 6-7m set back from the road of the adjoined property at no. 118a. Such a set back from the Oxford Road frontage is characteristic of the other properties further to the east along this side of Oxford Road such as Oddfellows' Hall and the Holy Trinity Church. The properties to the west of Oxford Road and the other side of the Bedford Road junction also display a fairly consistent set back from the road, albeit these are shallower. Retention of this set back from Oxford Road is considered a positive feature of the proposed development which assists with its integration within the open character of Oxford Road.
- 6.19 The west flank elevation of the proposed development would also reflect that of the existing building in directly abutting the back of the footway on Bedford Road. Whilst historic maps indicate that as recently as 1960 buildings to this part of Bedford Road would have previously directly fronted the pavement, this was at a time when Bedford Road was narrower and the buildings fronting the road were small terraced houses. The present character of Bedford Road, which is now a wider and more significant road junction, is of buildings of a larger footprint which retain a set back from the road frontage. Trinity Place to the rear of the application site further to the north up Bedford Road, retains a 6m set back from the road frontage. No.s 120-122 Oxford Road on the opposite corner of the Bedford Road junction retain a minimum set back of 3.5m and the new flattened

development to the rear of no. 120-122 Oxford Road retains a 2m set back from Bedford Road. Whilst acknowledging that the public house building pre-dates the larger buildings referenced above which demonstrate a set back from the Bedford Road frontage, it is considered that a replacement building on the site, particularly one which is of significantly greater scale, should reflect the siting and prevailing character of the existing properties and evolved wider character of the street at this time.

- 6.20 At part five/part four storeys to the Oxford Road frontage the proposed building would exceed the height of the existing pub building which is two and a half/two storeys. The proposed building would, apart from the Holy Trinity Church located 50m to the east of the site, become the tallest building in the immediate surrounding area, exceeding the height of the existing Trinity House sheltered housing block to the rear of the site which presently forms a dominant feature around the Bedford Road and Oxford Road junction. Given the permitted additional storey of accommodation (planning permission ref. 130602) to the adjoined building at no. 118A Oxford Road, officers accept that there could be potential for a building of greater massing than the existing pub where the building adjoins no. 118A; providing that the massing and design are carefully designed.
- 6.21 However, as discussed in paragraph 6.19 above the west flank elevation of the proposal would directly abut the Bedford Road frontage and whilst an existing situation this is currently acceptable in the context of a much more modest two storey building which is more reflective of the prevailing architectural style. The proposed introduction of the four storey part of the building directly abutting the pavement edge would result in a visually dominant addition and would be significantly out of keeping with the prevailing character and urban grain of the surrounding area. Views south along Bedford Road towards the junction with Oxford Road presently present a pleasant vista towards the listed terrace (nos. 149-169) which forms the northerly edge of the Conservation Area; with the present pub forming an appropriate component of this view. However, officers consider that the introduction of a four storey structure directly on the pavement on the corner of this junction would be detrimental to this approach to Oxford and the junction and is considered harmful to and to fail to preserve or enhance the views into the conservation area surrounding the junction contrary to Policies CS7 and RC5 and the setting of the adjacent Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area. In short, this massing would appear to be extending the site and appear as an over-development and significant massing, to the detriment of both the Bedford Road and Oxford Road street-scenes.

### Design

- 6.22 Notwithstanding the massing concerns above, officers also have concerns for the design and form of the building, which would fail to deliver an appropriate design standard for this prominent corner location. Whilst a predominantly red brick approach is considered suitable in this location and is reflective of the materials found within the adjacent Castle Hill/Russell Street Conservation Area, the design contains a simplified form of architectural elements which as a whole, fail

to produce a satisfactory building form. The applicant's DAS does not clearly set the design cues for this development, much beyond the materials to be used (brick and slate). There appears to be little relief to the block/blocks and there is little to indicate any design quality or thought to the design, which would relieve the massing concerns identified above. The 'block-like' form of the development is more reflective of monolithic appearance of Trinity Place to the rear of the site and also the utilitarian appearance of the adjoining flat roof commercial building at no. 118a Oxford Road and the two storey flat roof Oddfellows Hall community building, which are the poorer architectural forms nearby. Whilst attempts appear to have been made to include echoes of Victorian design (for example the lessening of window heights further up the building), what is produced is a rather bland design which appears to be attempting to blend in to the varied architecture around it. However, in your officers' opinion, it appears to be failing to produce any notable architectural style.

- 6.23 When viewed from Bedford Road the flat roofed appearance of the proposed building where it steps down to two storeys as it projects closer to Trinity Place, combined with the flat roof form of the faux mansard-style roof of the four storey element, is considered to fail to deliver a suitable style of architecture. These elements do not mitigate the extended building mass either towards Bedford Road or upwards, when compared to the modest massing of the present building and would produce a jarring 'step' when viewed from the west along Oxford Road. The proposed upper storey of accommodation set within the mansard style roof is also considered to fail to 'turn the corner' in terms of the design. The lack of fenestration at this level presents a building which very much fronts Oxford Road rather than taking the opportunity to present a development in this prominent corner location which also addresses Bedford Road. Whilst the shop front turns the corner at ground floor level the scale and siting of the development directly abutting the pavement further exacerbates the failure of the proposal to address Bedford Road in design terms at roof level. A more sympathetic proposal could have taken a variety of measures to address both street frontages. Officers consider that the more recent development to the rear (north) of 120-120 Oxford Road has produced a new red brick development of design quality and siting suitable to its design and massing.
- 6.24 By contrast, the application proposal is considered to be ill-judged in terms of its execution. Its massing is considered to be harmful towards Bedford Road, the height of the proposal is not successfully mitigated by the application of an exposed flank of a crown roof, which is clearly not a mansard roof. The building as a whole lacks design cohesion and there are no design details to demonstrate the design suitability of what is proposed. Overall the design and massing is considered to fail to preserve the setting of the adjacent Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area or the character of this part of Reading. It is considered the proposal would be contrary to policies CS7, CS33 and RC5. There are further design details which are also of concern, such as the lack of a suitable front entrance door to Oxford Road.

- 6.27 Policy DM10 seeks that residential proposals are served by appropriate levels of private or communal amenity space. The policy acknowledges that flats in central Reading will not require the same amount of outdoor space as houses in other parts of the Borough. The proposal does not include any private or communal amenity space. This is not considered unreasonable on the basis of the constraints of the site and is not uncommon for town centre residential developments. The town centre location of the site is also such that it would be well served by public recreation facilities and in terms of amenity space provision no conflict with Policy DM10 is advised.

#### **Amenity of Surrounding Occupiers**

- 6.28 Policy DM4 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012, 2015) seeks to protect the amenity of existing and future occupiers. Policy CS34 of the Core Strategy (2008, 2015) seeks to protect and mitigate development from pollution.
- 6.29 The neighbouring property with most potential to be impacted upon by the proposed development is the four storey sheltered housing flats at Trinity Place to the rear (north) of the site on Bedford Road. The south elevation of Trinity Place is located 6m away from the two storey north elevation of the existing pub. The proposed development has been designed such that it retains this same two storey level of massing at the closest point between the two buildings. The massing of the proposal then steps up to four and five storeys at a distance of 12m from the facing elevation of Trinity Place.
- 6.30 A daylight/sunlight impact assessment has been submitted as part of the application. The south elevation of Trinity Place which faces the proposed development includes a central column of windows. These windows serve the small kitchens of the sheltered accommodation flats and are shown by the daylight/sunlight assessment to be most impact upon by the proposed development, albeit daylight levels would still be within BRE recommended levels of urban developments. Furthermore, as windows serving non-habitable rooms loss of daylight/outlook would be a material consideration. The other windows to the south elevation of Trinity Place impacted upon by the proposed development are living rooms windows located on the corner points of the building. Whilst these are habitable rooms each of the living rooms are dual aspect and also served by windows to the front (west) and rear (east) elevations of the building which would be unaffected by the proposed development. In this respect officers do not consider that the proposed development would result in any undue loss of light or outlook to the occupiers of Trinity Place.
- 6.31 Given the separation distances of the development to Trinity Place, siting of the existing pub and window placement and configuration to Trinity Place it is not considered that the proposals would result in any undue overbearing impacts.
- 6.32 In terms of any overlooking or loss of privacy the proposed development incorporates only high level windows to the north elevation facing Trinity Place such that no adverse impacts in this respect are considered to result. A

condition is recommended to ensure that the flat roof area to the two storey element of the proposed cannot be used a terrace/balcony/roof garden to prevent future adverse impacts upon the residential amenity of occupiers of Trinity Place.

- 6.33 The other closest residential properties to the application site are the flats at 120-122 Oxford Road to the west on the opposite corner of Bedford Road. At over 20m away across a busy road there are not considered to be any adverse impacts on these properties from the proposed development in terms of loss of light, overbearing impact or overlooking. The proposals are not considered to result in any adverse impact upon the adjoined commercial unit at 118a Oxford Road.
- 6.34 The proposed development is not considered to result in any significant adverse harm to the amenity of surrounding occupiers in accordance with Policy DM4.
- 6.35 Conditions are also recommended to secure an appropriate construction method statement and hours of working to protect neighbouring amenity during implementation of the proposed development in accordance with Policy CS34.

#### **Standard of Residential Accommodation to be Provided**

- 6.36 Policy DM4 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012, 2015) seeks that new development should not cause a significant detrimental impact to the living environment of new residential properties. Policy CS34 of the Core Strategy (2008, 2015) seeks to protect and mitigate development from pollution.
- 6.37 The proposal would provide room and residential units of adequate size. All units would be served by satisfactory levels of lighting and outlook. Where rooms to units to the rear of the site are served by high level windows to the north elevation facing Trinity Place the rooms are dual aspect and also served by full windows to the east and west flank elevations and in some instances roof lights as well. The only exception to this is to one of the bedrooms of the two bedroom flat located at third floor level which is served by two roof lights only. The roof lights are large and considered to provide an adequate level of daylighting and given all other rooms well served in terms of natural light this is not considered an unacceptable arrangement.
- 6.38 All units are considered to be served by acceptable levels of privacy. The proposed high level windows to the north elevation facing Trinity Place would prevent any undue overlooking from the flats in this building whilst the separation (over 20m) to the flats at 120-122 Oxford Road on the opposite side of Bedford Road would be sufficient to prevent any overlooking from this direction.
- 6.39 The site is located on a busy road near the town centre and future occupants could potentially be affected by traffic and other external noise. A noise assessment and mitigation scheme was submitted as part of the application. Environmental Protection Officers have reviewed the submitted information and are satisfied that the glazing and ventilation specifications proposed would

ensure that the noise levels within the flats would be within acceptable levels. Implementation of the glazing and ventilation specification can be secured by way of condition. Acceptable standard in terms of internal noise transmission between the residential units would be secured by way of building regulations requirements.

- 6.40 Environmental Protection Officers have also reviewed the air quality assessment submitted as part of the application and are satisfied that this demonstrates that air pollutant levels at the site meet objective levels and no additional mitigation is required in this respect.
- 6.41 Given the application proposes a either an A1, A2 or A3 use to the ground floor unit it is recommended that a condition to secure an additional noise assessment and mitigation scheme to should any plant equipment be added to the site, particularly if an A3 restaurant use of the unit is pursued. This would ensure future occupiers of the flats to the upper floors of the development as well as existing surrounding residential occupiers would be protected from any additional noise impacts from plant equipment. A Condition is also recommended to restrict the opening hours of any potential A3 use of the ground floor unit to 11pm to protect occupiers of the proposed flats and existing surrounding properties from potential noise and disturbance associated with this use.
- 6.42 A condition is also recommended to control deliveries and waste collection from the proposed ground floor commercial unit to between 8am and 10pm Monday to Saturdays and 10am to 6pm on Sundays and Bank Holidays on the interests of future and existing nearby residential occupiers.
- 6.43 The proposed development is considered to provide a suitable standard of accommodation and amenity for future occupiers subject to the above recommended conditions would accord with Policies DM4 and CS34.

#### **Unit Mix**

- 6.44 Policy CS15 of the Reading Core Strategy (2008, altered 2015) states that “Developments should provide an appropriate range of housing opportunities in terms of a mix of housing types, sizes and tenures, in accordance with the findings of a housing market assessment.” The supporting text to this policy states that the provision of at least an element of family housing in all developments is a priority, based on the findings of the Berkshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2007) (SHMA). The policy also states that the appropriate density and mix of residential development will be informed by the characteristics of the area in which it is located and accessibility.
- 6.45 The proposal is for town centre redevelopment and the proposed mix of 4 x 1 bed and 2 x 2 bed units is considered to accord with Policy CS15.

#### **Sustainability**



- 6.46 Policies CS1 and DM1 seek that proposals should incorporate measures which take account of climate change, however as a 'non-major' application for 6 residential units there are no specific thresholds which the development is required to meet other than those required under the relevant building control regulations. The applicant has submitted a sustainability and energy efficiency report which sets out a number of energy efficiency measures that have been incorporated within the development including window location to utilise passive solar gain, insulation materials which exceed building regulation requirements, low flow water fittings and restrictors and high efficiency gas boilers. It is considered that the proposals satisfactorily accord with Policies CS1 and DM1.

### **Transport**

- 6.47 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.
- 6.48 The site is located within the Zone 2, the 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.
- 6.49 In accordance with the adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD, the proposed development would be required to provide parking provision of 1.0 space per unit, therefore equating to a total of 6 spaces for the residential element. The design and access statement confirms that there is no on-site parking or vehicular access related to either the commercial or residential elements proposed. Trinity place, which is located to the north of the site provides residential accommodation with a private car park for its residents only. Transport Officers have advised that a car free development is acceptable in this close to centre location given the constraints of the site. Bedford Road and the surrounding road network all have parking restrictions preventing on-street parking, therefore, any overflow in parking would not affect flow of traffic on the classified road network. However, the conditions would be attached to any permission to advise the applicant and future occupiers that they would not be entitled to residents parking permits for the surrounding streets where parking is under considerable pressure. 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.
- 6.50 Bin storage is proposed internally at ground floor level towards the rear of the site. The Design and Access statement states that the existing roadside collection from Bedford Road, which served the licensed premises, will be maintained. The Transport statement states refuse vehicles will wait on Oxford Road or Trinity Place to serve the site. In order to remove the bins from the storage area, two sets of doors will need to be negotiated to gain access to the frontage of the site, a statement has been provided stating that wheeled bins will brought to a collection location at the appropriate time and returned to the storage area by the building management operatives. Transport Officers are satisfied that the 'managed' bin collection scheme proposed is acceptable in principle but seek

that a condition is attached to any permission to secure submission and approval of further details of this and the bin collections points location.

- 6.51 With regards to the retail element (A1/A2/A3) of the proposal, details of how this would be serviced has not been provided, however as stated above, due to the constraints of the site the provision of a separate service/delivery bay is not possible and it is accepted that the existing Public House would have been serviced in the same manner. A condition is recommended to secure submission and approval of servicing strategy.
- 6.52 In accordance with the adopted Parking SPD, the development is required to provide secure cycle storage and a minimum provision of 0.5 cycle storage spaces per flat within the building or within a lockable covered store. Plans indicate that six cycles can be accommodated by three "Sheffield" type cycle stands located externally with a further 6 bicycles stored in Sheffield type stands within the entrance to the residential part of the development. This is deemed acceptable and provision of the cycle parking can be secured by way of condition.
- 6.53 There are no transport objections to the proposed development, subject to the recommended conditions above, including for submission of a construction method statement. The proposal is considered to accord with Policies CS20 and CS24 of the Core Strategy 2008, 2015 and Policy DM12 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012, 2015.

#### **Affordable Housing**

- 6.54 As a scheme for 6 new dwellings the proposal would be required to provide a 10% on site provision of affordable housing or equivalent financial contribution in accordance with Policy DM6 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012, 2015) and the Affordable Housing SPD (2013).
- 6.55 A viability appraisal was submitted as part of the application to justify a non-provision of on-site affordable housing and a zero financial contribution towards off-site affordable housing elsewhere within the Borough. The viability appraisal is currently under review by the Council's viability consultant. Officers will update you on the findings of the viability review via an update report or verbally on the day of the Committee.

#### **Other Issues**

##### Ecology

- 6.56 Policy CS36 seeks that developments should retain, protect and incorporate features of biodiversity. The applicant submitted a bat survey of the existing pub building which is to be demolished as part of the application. This has been reviewed by the Council's Ecological Consultant who is satisfied that the building is unlikely to host roosting bats and due to its location is surrounded by habitat or

poor quality for use by commuting or foraging bats. There are no objections to the proposal on ecological grounds.

#### Community Infrastructure Levy

- 6.57 As new build residential development the proposal would be liable for the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The total liable floor space, as per the applicants, CIL Additional Information Form, submitted as part of the application is 400m<sup>2</sup>. On this basis CIL liability is estimated to be fifty nine thousand two hundred and ninety six pounds (£59,296).

#### Access

- 6.58 Policy CS5 seeks that proposals should be located, sited and designed to provide suitable access, to, into and within, its facilities for all potential users, including disabled people, so that they can use them safely and easily.
- 6.59 The site provides level access from the front forecourt to the ground floor and retail unit and lobby, bin and cycle store for the flats, however the flats themselves are all located above ground floor level and accessed via a single stair core. The applicant confirms that a lift is not proposed. Given the small number of units proposed officers are satisfied that non-provision of a lift is acceptable and that inclusive access to the ground floor retail unit alone is sufficient for the purposes of CS5 in this instance.

### **7. Equality**

- 7.1 In determining this application the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. 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 (including from consultation on the current application) that the protected groups would have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application.

### **8 CONCLUSION**

- 8.1 The proposal is considered to be poor in massing and design terms. Officers have considered the level of harm to the setting of the Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area and conclude that although harm to views into the Conservation Area will occur, such harm would be 'less than substantial'. As such and as per paragraph 196 of the NPPF (2019), this must be weighed against the public benefits of the proposed development as discussed within the other sections of this report. There are public benefits to the proposal, notably the provision of six new dwellings within a sustainable location. However, officers do not consider that this outweighs the significant shortfalls of the proposed development in terms of design, massing and impact upon the character of the surrounding area.

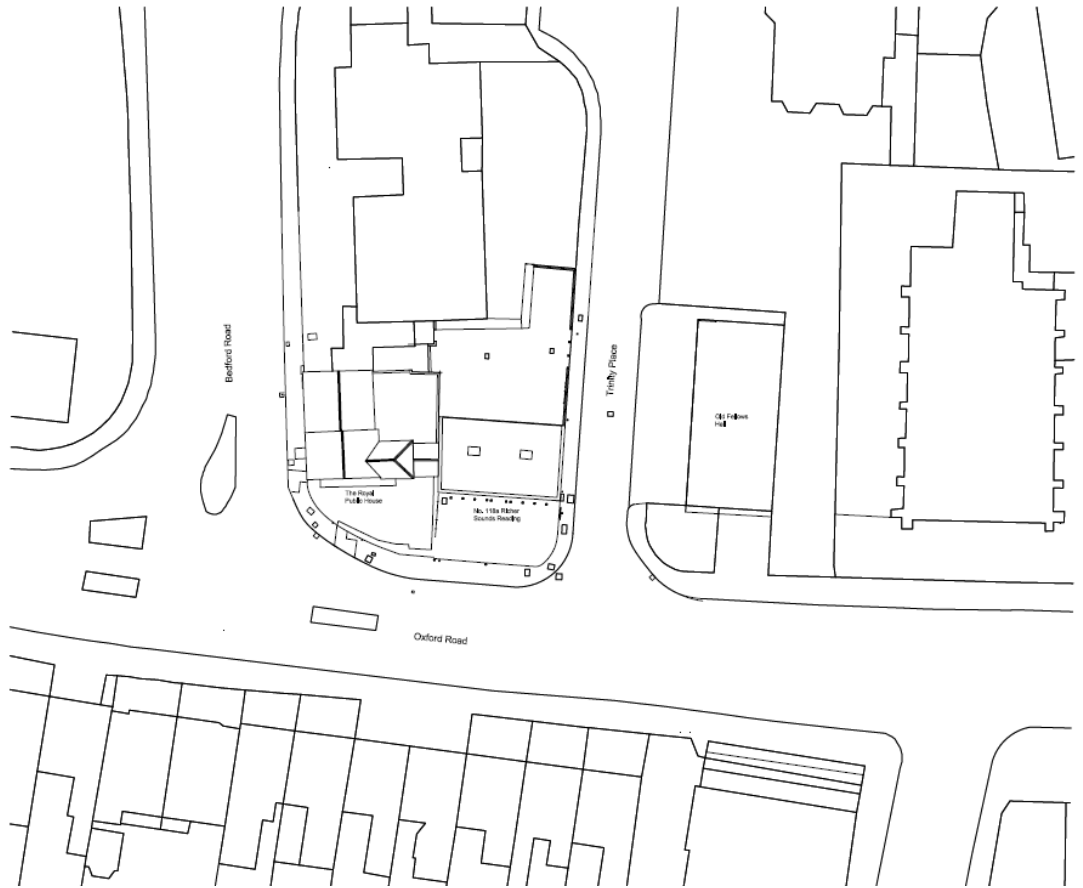
- 8.3 Officers shall update Councillors on the findings of the affordable housing viability review but expect to be able to report that the provision of zero affordable housing represents an additional reason for refusal of the application ahead of submission of the Council's appeal statement on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2019.

**Drawings Submitted:**

Drawing no.s:

- 15-035-01 rev C - Site Plan as Existing
- 310 rev E - Site Plan
- 15-035-04 rev C - Elevations as Existing 1
- 15-035-05 rev C - Elevations as Existing 2
- 321 rev H - Ground Floor Plan
- 322 rev H - First Floor Plan
- 323 rev H - Second Floor Plan
- 324 rev H - Third Floor Plan
- 325 rev G - Fourth Floor Plan
- 326 rev D - Roof Plan
- 327 rev G - South & West Elevations
- 328 rev H - North & East Elevations
- 330 rev F - Anxonometric View #1
- 331 rev F - Anxonometric View #2
- 332 rev F - Anxonometric View #3
- 333 rev F - Anxonometric View #4
- 334 rev E - Anxonometric View #5
- 335 rev E - Anxonometric View #6
- 336 rev F - Perspective Views
- 337 rev F - Contextual Views

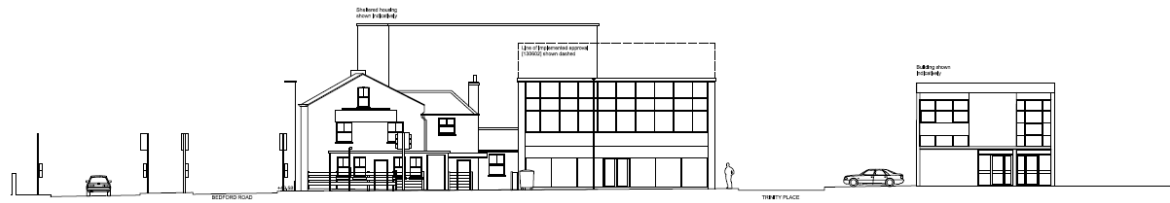
**Case Officer: Matt Burns**



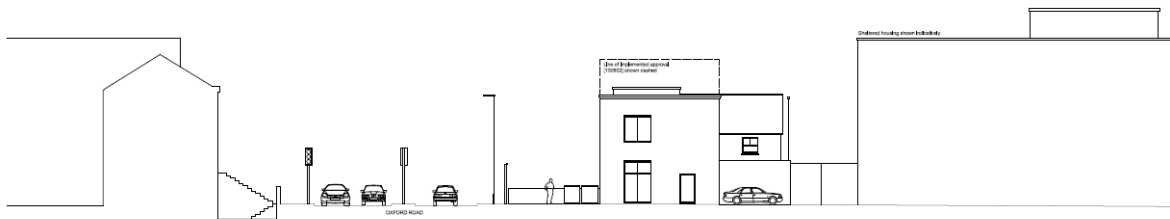
Existing Site Plan



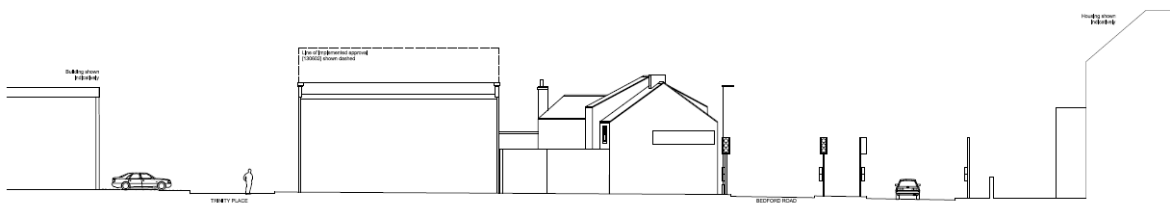
West elevation to Bedford Road



South elevation to Oxford Road

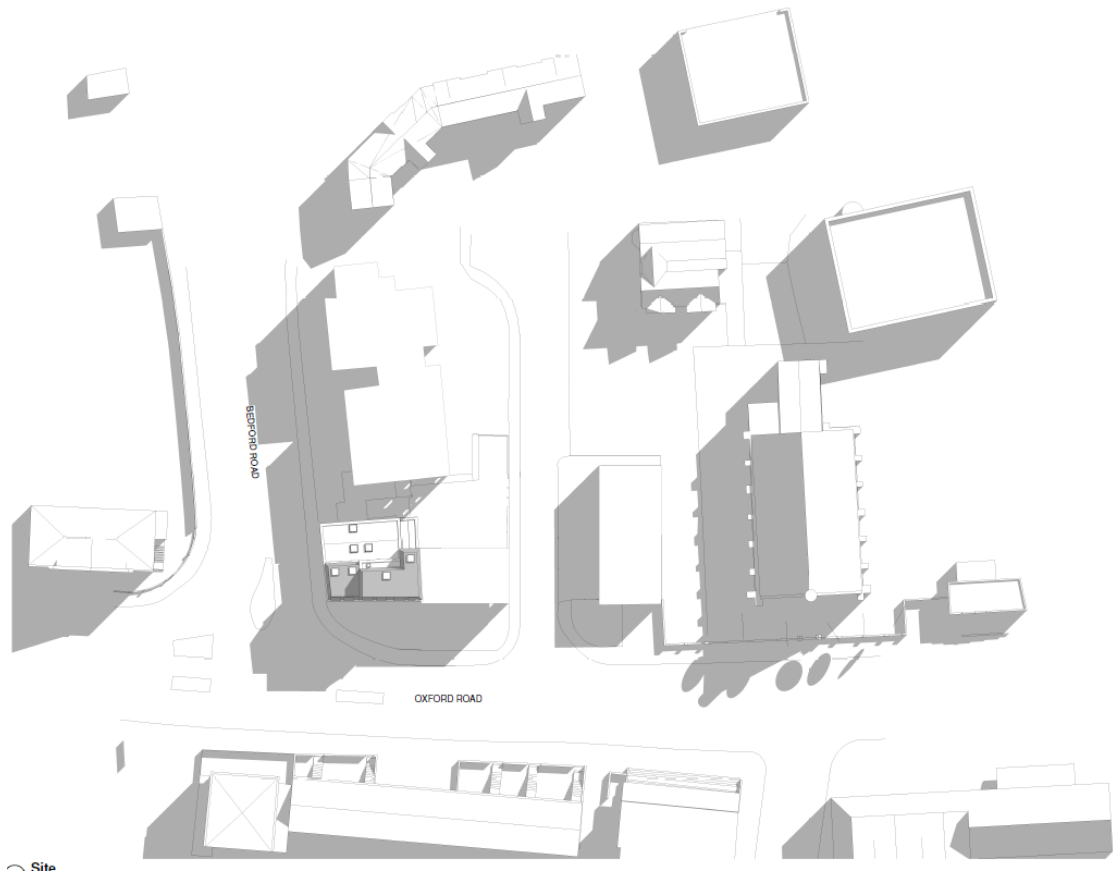


East elevation to Trinity Place

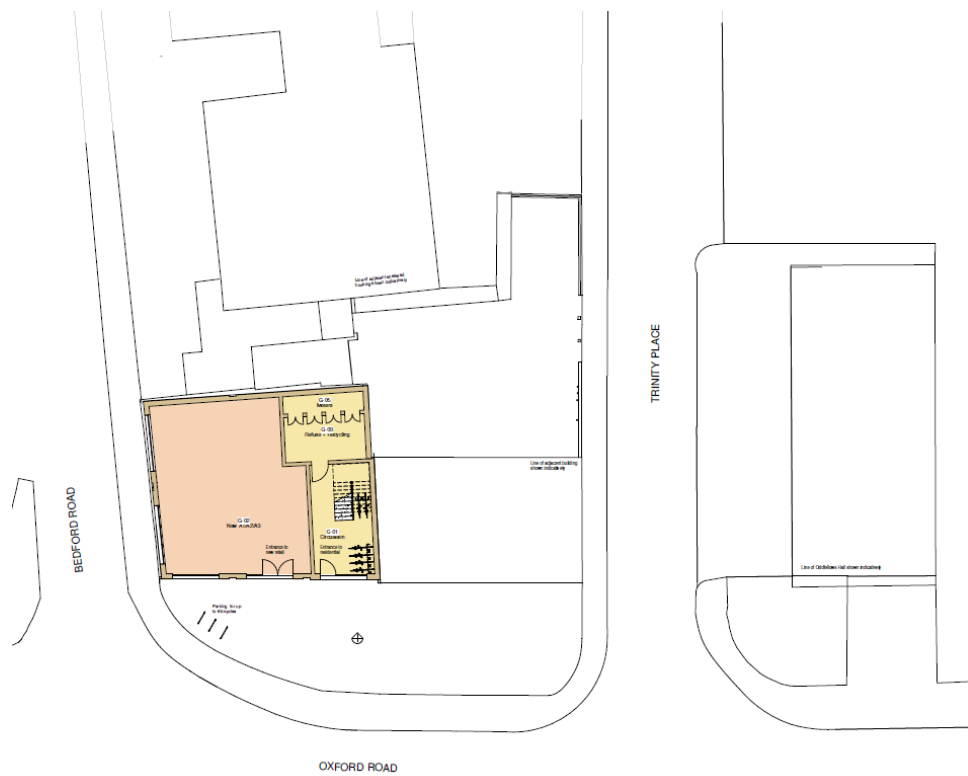


North elevation

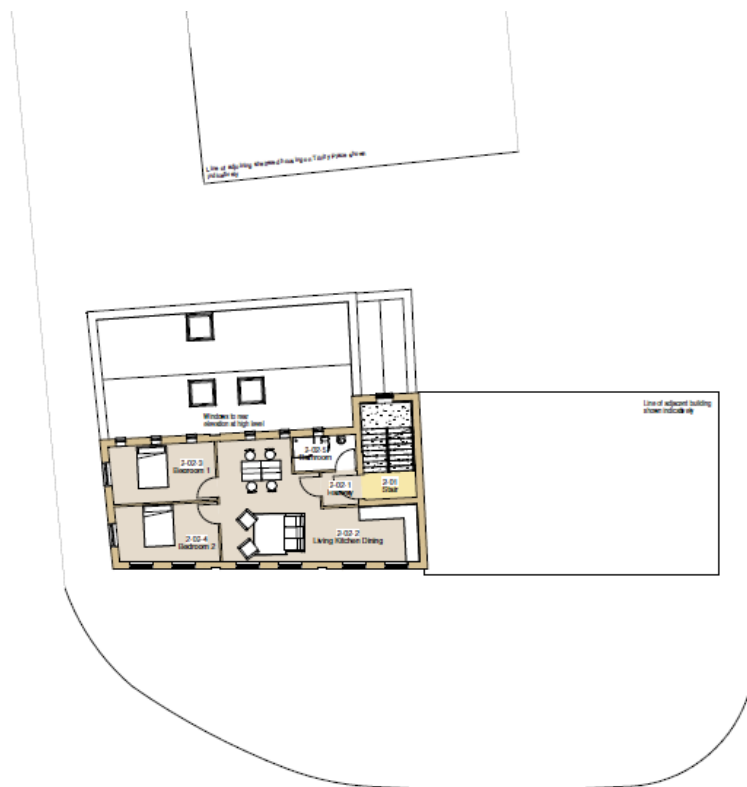
## Existing Elevations



Proposed Site Plan

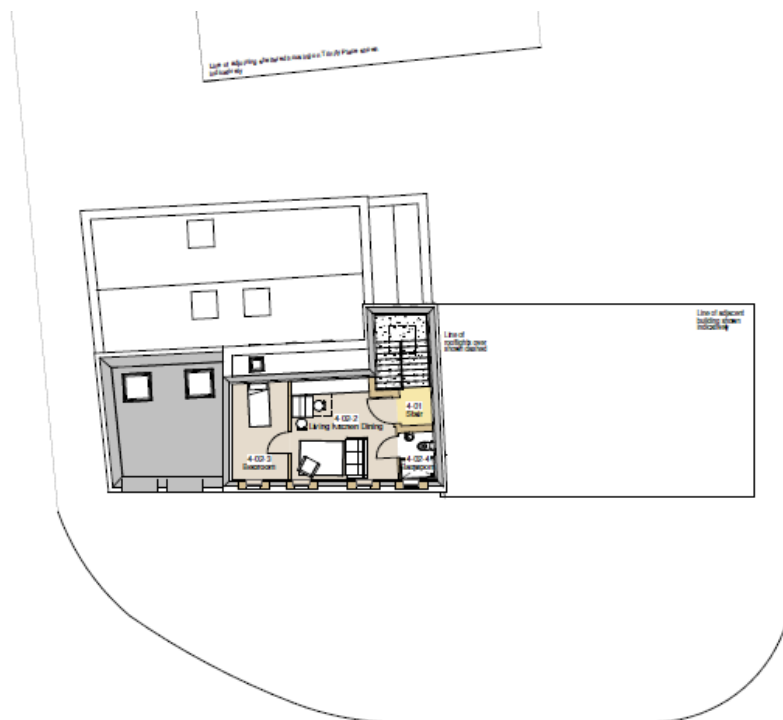
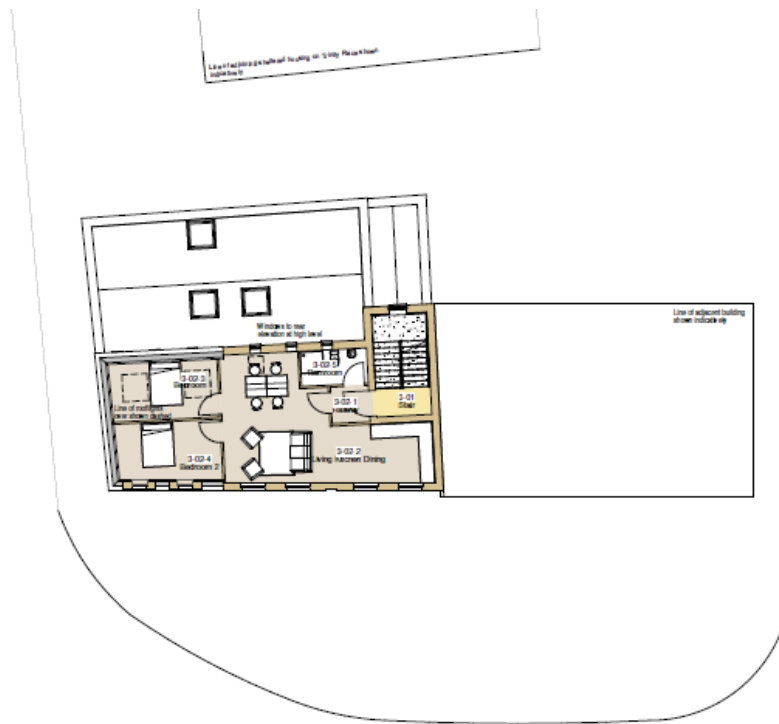


Proposed Ground Floor Plan

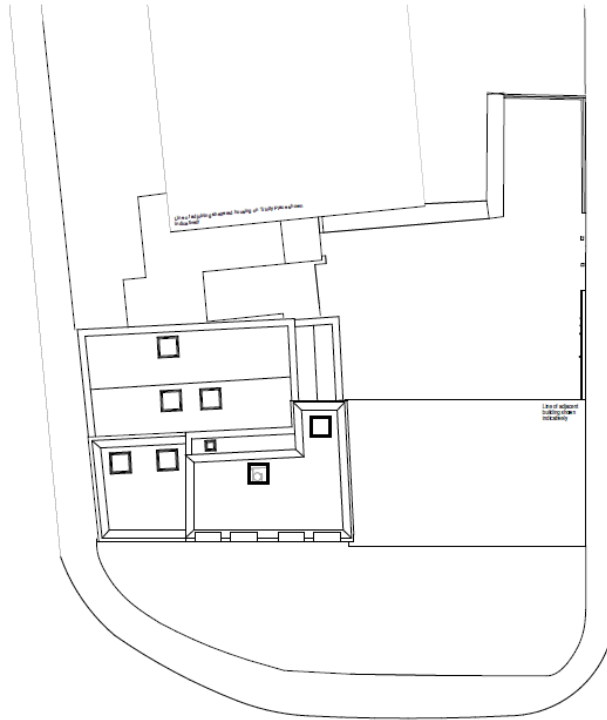


## Proposed First & Second Floor Plans





Proposed Third & Fourth Floor Plans



Proposed Roof Plan

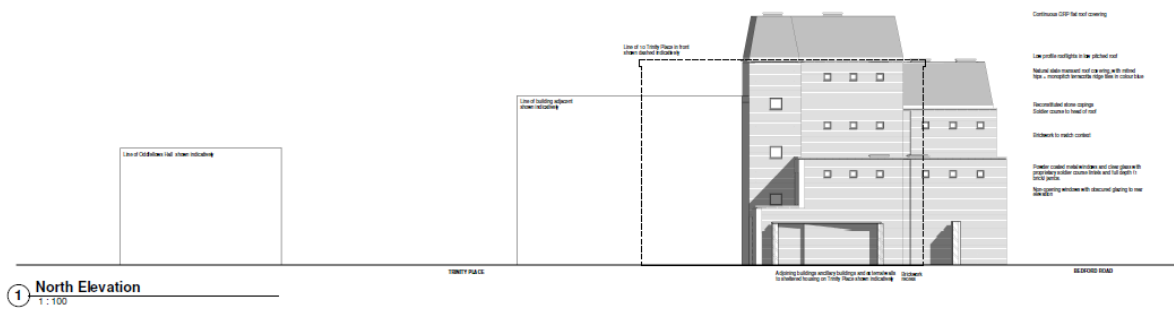


1 South Elevation  
1 : 100



2 West Elevation  
1 : 100

Proposed Elevations



## Proposed Elevations



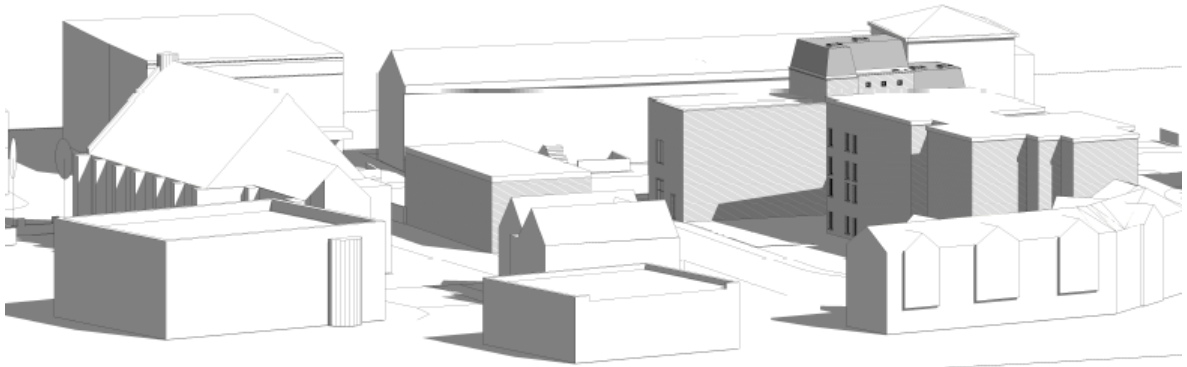
## Proposed Visual



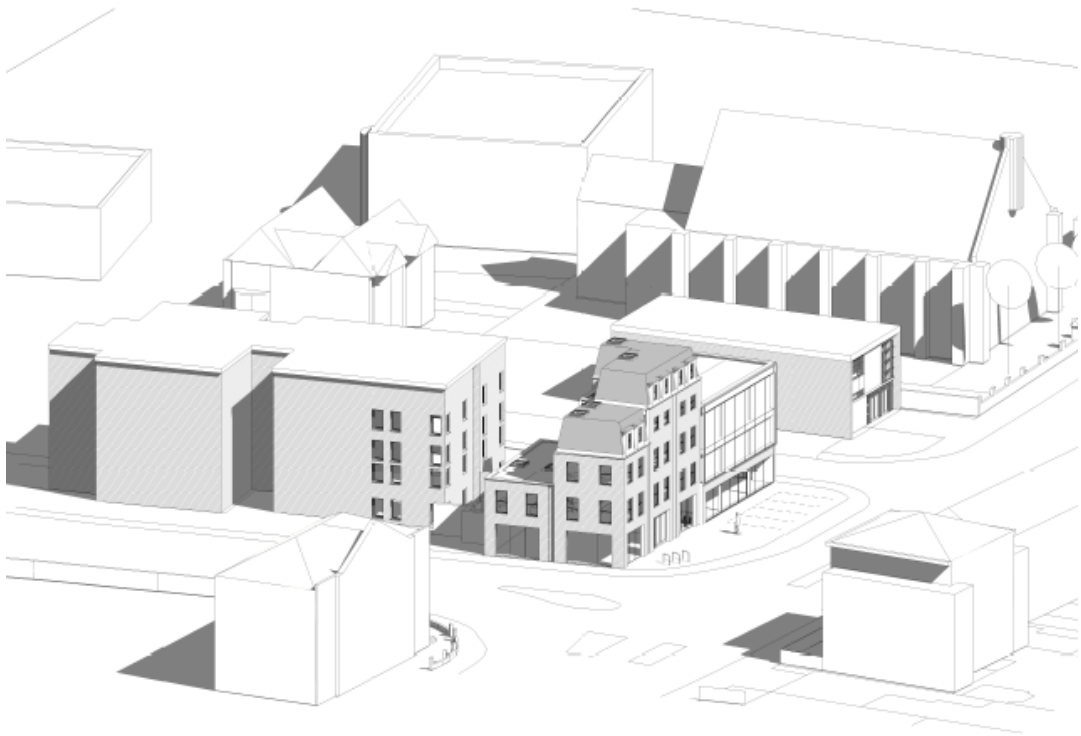
Proposed Visual



Proposed Visual



Proposed Visual



Proposed Visual



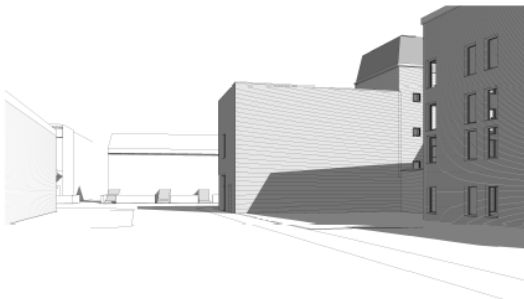
Proposed Visual



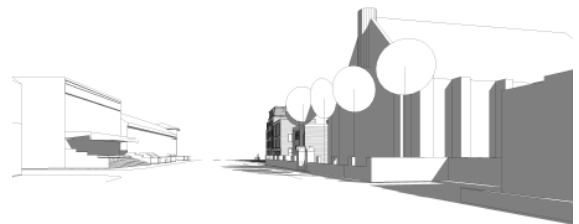
⑥ 3D View C



① 3D View A

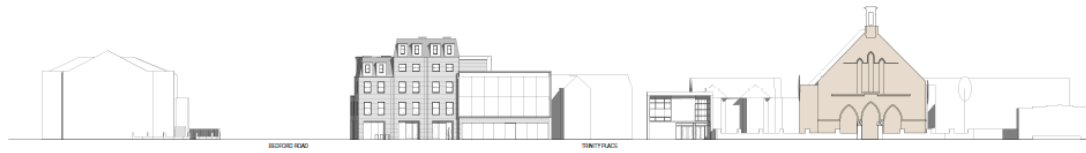


② 3D View D



⑤ 3D View E

Proposed Visuals



① Contextual Elevation - south  
1:250



③ Contextual Elevation - north  
1:250



② Contextual Elevation - west  
1:250



④ Contextual Elevation - east  
1:250

## Proposed Street-Scene Elevations