

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT - Application No. 191660/FUL

Address: 54-58 Queens Road, Reading

Proposal: Extension and alterations to roof to provide 9 flats, alterations to existing parking and access arrangements and minor alterations to existing building.

Case officer: Ethne Humphreys

Target Date: Originally 19/12/2019; EOT agreed until 07/5/2020

Site Description and Surrounding Area: The application site comprises a contemporary terraced of 3 storey buildings located on the south side of Queens Road, on the corner with Sidmouth Street. There is a private car park to the rear of the site.

The site is within an Air Quality Management Area. There are 4 trees on site; 1 on the Queens Road frontage, 2 along the Sidmouth Street Frontage and 1 at the rear of the site.

The site is located within the 'Reading Central Area' but outside of the 'Central Core'.

The site has approval for 20 residential units (4 x 2 bed and 16 x 1 bed) under the Prior Approval procedure (see relevant history section below).

Proposal: The application seeks planning permission for the retention of existing 54-59 Queens Road (which has prior approval for conversion to 20 units) and side/rear extension and alterations to the roof to provide 9 flats. The proposals also include alterations to the existing parking and access arrangements and minor alterations to existing building.

The proposals would provide 1 x 1 bed flat, 7 x 2 bed flats and 1 x 3 bed flats.

It is proposed to move the existing vehicular access southwest and the proposals incorporate 17 parking spaces (including 2 visitors and one dedicated disabled space).

Shared amenity space for all flats will be located on the roof and soft landscaping is also proposed.

The proposed roof extension would be constructed out of red stock brick and grey roof tiles to match the existing.

The application also includes the following alterations to the existing building:

- Replacement of two doors on the northern elevation with windows;
- Replacement of an existing door with a window and provision of a new door in the western elevation; and
- Infill of existing opening, removal of gate and provision of new window and door in the south elevation of number 56 and the west elevation of number 58

Plans Considered

15261-100 - Site Location Plan
 15261-101 - Existing Block Plan
 15261-102 - Existing Site Plan
 15261-103 - Existing Ground Floor and First Floor Plan
 15261-104 - Existing Second Floor and Attic Plan
 15261-105 - Existing Roof Plan
 15261-106 - Existing Elevations
 15261-110 Rev A - Proposed Block Plan
 15261-111 Rev A - Proposed Site Plan
 15261-112 - Proposed Ground Floor Plan
 15261-113 - Proposed First Floor Plan
 15261-114 - Proposed Second Floor Plan
 15261-115 - Proposed Third Floor Plan
 15261-116 - Proposed Roof Plan
 15261-117 - Proposed Elevations 1 of 2
 15261-118 Rev A - Proposed Elevations 2 of 2
 15261-119 - Sidmouth St Wall
 19236-BT1 - Tree Survey
 Received 16/10/2019

V15261_L01 Rev B - Proposed Landscape Plan
 V15261-R01 Rev B - Landscape Design Proposals
 Received 20/12/2019

Relevant Planning History

200055/FUL Change of use from B1a offices to allow for a flexible range of uses falling with B1a offices and D1 (education and training centres only). Permitted

180982/OPA Change of use of building from Class B1(a) (offices) to C3 (dwelling houses) to comprise 20 residential flats including 4 x 2 bedroom and 16 x 1 bedroom flats. Prior Notification under Class O, Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015. Prior Approval

Consultation Responses:

Transport: No objection subject to conditions and inclusion of S278 Highways Works in the S106 Legal Agreement.

Heritage Officer: No objection subject to condition.

Environmental Protection: No objection subject to conditions.

Natural Environment (Trees): No objection subject to conditions.

Ecology: No objection subject to condition.

Berkshire Archaeology: No objection subject to condition.

Properties at Kings Oak Court, Trinity Hall, 5 Sidmouth Street, 49 South Street, 50, 52 and 60 Queens Road were notified of the application and a site notice was displayed. No neighbour letters of representation have been received.

Summary of discussions with applicant/agent:

The agent was advised of concerns relating to the landscaping and transport. Further to revised plans/additional information, no further objection from the Transport or Natural Environment Officers subject to conditions.

Pre-application advice was sought/provided prior to the submission of this application, the advice of which has been followed which is welcomed.

Equality Act 2010

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

Relevant Planning Policy and Guidance

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 a listed building or its setting or any features of special interest which it possesses.

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'. For this Local Planning Authority the development plan is now in one document - the Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019), which fully replaces the Core Strategy, the Sites and Detailed Policies Document and the Reading Central Area Action Plan.

Accordingly, the National Planning Policy Framework and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

Reading Borough Local Plan 2019

- CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction
- CC3: Adaptation to Climate Change
- CC5: Waste Minimisation and Storage
- CC6: Accessibility and the Intensity of Development
- CC7: Design and the Public Realm
- CC8: Safeguarding Amenity
- CC9: Securing Infrastructure
- EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
- EN2: Areas of Archaeological Significance
- EN5: Protection of Significant Views with Heritage Interest
- EN6: New Development in a Historic Context
- 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
- H1: Provision of Housing
- H2: Density and Mix
- H3: Affordable Housing
- H5: Standards for New Housing
- H8: Residential Conversions
- H10: Private and Communal Outdoor Space
- TR1: Achieving the Transport Strategy

- TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
- TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging
- CR1: Definition of Central Reading Borough Council
- CR2: Design in Central Reading
- CR6: Living In Central Reading

Supplementary Planning Guidance

Sustainable Design and Construction SPD November 2019

Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD October 2011

Affordable Housing SPD July 2013

Section 106 Planning Obligations SPD April 2015

Appraisal

Principle of Development/Land Use Matters

The NPPF (2019) encourage 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.

Prior Approval has been given for the change of use of the existing building(s) (application ref 180982/OPA) and there would be no loss of office accommodation (under this application). Furthermore, it is considered that the principle of providing residential use at the site is acceptable in that this aligns with the broad objectives of Policy H1. More specifically, the proposals would assist the Borough in meeting its annual housing targets. The proposal, and mix of 1 x 1 bed, 7 x 2 bed and 1 x 3 bed flats set within the context of the location, size and nature of the site, is considered acceptable and providing a good mix for a flatted development. However, the proposals must be appropriate in all other aspects (which is detailed further below).

Design, Impact on the Character of the Area and Setting of Adjacent Listed Buildings

Policy CC7 requires all development to be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. The various components of development form include layout, landscape, density and mix, scale - height and massing and architectural detail and materials.

Policy CR2 seeks to secure appropriate relationships between buildings, spaces and frontages within the centre of Reading.

Policy EN1 states that historic features and areas of historic importance and other elements of the historic environment, including their settings, will be protected and where appropriate enhanced.

Paragraph 127 of the NPPF 2019 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

In terms of the surrounding area, No's 3-5 Sidmouth Street to the south east of the site is a three storey red brick building (s) and is grade II listed and No's 52-24 Queens Road to the west of the site is a two storey ashlar stone terrace which is also all grade II listed.

The host building (No's 54-58) consists of a three storey red brick office building with large gable projections on both the Queens Road and Sidmouth Road frontages. Given its location, it is a fairly prominent building on one of the busiest routes out of Reading town centre. It has no particular architectural interest, which has a negative effect on the setting of the grade II listed Queens Road terrace to the west. Indeed, the building is much taller, with contrasting materials, and whilst it does contain some architectural detailing in the form of windows surrounds and lintels, its overall effect is to dominate, and detract from, the setting of the listed terrace.

The main changes along the Queens Road elevation, adjacent the listed terrace, consist of the addition of two flat roof dormer windows, with no changes to the overall height of the building. The Council's Heritage Officer considers this to have a limited impact on the setting of the listed terrace.

The proposed side/rear extension would be large; however, it would be no higher than the existing building, would match the width of the current unit at No.58 and would not project forward of the main building line of the elevation along Sidmouth Street. In terms of its detailed design, the extension would replicate the built form with matching materials and window positions/detail and would afford some level of symmetry, albeit not complete given the scale.

Whilst the extension would bring the built form closer to the listed 3-5 Sidmouth Street there would remain sufficient distance (on the opposite side of the road) and the extension (and dormer windows) is not considered to significantly detract from the setting of this listed building. Furthermore, the red brick palette is considered appropriate, reflecting the historic use of materials found within the area, in particular the 3-5 Sidmouth Street.

Similarly, given the distance from the extension (and dormer windows) to the listed terrace to the west of the site, there would be no adverse harm.

It is acknowledged that flat roof dormer windows generally fail to improve the appearance of a building. However, the dormer windows proposed would be small in scale, set well below the main roof ridge and their diminutive appearance would reduce their overall impact.

The proposed roof garden terrace would not be readily visible from the main front elevations of the building and its recessed nature results in a subservient appearance which is acceptable.

The addition of roof accommodation and terraced areas is not uncommon within this part of Reading, with other larger additions to the roof of nearby buildings in the area ie Queens Wharf to the west. There is also evidence of a recessed roof addition at Havell House (62-66 Queens Road) whilst similar has also been permitted at No's 3-4 Wesley Gate (70-74 Queens Road) under application ref. 172162 as well as larger roof extensions at Clarendon House (59-75 Queens Road) under application ref. 180909.

Overall, the proposed development is considered to have a satisfactory design and appearance which would cause no significant harm to the character and appearance of the area, given the location and existing context of neighbouring properties. However, officers also acknowledge and consider that the amount of development proposed is the maximum permissible at this site, owing to the site constraints and surrounding characteristics of the immediate area. Given the above, in respect of both the proposed building itself and the nearby context, the proposal is considered satisfactory in design/heritage terms.

Given the above, the Council's Heritage Officer considers that any harm to the setting of the listed buildings would be limited. Furthermore, this harm would be less than substantial harm to the setting of the nearby listed buildings. As such and as per para 196 of the NPPF (2019) this must be weighed against the public benefits of the proposed development as discussed

within the other sections of the report. Notwithstanding, the Council's Heritage Officer has raised no objection subject to appropriate detailing and materials.

There is no issue with the proposed alterations to the existing building in design terms.

To ensure suitable quality of materials it is considered reasonable and appropriate to secure further details of the proposed materials by way of a suitable worded pre-commencement condition. With this condition secured and in light of the above, it is considered that the proposals would not adversely harm the character of the surrounding streetscape or give rise to an overly dominant or incongruous addition to the immediate area such to warrant a refusal.

Impact on Neighbour Properties

Residential amenity is assessed against Policy CC8 which requires developments to not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing properties in terms of: Privacy and overlooking; Access to sunlight and daylight; Visual dominance and overbearing; Harm to outlook; Noise and disturbance; Artificial lighting; Vibration; Dust and fumes; Smell; and Crime and safety.

Given the nature of the alterations to the roof and distance to nearby properties it is not considered to result in any material loss of light or overbearing impact. Similarly, given the position of the side extension adjacent Sidmouth Street in relation to nearby properties, it would not result in any material loss of light or overbearing impact to any nearby property.

The introduction of dormer windows on the existing building is not considered to result in any material loss of privacy over and above that of the existing first floor windows. Similarly, given the position of the windows and dormer windows on the extension in respect of properties on the opposite side of Sidmouth Road, no material loss privacy is considered to occur.

It is recognised that given the elevated position of the roof terrace, this could potentially impact on adjacent occupiers. There is a distance of 25m to the southern boundary of the site and 40m from the rear elevation of 49 South Street. Furthermore, the existing external areas of the properties on Livery Close are predominantly areas of parking with no amenity areas directly overlooked by the proposed roof terrace. It is not considered that there would be any significant material loss of privacy to any neighbouring property.

Furthermore, with regard to noise, the Council's Environmental Protection Team have raised no objection in this respect.

In addition to the above, a further condition is required in respect of protecting the amenity of neighbours during the construction period. A pre-commencement construction method statement will therefore be secured via condition and is required from a highway safety perspective too. Given the proposed units will be self-contained flats (rather than single dwellinghouses), they will not benefit from permitted development rights and therefore this also protects nearby occupiers in the future too. As such in overall terms, considering all nearby residential occupiers, no significantly harmful amenity impacts would occur, subject to conditions and in compliance with Policy CC8.

Amenity for Future Occupiers

Policy H5 (Standards for New Housing) seeks that all new building housing is built to high standards. Policy EN16 (Pollution and Water Resources) seeks to protect future occupiers from the impacts of pollution and Policy H10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space) seeks that residential developments area provided with adequate private or communal outdoor amenity space.

The proposed units would all meet the minimum size requirements set out in Policy H5 and all would have sufficient light and outlook. Whilst some bedrooms would be slightly irregular in shape, this is not considered to be harmful and room sizes would comply with Policy.

A communal roof terrace is proposed within the roofspace of the existing property. This is proposed to be available for use by residents of the proposed development, as well as the residents of the approved (by way of OPA) conversion of the existing building. In addition to the roof terrace, a private balcony will be provided for the flat within the roofspace of the proposed extension. Given the site's town centres location and proximity to nearby public recreation facilities this is considered acceptable. Indeed, the provision of amenity space is a benefit to the development.

Any views between the terrace and the private balcony would be at an oblique angle and not considered unacceptable.

The application site is located adjacent Queens Road, one of the busiest routes in and out of Reading Town Centre and a noise assessment has been submitted with the proposals.

Environmental Protection Officers have reviewed the noise assessment and are satisfied that the glazing and ventilation specification proposed within it would meet the required internal noise levels for future occupiers. Installation of the required glazing and ventilation can be secured by way of a suitably worded condition.

Appropriate internal noise insulation between future neighbour occupiers of the proposed development would be secured under building regulation requirements.

An air quality assessment has been submitted with the application which Environmental Protection Officers consider to satisfactorily demonstrate that future occupiers would be served by suitable air quality levels.

A contaminated land assessment has also been submitted with the applications which concludes that there is low risk of contaminated land being present. Environmental Protection Officers are satisfied that no further assessment is required in this respect however, a condition is recommended in the event of unexpected contamination.

Similarly, in terms of noise, vibrations, dust and fume considerations, comments from Environmental Protection confirms that during the construction phase, and subsequently, the proposals will be acceptable subject to a variety of conditions for any permission.

Therefore, in overall terms and having applied a critical planning balance to the consideration of the scheme as a whole, the units are considered to provide an overall suitable standard of accommodation, in line with Policies EN16, CC8, H5 and H10 in particular.

Transport

Policies TR1, TR3 and TR5 seek to address access, traffic, highway and parking relates matters relating to development.

The site is located to the north side of Queens Road (A329), a major transport corridor into Reading and located within the Zone 2, the primary core area but on the periphery of the central core area which is an area at the very heart of Reading Borough, consisting primarily of retail and commercial office developments, with limited residential. This area is well served by rail and bus links and also contains the largest proportion of public

The submitted Transport Document and Design and Access Statement state that the existing site access from Sidmouth Street is to be moved 6m to the south of its current location; this will result in the access being brought closer to the pedestrian refuge and the illuminated street signage that is adjacent to the proposed access. This is considered acceptable subject to a S128 agreement to secure the relocation of the access and adjacent signage prior to the occupation of the development. This has been secured through the S106 Legal Agreement.

The Council's Transport Officer is satisfied that the visibility splays of 2.4m x 43m can be achieved.

The existing parking provision is 10 spaces and a total of 15 parking spaces would be required for the entire development. This is provided, as well as 2 additional visitor spaces and as such this complies with the Council's current parking standards.

Further to the above, Queens Road and the surrounding road network all have parking restrictions preventing on-street parking. Kennet Side and Sidmouth Street consists of a mixture of double yellow lines and permit holder only parking bays and whilst the site is accessible to good public transport links and local shops, the parking demand created by this development should not be accommodated on the surrounding roads where there is significant demand for on-street parking. The site is located within an area designated as a Residents Parking Permit Area Zone 02R; Therefore, a parking informative would be applied to prevent any future occupants of the new dwellings from obtaining a residents or visitors parking permit for the surrounding residential streets.

Internal cycle parking on the ground floor is to be provided internally in the form of double stacked racking for 27 cycles a further double stacked racking 27 cycle spaces will be available on the first floor (a lift is available for use). This is in excess of the Council's current standards and is welcomed, acceptable and will be secured via condition.

Electric Vehicle Charging points are required of the scheme; however, it is considered that this can be dealt with by way of a suitably worded condition.

Bin storage is located near the proposed access point which is acceptable and will be secured via condition.

In the circumstances there are no transport objections to the proposed development subject

to conditions and informatives (Policies TR1, TR3 and TR5).

Natural Environment (Trees)

Policy EN14 seeks to extend the Borough's vegetation cover and that development should make provision for tree planting whilst Policy CC7 seeks proposal should include appropriate landscaping.

The site fronts onto Queens Road which is a designated treed corridor and the Borough Council is committed to protecting and enhancing the tree cover along these routes. This application requires the removal of three trees on site which the Arboricultural Report demonstrates are fairly poor / low quality specimens. The Council's Tree Officer has confirmed that there are no objections to the removal of these trees in order to facilitate the proposals, provided that the replacement planting results in an overall betterment of tree cover and quality on site. This can be secure by way of a suitably worded condition.

The application also proposes two new trees adjacent to Sidmouth Street. This is considered acceptable subject to the landscaping scheme including additional planting on site along the front boundary to the buildings adjacent to Queens Road, which will make a welcome long term contribution to the amenity of the Queens Road as a designated 'Treed Corridor'. As above, this can also be dealt with by way of a suitably worded condition.

Ecology

Policy EN12 seeks that developments should retain, protect and incorporates features of biodiversity.

An ecological report has been submitted with the application and the Council's Ecologist considers that this has been undertaken to an appropriate standard. The report concludes that the risk of the proposal adversely affecting bats (and other wildlife) is minimal, so long as vegetation clearance occurs outside of the nesting season. This can be secured by way of a suitably worded condition.

Given the nature of the scheme, it would also be appropriate to ensure that ecological enhancements are provided and this can also be secured by way of condition in compliance with Policy EN12.

Sustainability

The Design and Access Statement highlights that sustainability measures would be in relation to the internal fit out of the scheme and that all units will be provided with sanitary and catering equipment to minimise the use water and energy.

Notwithstanding the above, Policy H5 'Housing Standards' requires that all new build housing integrate additional measures for sustainability. In light of this conditions are recommended to ensure the development meets the following requirements:

- Higher water efficiency standards of 110 litres per person per day; and
- A 19% improvement over building regulations energy requirements

Although secured by planning condition, these new requirements will be administered through the Building Regulations. Confirmation of compliance will need to be submitted to the LPA to discharge the condition.

Archaeology

Policy EN2 states that development should protect features and areas of historic importance.

Berkshire Archaeology have advised that whilst a modest development, the site has an archaeological potential and may contain the buried remains of Reading's Civil War defences. As such and given the known archaeology within this area of Reading, there is no objection subject to condition in respect of implementation of a scheme of archaeological investigation to further assess the archaeological potential of the site in accordance with Policy EN2.

Affordable Housing

The proposal involves a roof top extension and side extension in order to provide 9 residential units and therefore a 20% contribution towards off-site affordable housing provision is required as part of the application in accordance with Policy H3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

The applicant has agreed to provide a Policy compliant contribution of £308,000 which has been secured via S106 Legal Agreement. With this secured, the proposal is considered to comply with Policy H3 and is a key tangible benefit to the scheme.

CIL

The proposal is a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) liable development. The applicant has provided the appropriate CIL Additional Information Form and an informative will be attached to the decision notice to advise the applicant of their responsibilities in this respect.

An estimate of the CIL amount is 761.7sqm (proposed GIA) x 2020 CIL rate of £157.18 per sqm
= £119,724.006.

Other Issues

In relation to planning conditions, in line with section 100ZA(5) of the Town and Country Planning Act (as amended), which came into force on 01/10/18, discussions have been undertaken with the applicant regarding pre-commencement conditions. The applicant has formally agreed to the recommended pre-commencement conditions via return emails on 27/04/2020 and 4/05/2020.

Conclusion

In overall terms the planning merits of the proposals (including the provision of an affordable housing financial contribution) are considered to be acceptable within the context of national and local planning policies, as detailed in the appraisal above. Ultimately, when applying an overall critical planning balance of all material considerations, the benefits are considered to outweigh the conflicts. As such, full planning permission is recommended for approval, subject to conditions and completion of the S106 Legal Agreement.

RECOMMENDATION:

Grant Planning Permission subject to conditions and the completion of a s106 legal agreement to secure a £308,000 financial contribution towards affordable housing and S128 Highways Works.