

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	200851
Site Address:	260 Shinfield Road, Reading, RG2 8HG
Expiry Date:	12 June 2020
Site Visit Date:	14 May 2020
Proposal: Full planning application for the proposed change of use from existing ground floor store room to self-contained flat with secure cycle shed and bin store.	

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Major Development Location: Shinfield
District Centre (Shinfield Road, Shinfield)
Affordable Housing Threshold
Landscape Character Assessment Area
Green Routes and Riverside Paths Consultation Zone
SSSI Impact Risk Zones
Contaminated Land Consultation Zone
Borough Boundary

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP3 – General Principles for Development CP5 – Housing Mix, Density and Affordability CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP7 – Biodiversity CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals CP13 – Town Centres and Shopping CP17 – Housing Delivery
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC02 – Development Limits CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB05 – Housing Mix TB07 – Internal Space Standards TB15 – Major Town, and Small Town/District Centre development TB17 – Local Centres and Neighbourhood and Village Shops TB20 – Service Arrangements and Deliveries for Employment and Retail Use TB21 – Landscape Character

	TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document

PLANNING HISTORY		
Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
64/50	Drainage and WC	Approved 14.03.1950
839/57	Bay windows	Approved 12.11.1957
1066/57	Store Shed	Approved 14.01.1958
R/156/61	Removal of 2 store sheds and rebuild 1 large store	Approved 07.09.1961
R/233/63	Extension to form storage accommodation with flat above.	Approved 31.10.63
14646	New alts. Shopfront	Approved 10.12.1980
20858	Widen existing vehicle access	Approved 08.03.1984

CONSULTATION RESPONSES	
WBC Environmental Health	Recommend approval with no conditions.
WBC Highways	Request Further Information.
WBC Cleaner and Greener	Recommend approval with conditions.
Reading Borough Council	No comments received.
WBC Drainage	Recommend approval with conditions.
WBC Growth and Delivery	See Report.

REPRESENTATIONS	
Parish/Town Council	No comments received
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	No comments received

APPRAISAL

Site Description:

The site is located on the western side of Shinfield Road and is designated within the Shinfield Road District Centre. It has a total site area of 500 square metres with a frontage of 12 metres to Shinfield Road. The site contains a two storey building that is currently occupied by a company called 'Choice Home Improvements' which specialises in fitting kitchen, bathroom and bedroom furniture at ground floor level, with a three bedroom flat at first floor level. The applicant states that some of the storage area on the ground floor is surplus to requirements as most of the items previously stored are now delivered directly to clients addresses.

At the front of the application site there is off street car parking, for four vehicles. To the north of the building is a vehicular access provided access to a hard surfaced area.

To the north of the application site is 258 Shinfield Road, which is a two storey building with ground floor windows facing the application site. Prior Approval (LPA ref: 150741) was given in May 2015 for conversion from office accommodation to self-contained flats. Beyond 258 Shinfield Road are a range of commercial uses associated with Shinfield Road District Centre. To the south of the application site is a residential property at 262 Shinfield Road. On the opposite side of Shinfield Road (to the east) are residential properties. To the rear (to the west) of the application site are residential properties on Lacewood Gardens.

Description of Development:

Planning permission is sought to change the use of part of the ground floor of 260 Shinfield Road to residential accommodation. The floor space proposed to be converted is currently used as ancillary accommodation, including a storage space, office and a kitchen. The proposal is to convert the space to provide a one bedroom flat with a living room, kitchen / dining room and bathroom. With two car parking spaces and an area of garden space to the rear of the building. A secure cycle shed and bin store are also shown. The proposed dwelling would be accessed via an entrance on the northern elevation, towards the rear of the site. 95 square metres of the existing A1 showroom is shown as being retained. New windows are proposed in the south and west elevations and new doors in the northern elevation.

Principle of Development:

The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy CC01 states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The site is located within settlement limits and as such the development should be acceptable providing that it complies with the principles stated in the Core Strategy.

Section 7.0 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that planning policies and decisions should support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation. Annex 2: Glossary of the NPPF states that reference to town centres or centres apply to city centres, town centres, district centres and local centres.

Section 12 of the NPPF states that the creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.

Policy CP13 of the adopted Core Strategy states that Wokingham and Woodley town centres, Lower Earley district centre, Shinfield Road district centre, Twyford village centre and Winnersh centre are suitable in principle to accommodate town centre uses. The roles of all existing and new retail centres will be protected and maintained, in addition to local shopping centres and parades that meet the day to day needs of the local community. Losses of retail from primary retail frontage will not be permitted in order to maintain vitality and viability. The site is designated in Shinfield Road district centre, as defined on the Council's Policies Map.

Policy TB15 of the Managing Development Delivery (MDD) Local Plan states that planning permission will only be granted for proposals for main town centre uses within district centres where they can demonstrate 4 criteria can be met. The proposal is not a main town centre use. Criteria 1 identifies major town, small / district centre boundaries. Criteria 2 identifies primary and secondary shopping frontages and primary shopping areas. Criteria 3 sets out that planning permission will only be granted for main town centre uses within district centres where they can demonstrate that:

- 3a) They are of a scale and form that is compatible with the retail character of the centre and its role in the hierarchy of retail centres
- 3b) How it retains or increases the provision of Use Class A1 (Shops) in primary shopping frontages and the provision of Use Class A1 or A2 (Financial and professional services) or A3 (Restaurants and cafes) or A4 (Drinking establishments) or A5 hot food takeaways in secondary shopping frontages
- 3c) They contribute to the provision of day and evening/night-time uses and are compatible with other uses
- 3d) They enhance vitality and viability.

The policy also states in criteria 4 that the Council will support the provision of office uses or self-contained dwellings in vacant or under used units above (officer emphasis) ground-floor town centre uses where a suitable/appropriate level of amenity for occupants can be provided. The Council will also support the provision of live-work units in appropriate locations.

The subject site is with a district centre but is not located within a primary or secondary frontage. The proposal is not a main town centre use.

In respect of 3a the scale and form of the proposed dwelling is considered to be acceptable.

The proposal would not retain or enhance the vitality and viability of the District Centre. The proposed dwelling is located on the ground floor of the District Centre. The existing gross internal floor space of the ground floor is approximately 167 square metres. The proposed dwelling is 72 square metres leaving 95 square metres to be retained in the existing use. A 43% decrease in the size of the unit would significantly reduce the size of the unit and result in the loss of retail floor space in the District Centre.

This could undermine the continued viability of the unit. The application states that the floor space is no longer required by the current occupier but it has not been demonstrated that the retail floor space is no longer required and reducing the size may limit future retail options at the unit in the future. No information to justify the loss of the retail floor space has been submitted. The long term viability of the unit for retail use has not been demonstrated.

Whilst the proposed ground floor plan shows the frontage of the unit adjacent to Shinfield Road to be retained and therefore consistent with 3c contributing to the provision of day uses. However, this does not outweigh the loss of 43% of the unit's retail floor space.

In respect of criterion 4 of policy TB15 which relates to the provision of self-contained dwelling, the criterion sets out that the Council will support the provision of self-contained dwellings in vacant or underused units above ground-floor town centre uses where a suitable/appropriate level of amenity for occupants can be provided. In this case it is stated that the floor space is no longer required by the current occupier, the proposed dwelling is located on the ground floor and as detailed below the proposed dwelling doesn't have a suitable/appropriate level of amenity.

On this basis the application is recommended for refusal, the proposal would significantly reduce the size of the existing retail unit and result in the loss of retail floor space within a district centre. It has not been demonstrated that the proposed change of use would enhance the vitality and viability and could undermine the continued viability of the retail unit. It is considered that the proposed change of use to residential (use class C3) would not be acceptable in principle, and contrary to the NPPF, Policy CP13 of the Core Strategy, Policy TB15 of the Managing Development Delivery (MDD) Local Plan and Borough Design Guide.

Proposed residential use

Policies CP1 and CP6 of the Core Strategy require that development be sustainable, by achieving zero carbon developments with a reduction in the need for travel and the promotion of sustainable transport. Policy CP9 of the Core Strategy states that the scale of development must reflect the existing or proposed levels of facilities, services and accessibility in the area.

The site is located in a Major Development Location and so the provision of residential units within this location is considered acceptable, in terms of accessibility to facilities and services.

Character of the Area:

Policy CP1 of the Core Strategy seeks to maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment. Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale, mass, layout, built form, height and character of the area and must be of high quality design. This is reinforced by other guidelines in the Borough Design Guide (Supplementary Planning Document), including criterion:

- R1 requires that development contribute positively towards and be compatible with the historic or underlying character and quality of the local area.
- R2 requires development to respond to context, including orientation and relating to neighbours
- R23 requires alterations and extensions to buildings should be well designed; respond positively to the original building; and contribute positively to the local character

Acoustic Amenity:

Policy CC06 and Appendix 1 of the MDD Local Plan requires that development protect noise sensitive receptors from noise impact. Room types should be grouped and stacked together to prevent noise transmission from high noise sources such as main living rooms and kitchens between walls and floors to bedrooms within an adjoining unit.

The proposed arrangement is for the proposed dwelling to be located adjacent to the retail unit. It is disappointing that no noise insulation information has been provided, the proposed bedroom is located adjoining a business premises and the concern with noise impacting the bedroom would be overnight, when it is unlikely the showroom would be open / trading. The application has been considered by the Council's Environmental Health Officer who has not raised concern in this regard. Whilst there is potential for impact from kitchen extraction flues or plant from the parade of shops / takeaway it is unlikely, given that there is a building between which would act as a noise barrier to protect the dwelling from noise. The proposed dwelling is located to the rear of the building so road traffic noise impact is considered acceptable as the main showroom is positioned between the proposed flat and Shinfield Road.

Outlook and Light Amenity:

R18 of the Borough Design SPD requires sufficient sunlight and daylight to new properties. There are reservations about the quality of the internal accommodation that would be provided for the future occupiers of the dwelling, whilst all of the rooms are provided with windows, the bedroom, bathroom and kitchen / dining room directly face the flank wall of the neighbouring property at No. 262 Shinfield Road. The living room proposes a window and door overlooking the proposed external amenity space. The proposed layout would provide a poor quality level of residential accommodation for future occupants specifically in respect of outlook. The proposed layout offers a poor quality of accommodation with a single aspect outlook towards a boundary fence. The proposed dwelling would not provide a suitable/appropriate level of amenity for occupants.

Housing Amenity

Internal Amenity

Policy TB07 of the MDD Local Plan and R17 of the Borough Design Guide (SPD) require adequate internal space to ensure the layout and size achieves good internal amenity. In accordance with the Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard, the minimum standard for internal floor area is dependent upon the number of bedrooms, floors and bed spaces (occupancy). A one bedroom x 2 person flat must provide 50 square metres of gross internal floor area plus 1.5 square metres of built-in storage. The proposed living room and kitchen / dining room are in excess of 23 square metres.

The Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard states that in order to provide two bed spaces, a double bedroom must have a floor area of at least 11.5 square metres. One double must be at least 2.75 metres wide.

The proposed dwelling is approximately 71 square metres. No separate storage space is shown. The proposed bedroom is 14 square metres and is shown as 3.4 metres wide.

External Amenity

R16 of the Borough Design Guide SPD stipulates that dwellings should have amenity space, preferably in the form of private or communal garden space. The proposal is for an area of grass 72 square metres adjacent to the parking area and drive way. The first floor accommodation has a balcony / roof garden above the store room on the ground floor and would overlook the proposed amenity space.

Due to its limited size and its position next to the private access which would be used by vehicles in order to access the rear car parking spaces, it is considered that the provision of external amenity space would be of poor quality and would not offer private amenity space.

On this basis the application is recommended for refusal, the proposed layout of the dwelling would provide a poor quality level of residential accommodation for future occupants specifically in respect of outlook and no private amenity space. It is considered that the proposed change of use to residential (use class C3) would not be acceptable and contrary to the NPPF, Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy and Borough Design Guide.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Privacy and Overlooking:

Criteria R15 of the Borough Design Guide SPD requires the retention of reasonable levels of visual privacy to habitable rooms, with a separation distance of 22 metres between back to back elevations and 10 metres for front to front elevations. Criteria R23 of the SPD states that the side walls must not contain windows, especially at first floor level. The proposal would include flank windows on the ground floor on the

northern (side elevation facing No. 262 Shinfield Road) and south elevation (side elevation facing No. 258 Shinfield Road) and west elevation (rear facing Lacewood Gardens).

It appears that No. 258 Shinfield Road contains ground floor flank windows that faces the application site, one of which appears to serve a habitable room. Therefore, there are concerns that the proposal could result in overlooking and a loss of privacy for the occupiers at No.258. On balance, this element is considered to be acceptable given the proposed siting of the windows in relation to the proposed new doors and windows.

No. 262 Shinfield Road is a two storey semi-detached dwelling located to the south of the site. This neighbouring property does not contain any flank windows that faces the site. It is acknowledged that No.260 already contains a first floor bathroom and kitchen window that faces the side elevation of this neighbouring property.

The proposed dwelling would have four windows on the southern elevation serving a bedroom window, bathroom and kitchen / dining room instead of a single office window. A 1.8m high close boarded fence is proposed along the boundary. The proposed dwelling is 1.6 metres from the side boundary. The proposed arrangement would have a poor outlook for future occupiers of the dwelling and would therefore provide a poor standard of living accommodation, as discussed above.

The separation distance from the western elevation to No. 2 Lacewood Gardens is approximately 24 metres.

Sunlight and Daylight

R18 of the Borough Design Guide SPD aims to protect sunlight and daylight to existing properties, with no material impact on levels of daylight in the habitable rooms of adjoining properties.

The proposal is for change of use and is therefore acceptable in this regard.

Overbearing

The proposal is for change of use and is therefore acceptable in this regard.

Affordability:

Policy CP5 of the Core Strategy, Policy TB05 of the MDD Local Plan and the Affordable Housing SPD specify an affordable housing rate of 20% for any development involving five or more dwellings or 0.16 hectares or larger. With one dwelling on 0.05 hectares, affordable housing is not triggered.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

The proposed site plan shows two car parking spaces at the rear of the site and four car parking spaces at the front of the site. It is assumed that the parking retained to the front of the building is for the commercial use and this is considered acceptable in this instance. However this area is not currently formal parking as the dropped crossing does not extend the width of the frontage. Insufficient information has been provided on the plans, a revised plan which confirms that the dropped crossing will be extended would need to be submitted if these parking spaces are considered.

A cycle store has been indicated and this is acceptable for 1 cycle in accordance with WBC parking standards.

In respect of the proposed parking at the rear of the site, it is assumed that this is for the proposed dwelling. As shown, parking space No.2 has no turning area and obstructs turning for parking space No. 1. A revised plan relocating this parking space would be required. Parking spaces need to be set away from any hard boundary by 0.5m. The parking spaces are below WBC requirements and would need to be increased to 5.0m x 2.5m with a minimum 6.0m distance behind parking spaces for turning.

Accordingly, in the absence of adequate information the Council is unable to be certain that satisfactory off-street car parking can be provided and that the proposal would not be to the detriment of highway safety. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies CP1, CP3 and CP6 of the Core Strategy and Policies CC03, CC07 of the MDD plan.

Flood Risk and Drainage:

Policy CC09 of the Managing Delivery Document (MDD) Local Plan requires consideration of flood risk from historic flooding. Policy CC10 of the MDD Local Plan necessitates sustainable drainage methods and the minimisation of surface water flow. The development is in Flood zone 1 according to the EA mapping. There will be a small increase in impermeable area. The Council's Drainage Engineer has been consulted on the application who has no objection to the principle of the development but as Drainage details have not been provided and the existing drainage details are not been mentioned, if recommended for approval, a condition on details of the drainage system would be recommended.

Other:

Waste Storage: Policy CC04 of the MDD Local Plan requires adequate internal and external storage for the segregation of waste as well as the provision of compost facilities. The 'Wokingham Borough Council Guidance Notes for Developers' states that bin stores should be no more than 10 metres from the highway or vehicular access (parked collection vehicle) and a dropped kerb in place. The bin store would need to be of a sufficient size. Further information is provided here (<https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/rubbish-and-recycling/collections/waste-information-for-developers/>). The proposed bin store is sited more than 10 metres from the public highway. Further information in this regard is required, if recommended for approval

this could be dealt with via a condition.

Potentially Contaminated Land: The site is located within a potentially contaminated zone. It is not clear what the rear yard was used for in the past but it is *possible* that the land may be contaminated an amenity area proposed to the rear of the property. The change of use means that the use becomes more 'sensitive' being residential as there is the risk the occupants may choose to grow veg or allow children to play etc. It is unknown if the site is contaminated, but given that the yard is currently in use for a commercial business and little is known about the history of the site, it was recommended that the applicant provide a preliminary assessment. This is a desk study and walkover which helps determine if there is a potential risk from contamination and if further investigation is required. If the application is recommended for approval, this could be secured via a condition. It is clear whether the landscaping proposed would be soft or hard landscaping as this would have an impact on the risk.

Cross Boundary: The application site is in both Wokingham Borough Council and Reading Borough Council. Planning permission would be required from both authorities. An informative has been recommended accordingly.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010):

In determining this application the Council is required to have due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that persons with protected characteristics as identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application and there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

RECOMMENDATION

Conditions agreed:	Not required
Recommendation:	Refused
Date:	10 June 2020
Earliest date for decision:	14 May 2020

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	10/06/2020