

DELEGATED PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Park

App Ref: 221541/FUL

Address: 64 College Road, Reading, RG6 1QB

Proposals: Change of use from 6 person C4 HMO to an 8 person Sui Generis HMO

Case Officer: Marcie Rejwerska

**Date received (valid from): 28 October 2022
(ext.)**

Target Decision date: 2 August 2023

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site comprises a two-storey mid-terrace property on the west side of College Road. The property is set back from the road with a front garden converted to hardstanding. There are three rooflights at the front elevation and two rear dormers. The immediate surrounding area is residential with similarly designed Victorian terraced rows. The application site is not listed nor in a conservation area.



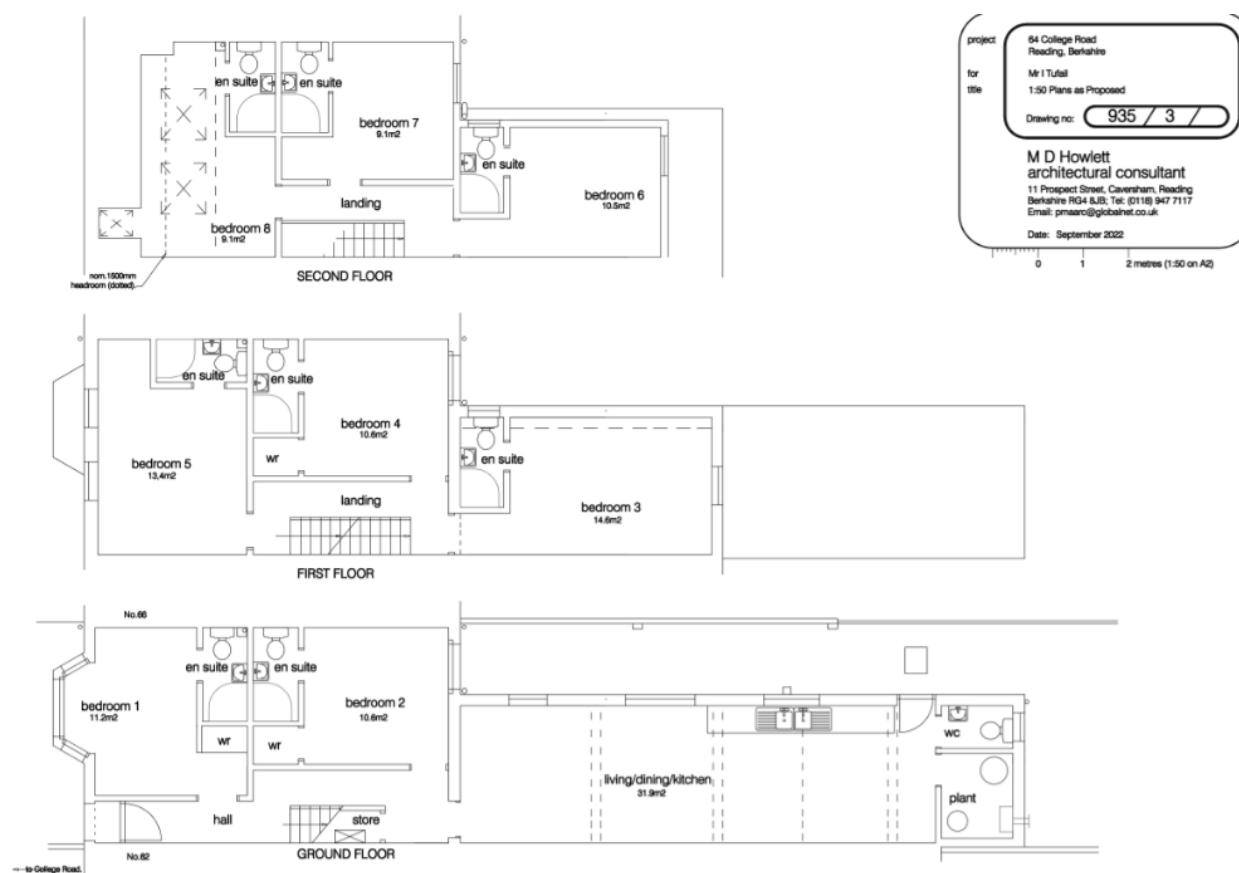
Image taken from Google Maps on 19 July 2023

The property is in the Article 4 Direction area which removes normal permitted development rights to convert a house (C3 use) into a small house in multiple occupation (C4 use). The property has a certificate of lawfulness for the existing use as a small HMO (C4 use).

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Planning permission is sought for the intensification of the use of 64 College Road from a small HMO (C4 use) to a large HMO (Sui Generis use class). No external alterations are proposed within this application. No internal alterations are proposed as the existing layout includes 8 bedrooms with 2 bedrooms currently not in use. The proposal would result in an 8-bedroom, 8-person large HMO.

Two rear dormers and rooflights have been completed at the site presumably under permitted development as there is no formal planning history for this. Enforcement case ref. 452855 confirms the PD status of the dormers. The extensions make up 2 bedrooms on the second floor.



Plans considered:

- Design and Access Statement, dated October 2022, received 17 October 2022
- 935/4 Block and Location Plan, dated October 2022, received 17 October 2022
- 935/2 Plans as Existing, dated September 2022, received 17 October 2022
- 935/3/A Plans as Proposed, dated September 2022, received 23 June 2023
- 935/5 Cross Section, dated October 2022, received 28 October 2022
- 935/6 Furniture Layout to Dining & Living Room, dated January 2023, received 23 June 2023
- 935/9/A Site and Location Block Plans/Cycle Storage, dated April 2023, received 23 June 2023

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

230463/CLE - 6-person small HMO - Certificate of Lawfulness granted on 21 June 2023

4. CONSULTATIONS

Non-statutory:

RBC Transport - No objections in principle subject to submitted bin and cycle storage plans. The agent has submitted plans to demonstrate cycle storage and the proposed bin storage is same as existing.

RBC Environmental Protection - No comments.

RBC Private Sector Housing - The property currently holds a HMO licence for up to 8 people as it has sufficient facilities at the time of application for this amount of people. (The licence is valid until May 2024) I do note from our records that it was pointed out to the licence holder that just because it has a HMO licence for use of up to 8 people that it would need planning permission for this amount of people.

RBC Planning Enforcement - Having checked our records which go back to 2003, I can see that the only relevant investigation was back 2011 (11/00369), part of which concerned the use of the property. That investigation was closed in 2015 and established that the property was in authorised use as a C4 HMO.

Public:

The following addresses were consulted by letter.

62 College Road, Reading
66 College Road, Reading, RG6 1QB
48 College Road, Reading, RG6 1QB
4 Culver Mews, Reading, RG6 1FD

Letters of representation have been received as follows:

1 comment received requesting that the officer conduct a site visit to ensure the quality of the property. A site visit was conducted and the officer found that the property was in good condition. There is further discussion in the appraisal section within this report.

5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

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'. The following local and national planning policy and guidance is relevant to this application:

National Policy and Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework

National Planning Practice Guidance

Technical housing standards - nationally described space standard 2015

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC7: DESIGN AND THE PUBLIC REALM

CC8: SAFEGUARDING AMENITY

H8: RESIDENTIAL CONVERSIONS

H10: PRIVATE AND COMMUNAL OUTDOOR SPACE
TR3: ACCESS, TRAFFIC AND HIGHWAY-RELATED MATTERS
TR5: CAR AND CYCLE PARKING AND ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING

SPG/SPD

Residential Conversions (2013)

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.

APPRAISAL

Character

Policy H8 states that *“Additionally, in areas covered by an Article 4 direction that restricts changes of use from Class C3 to Class C4: Planning permission will not normally be granted where the proportion of HMOs (either C4 or sui generis) will result in HMOs representing 25% or more of the residential properties within a circle of 50m radius measured from the application site.”*

The concentration of HMOs in the area surrounding the application site has been calculated as a percentage of the total estimated number of existing HMOs (C4 or sui generis) against the total number of residential properties, i.e. those falling with C3, C4 or sui generis HMO use. Potential data sources are those from the Environmental Protection and Nuisance Team, in particular the publicly available Register of Houses in Multiple Occupation.

The total number of properties within the 50m radius, including the application site, has been calculated as 31. This figure does not include buildings that are not classified as a dwelling (for example buildings under Use Class E) and purpose-built flats. A total number of 5 HMOs within a 50m radius of the proposal site have been identified, including 64 College Road. The estimated total percentage of existing HMOs within a 50m radius of 64 College Road is 16.13%. As a result, the proposed increase in HMOs would not exceed 25% within a 50m radius of the proposal site. Therefore, it is not considered that the proposed development would not have a harmful impact upon the character of the surrounding area in accordance with Policy CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan. The threshold estimate has been calculated in accordance with the guidance provided within Appendix 3 of the Residential Conversions SPD (2023).

No external alterations are proposed within this application, therefore, the development will not alter the appearance of the surrounding area. The development is therefore considered in accordance with Policy CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

Amenity - Future occupants

Policy H8 states that:

“Proposals to convert properties into self-contained flats or for multiple occupation will only be acceptable where:

- *There are no unacceptable adverse impacts to residents of the scheme or surrounding properties arising from noise and disturbance in terms of the number and layout of units proposed and the proximity to other properties;*
- *There is no inappropriate stacking and location of rooms between units;*
- *Bin and cycle storage is of an appropriate size and standard for the units proposed and should be located at ground floor level with easy access; and*
- *The resulting property or properties would provide adequate internal floorspace and headroom for residents.”*

The Residential Conversions SPD sets out a number of checklist items which provide further detail related to adopted policies CC8, H8 and H10 and the relevant ones to this proposal are as follows.

Room sizes

The nationally set out technical requirements identify the minimum floor space standards as 7.5m² and 2.15m width for a single bedroom. Areas with headroom less than 1.5m are not counted within the Gross Internal Area unless used solely for storage. The bedrooms range from 9.1m² to 14.5m², with a suitable head height. It is considered necessary to restrict the number of occupants to 8 (single occupancy rooms) in order to safeguard the residential amenity of future occupants.

Communal space

There is an existing kitchen and lounge/dining room which is considered acceptable for an 8-bedroom house, large HMO. It is considered reasonable to retain the living room as demonstrated on the proposed plans as communal use. This is to ensure that the use of 64 College Road as a large HMO is not intensified beyond 8 people, to ensure an adequate standard of living for future occupants in accordance with Policy CC8. It is not considered that any further intensification of the use would be acceptable given that this would require further extensions on an already well developed site.

It is also recognised that the size, layout and quality of daylight and sunlight in bedrooms 1, 2, 3 and 4 is such that it is not anticipated that there would be a reliance on the communal space other than for mealtimes.

Amenity space

The private garden space is considered acceptable.

External windows

All habitable rooms would benefit from external windows.

Access to sunlight/daylight

Room 8 has 3 roof lights at the front of the property. There were officer concerns that access to sunlight and daylight would be restricted but this concern was not sustained following a visit to the application site. The fenestration layout to all other rooms allows for acceptable access to sunlight and daylight.

Layout/stacking of rooms

The Council's SPD seeks to avoid layouts which locate living rooms, bathrooms and kitchens next to, above, or below, proposed or neighbouring rooms. The layout largely achieves this with all en-suite bathrooms being stacked in the same location throughout. This is considered acceptable.

Noise and disturbance

In terms of noise and disturbance there is no evidence to suggest an 8-bedroom HMO would create significantly greater levels of noise than a fully occupied small HMO for between 4 and 6 occupants and in itself would not warrant refusal on this basis.

Bin storage

Bins would be stored within the front garden, which consists of hardstanding. This arrangement is similar to other properties on College Road and is considered acceptable.

A pre-commencement condition has been agreed to secure a HMO Management Plan.

Amenity - Neighbouring residents

This proposal has also been assessed against Reading Borough Local Plan policy CC8: Safeguarding Amenity, which states that proposals are acceptable where they will not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties with regard to including factors (amongst others):

- *Privacy and overlooking*
- *Access to sunlight and daylight*
- *Visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development*
- *Harm to outlook*
- *Noise and disturbance*

With regards to the impact of the proposed development on adjoining properties 62 and 66 College Road; as already discussed, the proposed use is not considered to give rise to harmful levels of noise and disturbance. No external alterations are proposed within this application, as such the development is not considered harmful to neighbouring residents with consideration given to criteria listed under Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

No other nearby occupier is considered to be significantly impinged by the proposed development in relation to any amenity consideration.

Overall, the proposed development is not considered harmful to the living conditions of neighbouring properties or residents is therefore considered in accordance with Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

Transport

The applicant is advised that the future occupants are not entitled to Parking Permits and that these would need to be sought from the Council. With regards to cycle storage, secure cycle storage is proposed to the rear of the property, consisting of lockable cycle store. The cycle provision is considered acceptable.

Conclusion

The proposed development has been assessed and the proposed works are considered to be in accordance with the above relevant policies and planning permission can be granted.

RECOMMENDATION

GRANT PERMISSION

Subject to the following conditions:

1. Time Limit (Standard)
2. Approved plans
3. Restrict HMO use
4. HMO Management Plan (To Be Submitted)
5. Communal Use
6. Parking permits (Notification to occupants)
7. Cycle Parking (As Specified)