

DELEGATED PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Abbey

App Ref: 220992/FUL

Address: 33 Bedford Road, Reading, RG1 7EX

Proposals: Erection of rear facing dormer and installation of 1no. roof light.

Case Officer: Nathalie Weekes

Date received (valid from): 6 July 2022

Extended Target Decision date: 16 December 2022

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The site is situated on the western side of Bedford Road, on a prominent corner with Battle Street.

The site has been used as a stone masonry for the past 160 years, during which the use of the site has evolved over the years with the production and cutting of stone moved to the other AJ Jones site in rural Ipsden in Oxfordshire, to reduce any impact on the neighbouring residential properties. Therefore the overall use of the site is class B2, incorporating ancillary office (first floor) and retail/show room (ground floor) in the main building, with associated storage and distribution taking place at the side and rear of the building.

33 Bedford Road appears as an end of terrace Victorian town house with two prominent chimneys, visible within the public realm. The original use of the building when built in 1886, was C3 residential use. Other properties in the adjacent streets small rear loft dormers, however the two neighbouring properties on Bedford Road, in residential use, have larger flat roof dormers presumably by virtue of permitted development.

The site is adjacent to the Reading Central area boundary which runs along Bedford Road and is opposite the allocated development site at the former Central Swimming Pool.

Although not listed or in a conservation area, the building is considered to be a non designated heritage asset. It is in an AQMA.

A site visit was conducted to verify the existing internal layout on 7 December 2022.

Photos:



2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The proposal is to install a rear facing flat roofed dormer window and installation of 1no. roof light to facilitate 14 sqm of additional floor space for ancillary an office use for the stone masons business.

The site visit concluded that the end of terrace red brick building was being used as ancillary offices on the upper floors and a retail showroom on the ground floor. It was surrounded by storage and industrial buildings at the side and rear, on the other parts of the site.

33 Bedford Road was originally in residential use and the proposed dormer will be no larger than rear loft extensions on neighbouring residential houses. The application form states that the building is in class E (office) and B1c Light industrial use. However, from the officer visit and consideration of site history it is the opinion that the use of the planning unit would more correctly be described as B2 with ancillary retail and offices.

Plans considered

2228-P600-P2 Design and Access Statement, Holtham+Newman architects, 1 July 2022

As received 9 December 2022

2228-P100-P1 Existing Floor Plan

2228-P100-P1 Existing Floor Plan - Block Plan

2228-P002-P1 Site Location Plan

2228-P001-P1 Block Plan

CIL

As received 7 July 2022

2228-101-P2 Proposed Floor Plans

2228-200-P2 Existing and proposed elevations

As received 28 November 2022

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

181816 Demolition of all stonemasons buildings and structures (Class B1c) barring No.33 Bedford Road and residential redevelopment to provide: a basement and two-storey building and single storey bin/cycle store fronting Battle Street, a three-storey building on the corner of Battle Street and Bedford Road, and the change of use and alterations to No.33 Bedford Road, providing in total 9 (6x1, 2x2 and 1x3 bed) residential flats (Class C3). Withdrawn 29/09/2020

930518 - Alterations to frontage inclusive of new display area and erection of new workshop and storage areas to rear of site. Approved 18/4/94.

4. CONSULTATIONS

The following addresses were consulted by letter.

35 Bedford Road, Reading, RG1 7EX

First Flr Front, 6 Battle Street, Reading, RG1 7NU

First Flr Rear, 6 Battle Street, Reading, RG1 7NU

Gnd Flr, 6 Battle Street, Reading, RG1 7NU

A site notice was also displayed at the site on 11 August 2022 for a 21 day consultation period. No letters of representation have been received.

RBC Environmental Protection confirmed that there were no noise complaints for the site on file.

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.

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

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC1: PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

CC2: SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

CC7: DESIGN AND THE PUBLIC REALM

CC8: SAFEGUARDING AMENITY

EN1: PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

EN15: AIR QUALITY

EM1: PROVISION OF EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT

EM4: MAINTAINING A VARIETY OF PREMISES

6. APPRAISAL

Land use considerations

Policy EM4 states that there should be a range of types and units present in the Borough. Development should not therefore reduce the range of sites or space available in all areas of the Borough, not merely in the Core Employment Areas. Whilst the site is outside of the specified area on the Reading Local Plan for creating more office space, the site has an established use as a long standing business in a residential area, contributing to the variety and mix of premises as a range of types and sizes of units should be present in the Borough.

This proposal seeks to add just 14 sqm of new office space and staff facilities to support the existing employment use. The small increase in floor area is not considered to result in a need for increased housing provision. The intensification of the office use in this location as shown on the plans is not considered to result in significant harm to residential amenity for neighbours. The agent has confirmed in writing that no noisy activity would be carried out in the roof dormer. However, given the main industrial use of the site it would be reasonable to condition that the additional space provided remains ancillary office space so cannot become separate Class E offices or any other purpose (including the B2 use class of the main site).

Design

There is a prevailing character along Bedford Road for the neighbouring residential houses to have small size rear dormers set into the roof. However the residential properties neighbouring 33 Bedford Road have large rear roof dormers that will be larger and more visible than the proposed rear office dormer which has been reduced in volume and scale. The proposed development, when set back behind the existing chimneys and set in from the roof ridge, would not result in an overly obstructive or dominant addition when viewed from Battle Street.

The applicant's agreement to retain the existing distinctive chimney stacks is welcomed and a condition is recommended to safeguard their retention in accordance with EN1.

The materials used on the external elevations are proposed to match the original building.

Amenity

The proposed rear dormer extension is set away from the neighbouring boundary and should not result in an adverse impact in terms of loss of light or privacy. No development or changes of use are proposed to the ground or first floor levels.

The rear office window is set away from the boundary with 35 Bedford Road and an obscure glazing condition is recommended for the rear dormer toilet to safeguard the amenities for the adjoining premises from overlooking.

Noise

The proposed use of the extension has been confirmed as office use and the condition described above to ensure use remains ancillary office space will offer further safeguards.

Change of use

Any proposed change of use or intensification of use would require an additional planning application. The previous application for the change of use of 33 Bedford Road from office and redevelopment for C3 residential use was withdrawn in September 2020.

Conclusion

The site contributes towards a range of types of units in the area it is situated, it will not result in any increase in footprint, and the proposal is considered to be acceptable within the context of national and local planning policies, as detailed in the appraisal above. As such the proposed erection of a rear facing dormer to increase an office space by 14sqm, installation of a roof light and associated internal works are acceptable for the reasons provided and is recommended for approval, subject to conditions.

RECOMMENDATION

Approve

Subject to the following conditions:

Time line

Approved plans

Retention of chimney stacks as shown on approved plans - CC7/ EN1

Additional space created to be used as ancillary offices to the main use only - CC8.