

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT - Application No. 201864FUL & 201865LBC

Address: 163-165 Oxford Road

Proposal: Change of use of part basement, first and second floors from dental surgery (Use Class D1) to residential (Use Class C3) for 5 flats

Case officer: Matt Burns

Site Description and Surrounding Area

The application relates to an existing four storey mid-terrace building (with basement) located on the south side of Oxford Road opposite the junction with Bedford Road. The building forms part of a grade II listed terrace of buildings and is located within the Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area. The terrace and Oxford Road consists of a mix of commercial and residential uses. The application building is currently in use as a dental surgery which is accessed from Oxford Road with vehicular access and small car park located to the rear off Goldsmid Road. The site is located within the Reading Central Area as defined by Policy CR1 (Definition of Central Reading) of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) and within an air quality management area (AQMA).

Proposal

The application seeks full planning permission for changes of use and conversion of part basement, first and second floors from dentists (Use Class D1) to residential (Use Class C3) for 5 flats. The dentists use would be retained and ground floor and the remaining part of the basement. Listed building consent is also sought for minor internal and external alterations to facilitate the conversion.

Plans Considered

Drawings ref:

- 0344-P-002 Rev D - Proposed Plans, Elevations & Sections
- 0344-P-008 Rev C - Proposed Site Plan
- 0344-P-005 Rev C - Existing & Proposed Ground Floor Plan
- 0344-P-020 Rev B - Proposed Cycle Storage & Bin Storage
- 0344-P-003 Rev D - Demolishing Marked In Red

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 9th July 2021

- 0344-P-006 - Existing & Proposed First Floor Plan
- 0344-P-007 - Existing & Proposed Second Floor Plan
- 0344-P-004 - Existing & Proposed Basement Plan

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 22nd December 2020

Relevant Planning History

200517/Pre-App - Demolition of the former Royal Public House (2 Bedford Road) and the erection of a part 5 storey building which would provide a relocation of a dentist surgery (Use Class D1) at ground floor and first floor and 4 self- contained flats on the first floor and above AND conversion of 163-165 Oxford Road to 9 self-contained flats following relocation of the dentist surgery - Advice Given.

Consultation Responses

RBC Transport - No objection, subject to conditions to secure submission and approval of a construction method statement prior to commencement of development, pre-occupation provision of the proposed cycle parking, vehicle parkin and bin storage and conditions to state that future occupiers of the development would not be automatically entitled to obtain on-street vehicle parking permits.

RBC Natural Environment - No objection, subject to condition to secure landscaping details.

RBC Environmental Protection - No objection, subject to conditions to secure implementation of noise and air quality mitigation measures.

RBC Conservation and Urban Design - No objection.

Thames Water - No objection, standard informatives recommended.

Conservation Area Advisory Committee - No comments received.

Reading Civic Society - No comments received.

Public Consultation

Flats 1 to 5 no. 16 Goldsmid Road, no.s 161 and 167 Oxford Road and flat 1 no. 161 Oxford Road were notified of the applications by letter. A site notice was also displayed at the application site.

One letter of representation has been received raising concerns about insufficient parking for the proposed flats and that future occupiers may park in nearby residents existing allocated parking spaces.

Equality Act

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 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.

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

and conservation area or their setting or any features of special interest which they possess.

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

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

EN3: ENHANCEMENT OF CONSERVATION AREAS

EN15: AIR QUALITY

EN16: POLLUTION AND WATER RESOURCES

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

OU1: NEW AND EXISTING COMMUNITY FACILITIES

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

CR2: DESIGN IN CENTRAL READING

CR6: LIVING IN CENTRAL READING

Supplementary Planning Guidance

Sustainable Design and Construction SPD 2019

Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD 2011

Residential Conversions SPD 2013

Affordable Housing SPD 2021

Section 106 Planning Obligations SPD 2013

Appraisal

Land Use Principles

Policy OU1 (New and Existing Community Facilities) states that proposals involving the redevelopment of existing community facilities for non-community uses will not be permitted, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that there is no longer a need to retain that facility.

The proposals seek to keep the dentists use on the site at ground and part basement level such that the existing community use would be retained at the site. Furthermore, the existing accommodation at second floor and basement level is utilised as ancillary storage and office

facilities for the dentist with the core dentist surgery facilities located at ground and first floor. Whilst some surgery floor space would be lost at first floor level as part of the proposed conversion this is to be relocated to part of the basement level of the building. In overall terms officers are satisfied that the proposals, with retention of the dentists on site, would comply with Policy OU1.

Notwithstanding the above the applicant also identifies that there are a number of alternate dentists nearby including that at the adjoined building (no. 161 Oxford Road), whilst there are 34 NHS dentists within 5 miles of the application site and 54 dentists within Reading.

The proposed change of use of part of building to 5 x C3 residential flats would provide additional dwellings to the Boroughs housing stock, the principle of which would align with the broad objectives of Policy H1 (Provision of Housing) in assisting meeting annual housing targets whilst the location and accessibility of the site for residential development is considered to accord with Policy CC6 (Accessibility and Intensity of Development).

Policy H8 (Residential Conversion) deals with conversion of buildings to both C3 residential use and also HMO's and states that such conversions will be assessed against the impact on the amenity and character of the surrounding area, particularly in terms of intensification of activity, loss of privacy, loss of external amenity space, the provision and location of adequate on-site car parking and the treatment of bin storage areas and other related servicing. Policy CR6 (Living in Central Reading) also seeks to ensure new C3 residential units within the town centre are protected from surrounding noise and disturbance. The majority of the matters will be dealt with in later sections of this report but in terms of principle matters Policy H8 seeks that conversion should not, either individually or cumulatively, unduly dilute or harm an existing mixed and sustainable community through the significant loss of single-family housing and that buildings of a sufficient size for conversion (at least 120m²). In this instance the existing building is in dentist use and not residential and as such that there would be no loss of existing housing and the floor space of the existing building exceeds 120m².

Layout, Appearance, Design and Heritage

Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) states that all development must be of high design quality that maintains the character and appearance of the area within which it is located including layout, landscape, density, scale and architectural detail and materials. Policy H10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space) seek that residential dwellings are provided with functional outdoor private or communal amenity space which respects the size and character of similar spaces in the vicinity.

Policy EN1 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment) states that new development should preserve and enhance protect and enhance historic assets including listed buildings and conservation area and their settings. Policy EN3 (Enhancement of Conservation Areas) states that development should conserve and enhance the special interest, character and architecture of conservation areas.

The building forms part of a grade II listed terrace of buildings. The listing description for the terrace makes reference to external features of the front Oxford Road principal elevation of the building only. The development proposal does not seek to make any external alterations to the

front principal façade of the building with all characteristic features including chimneys, 2 storey recessed bays, parapets, cornice, arched doorways below 1st floor cill band, round headed ground floor windows to be retained. The existing timber sash windows to the front of the building are also to be refurbished whilst existing uncharacteristic non-sash windows to the rear elevation are to be replaced with sash windows similar to those to the front of the building which is considered to be an enhancement to the listed buildings. Details specification and schedule of window replacement/repair would be secured by way of planning conditions. In this respect it is considered that the proposals would preserve the character of the surrounding conservation area from where the proposals would have limited visual impact.

The most notable alteration proposed to the building is a small rear extension to the basement level of the building to facilitate provision of a new internal stair between the dentist accommodation to be retained at ground and basement level. This small extension is not considered detrimental to the historic significance of the building and indeed the heritage statement notes that this well may have been the location of a historic staircase as is the case in similar locations in other comparable Georgian buildings.

Internally the proposals seek to make only minor alterations to the internal layout of the buildings. Notably the conversion works would retain and as in the case of the second floor reinstate the plan form of the building which is considered to preserve the buildings significance in addition to reverting much of the building back to its historic residential use. Other internal alterations are focused on minor removal of non-original elements and addition of secondary glazing.

There is an existing rear car park and hardstanding area serving the dentist where the existing commercial bin and cycle store is located. The rear yard area is bounded by a brick wall to each side boundary with the adjoined terraced buildings either side. It is proposed to retain this area and reconfigure the parking spaces and bin cycle stores, a small area of block paving is proposed to delineate a pathway from the parking spaces to the rear of the building. In terms of soft landscaping an existing hedgerow is to be retained to the east boundary of the site whilst new additional hedgerow planting is proposed to the western boundary. The reconfiguration of this area addition of block paving and new soft landscaping is considered to be an enhancement to the appearance to the area to the rear of the site and in this respect would preserve the setting of the host listed building and conservation area from where there are very limited view of the rear of the site.

To the front of the property a standalone bin store structure to serve the residential units is proposed centrally within the small street level front yard area where the existing steps down to the basement level and up to ground floor to be retained are located. The proposed store structure would be modest in scale at 1.9m x 1.6m and 1.1m in height and is to be constructed from timber painted brown/red panels. Whilst such structures to the front of buildings are not characteristic to buildings to this part of Oxford Road the majority of surrounding buildings store wheelie bins in this location but in an ad hoc manner. The provision of a modest timber store painted a similar colour to the red brick of the building to conceal the bins is considered to be an acceptable bin storage solution. The modest scale and materials of the store are considered such that it would not appear unduly prominent from the street-scene and would preserve the setting of the listed building and conservation area.

In overall terms officers are satisfied that the proposals would preserve the historic character of the listed building and conservation area. Planning conditions are recommended to secure submission of a window refurbishment/replacement schedule, details of all materials, secondary glazing and all new internal and external doors.

Unit Mix and Affordable Housing

Policy CR6 requires that all new residential developments in the town centre provide a mix of units. In this instance the proposals seek to create 5 x 1-bedroom flats. Policy CR6 (Living in Central Reading) seek that proposals for residential development within the Central Area contribute towards a mix of different sized units unless this would render the development unviable. Whilst the proposals do not provide for a mix of units, given the building is grade II listed Officers strong preference is that alterations to the fabric of the listed building are kept to a minimum to preserve the buildings historic character. In this instance the provision of 1-bedroom units allows the building historic plan form to be retained and as in the case for the second floor to be reinstated which is considered pertinent to the preservation of the buildings historic character and given the small number of units proposed the unit mix is considered acceptable in this instance.

Amenity of surrounding and future occupiers

Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) seeks that development proposals should safeguard the amenity of both existing and future occupiers and Policy EN16 (Pollution and Water Resources) seeks that development will only be permitted where it would not be damaging to the environment and sensitive receptors in terms of pollution. Policy EN16 (Pollution and Water Resources) seeks to protect from the impacts of pollution. Policy H10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space) seek that residential dwelling are provided with functional outdoor private or communal amenity space which respects the size and character of similar spaces in the vicinity.

Future Occupiers

Whilst not specifically required for residential dwellings within the Reading Central Area all flats would adhere to the nationally prescribed space standards and all habitable rooms are considered to be served by suitable windows to provide adequate access to daylight. At basement level the proposed flat would-be dual aspect. There is limited external space within the application site with retention of the dentist use at ground floor. Policy H10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space) for the new part H10 acknowledges that developments within central Reading where building densities are high may be unlikely to meet requirements for provision of external amenity space. Given the central location of the application site Officers are satisfied that future occupiers would have suitable access to outdoor leisure and recreation facilities nearby within the town centre. Furthermore, town centre developments often provide amenity space by way of balconies or terraces but given the application building is listed would not be appropriate additions in this instance and would be harmful to the buildings historic character.

The application is accompanied by a noise assessment and following review Environmental Protection Officers have identified adverse noise impacts from Oxford Road to the front of the site and proposes use of secondary glazing (appropriate for the listed building) and mechanical ventilation to this façade, full details of this would be secured by way of condition to ensure suitable fixing to the listed building. Environmental Protection Officers have also identified

internal noise transfer impacts from the dentist surgery and an addendum noise assessment has been submitted to further detail the noise levels and activities. The introduction of additional insulation between the two floors would involve intrusions and alterations to the original fabric and on balance it is considered that the noise impacts upon the ground floor flat would not be adverse enough to justify additional intrusions and harm to the fabric of the listed building.

Surrounding Occupiers

The proposals largely relate to conversion works to the existing with the only small enlargement being at basement level such that there would be no adverse impact on neighbours in terms of any increased built form or overbearing and loss of light impacts. There would be no adverse impact in terms of overlooking or loss of privacy.

The use of the upper floors of buildings surrounding the site for residential is common and the introduction of 5 flats to the building is not considered to generate any additional noise and disturbance concerns.

A condition is recommended to secure submission and approval of a construction method statement prior to commencement of development to include noise and dust control measures to ensure the works would not adversely impact upon existing surrounding occupiers.

A condition is recommended to secure submission and approval of details of a bin store and measures to prevent access to the bins by pests and vermin prior to occupation of the development.

Transport

Policies TR3 (Access, Traffic and Highway related matters), TR1 (Achieving the Transport Strategy) and TR5 (Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging) seek to address access, traffic, highway and parking relates matters relating to development.

The site is located on Oxford Road which is a classified road and main transport corridor (A329) and within Zone 2, (bordering Zone 1) 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.

In accordance with the adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD, a Zone 2 location would be required to provide a parking provision of 1.0 space per unit. The submitted planning statement states that given its close proximity to the town centre and good transport links, the development will be a car free development. Given the sites location and the extensive parking restrictions in place in the area and surrounding streets a car free development can be accepted in this instance. Parking conditions and informatives would be applied to prevent any future occupants of the residential development from obtaining resident or visitor parking permits for the surrounding residential 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.

In accordance with the Council's Parking Standards and Design SPD and Policy TR5 of the Local Plan, each dwelling should be provided with 0.5 secure cycle storage spaces. The application

proposed to provide six Sheffield type stands within a lockable store which is considered to be acceptable.

Bin storage area for the flats will be located fronting Oxford Road, there is a pedestrian crossing and railings at the front of the site, although this is not an ideal position given that there is a pedestrian crossing and railings adjacent to the site, however bins have been stored at the frontage of the site previously and this is common for surrounding properties and this arrangement is considered acceptable from a transport perspective in this instance. Bins for the commercial element are located at the rear of the site and it is assumed that this will be privately collected.

Five vehicular parking spaces are to be retained for the Dental Surgery located at the rear of the site accessed via Goldsmid Road. The proposed layout and access to the parking spaces is considered to be acceptable.

Given the developments location a construction method statement would be required detailing how construction activities associated with the development could be carried out without adversely impacting on the surrounding highway network and would be secured by way of condition.

Sustainability

Policy CC3 (Adaptation to Climate Change) requires that all development incorporates measures to adapt to climate change whilst Policy CC2 (Sustainable Design and Construction) the proposals are required to achieve a BREEAM standard of very good. The application is accompanied by a BREEAM pre-estimator report which sets out that both the commercial and residential parts of the development would achieve a very good standard. A condition would be attached to a planning permission to secure submission and approval of evidence demonstrating as built compliance with the appropriate BREEAM sustainability standard.

Natural Environment

Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) sets out that good design should incorporate appropriate landscaping. There are no existing trees within the application site.

Given the location of the site and its constrained nature with very limited external space to the building Natural Environment Officers consider retention of the existing hedgerow and proposed new hedgerow planting to the rear of the site to be acceptable within the constraints of the site.

Affordable Housing

Policy H3 (Affordable Housing) requires that for schemes of 1-5 dwellings (C3 use) a financial contribution to enable the equivalent of 20% of the housing to be provided as affordable housing elsewhere within the Borough unless it can be demonstrated that this would make the development unviable. In accordance with the adopted Affordable Housing SPD 2019 this equates to contribution equivalent to 10% of the GDV of the development.

The Applicant submitted a Viability Appraisal with the application as they consider that development to be unviable if required to make the policy complaint level of affordable housing contribution. The Viability Appraisal has been reviewed by the Councils Valuations Officer who

agrees that the scheme is unviable with the policy compliant level of contribution but a reduced contribution of £50k has been agreed, together with an open book based deferred payment mechanism triggered upon occupation of the 4th unit with a 50/50 share in excess of 17.5% return on GDV (capped at £69.5k). This would be secured as part of a section 106 legal agreement.

Community Infrastructure Levy

The proposals are for housing development and would be liable for CIL based upon the proposed residential floor space of 246m². However, if the Applicant can demonstrate that the existing parts of the building to be demolished have been within a lawful use for a minimum continuous period 6 months within the last 3 years then the levy required could be reduced and off-set against the floor space of the existing building.

RECOMMENDATION

GRANT Full Planning Permission (subject to completion of a S106) and Listed Building Consent

CONDITIONS

PLANNING PERMISSION 201864FUL

1. Time period for Implementation
2. Approved plans
3. CMS
4. Provision of Cycle Parking
5. Provision of Bin Stores
6. Provision of Vehicle Parking
7. No Parking Permits Entitlement
8. No Parking Permits Notification of Addresses
9. Noise and Ventilation Mitigation
10. Construction Hours
11. No Burning of Waste
12. BREEAM Design Stage Certificate - Very Good standard
13. Landscaping - to be approved

LISTED BUILDING CONSENT 201865LBC

1. Time Period of Implementation
2. Approved Plans
3. Materials
4. Details of Secondary Glazing
5. Details of all internal doors
6. Details of all internal fixings
7. Making good
8. Details of any external services
9. No other works to listed building approved