



RMV/13.431/01c

Planning, Design & Access Statement

For

Conversion of first floor offices to two, one bedroom apartments including external works.

At

70 School Road, Tilehurst

On behalf of

AW Davis Properties Ltd

Introduction

In accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act. 2004, this Combined Planning, Design and Access Statement is submitted to Reading Borough Council in support of an application by AW Davis Properties Ltd for the Conversion of First Floor Offices to Two, One Bedroom Apartments and External Changes at 70 School Road, Tilehurst.

This statement sets out the design rationale for the submitted application in the following manner. Firstly it will examine the site's planning history and planning policy context to ensure the design process has due regard to any pertinent planning history and conforms to adopted and emerging planning policy guidance. It will then provide an analysis of the site and its surroundings to establish existing constraints and influences for consideration in the design process. The statement will then assess the key design and access considerations for the site and describe how these have been satisfactorily achieved in the submitted application. Finally, the statement will conclude how the design has been well thought out, relates to its surrounding context and satisfactorily meets the planning requirements, making it worthy of permission.

The principal guidance on the production of Design and Access Statements emerged on the 10th August 2006 in the form of DCLG Circular 01/06 (DCLG): Guidance on Changes to the Development Control System. This Secondary form of legislation forms part of the measures released under The Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, and requires that all applications be accompanied by such statements.

Background

70, 72 & 74 School Road are set of attached buildings, constructed around the 1960-70's as part an extension to the Local Centre of Tilehurst.

Set over two floors, the units were constructed as ground floor Commercial use and first floor apartments. 70 School Road was specifically constructed as a Bank to ground floor and the construction method and security measures are inline with this.

The stairs to first floor level are accessed from a door on the left-hand side of the frontage to School Road. The first floor has at some stage been converted to Offices for the use of the ground floor Bank and an access door cut through to the stairwell. There is no planning history or approval for this change and the year which use changed from residential to offices is unknown.

The rear of the building is laid to tarmac.

Site & Surroundings

The site is in the heart of the Local Centre of Tilehurst, which is characterised by a mix of residential and commercial units constructed over a span of approximately 150 years.

A large portion of the existing buildings have a split of Commercial ground floor and Residential first floor areas.

Planning Statement

The application site has some planning history, more pertinent to the ground floor banking use and historic shopfront changes.

Planning Statement

This Planning Statement takes into account local and national planning policies as stated below.

Reading Borough Council Local Plan

Policy H2 Density & Mix

The proposal would be in keeping with the existing character of Tilehurst Triangle and would result in a density commensurate with the area. The conversion back to residential use would make efficient use of and empty building.

Policy H5 Standards for New Housing

The proposal is for two, one bedroom apartments, which exceed 38m² and therefore exceed the nationally described space standards.

Policy H8 Residential Conversions

The proposed conversion would accord with Policy H8 in that it;

- Respects the physical character of the area
- Would not unduly dilute or harm the existing mix by conversion of an existing family house
- No unacceptable adverse impacts to the surrounding area arising from noise or disturbance.
- The resultant properties meet the nationally described space standards.

NPPF

The updated National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in February 2019 and establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development, encompassing, amongst other things, building a strong competitive economy, delivering a wide choice of high-quality homes and good design. It is a requirement that Local Planning Authorities positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area. Section 5 on housing delivery covers the Government's commitment to '**significantly boosting**' the overall level of supply and mix of housing in order to meet local needs. The first bullet point at paragraph 60 states that to deliver a wide choice of quality homes and widen opportunities for home ownership, *"the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies (including, but not limited to, those who require affordable housing, families with children, older people, students, people with disabilities, service families, travellers, people who rent their homes and people wishing to commission or build their own homes)"*.

Paragraph 11 deals with the Presumption in Favour of Sustainable development, considered to be the golden thread running through the NPPF;

Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

For plan-making this means that:

- a) plans should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area, and be sufficiently flexible to adapt to rapid change;*
- b) strategic policies should, as a minimum, provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses, as well as any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas, unless:*
 - i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of development in the plan area; or*
 - ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.*

For decision-taking this means:

- c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or*
- d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:*
 - i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or*
 - ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.*

Paragraph 49 states "Housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up-to-date if the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites." It is a requirement of paragraph 47 that Local Planning Authorities can demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable sites plus 5% (this is increased to plus 20% where there has been a record of persistent under delivery).

Design is covered in Section 12, where the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. This policy highlights that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, that should be indivisible from good planning, which in turn should contribute positively to making places better for people. Paragraph 127(c) stresses that decisions should not attempt to prevent or discourage appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities), but that it is proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness. Paragraph 127 goes further in identifying that securing high quality inclusive design goes beyond aesthetic considerations, and as such decisions should address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment in determining applications.

Design & Access

Use

It is considered the reversion to Residential use is acceptable, due to the existing character of the area.

Amount

The amount of development is in line with the character of the area and considered acceptable.

Access

Internal design considerations are incorporated into Part M of the Building Regulations and will be secured through subsequent applications in the usual manner.

All access points will be accessible and level with the entrance paving.

Access to the entrance floor Part M lavatory has been designed to accommodate wheelchairs as have door openings. All units comply with the Disability Discriminations Act 1995 and Part M of The Building Regulations 2004, and BS8300.

Parking

The existing site currently provides no parking provision for the existing uses and it is not proposed to provide parking onsite as part of these proposals.

The existing first floor use, based on the current RBC Parking Standards SPD, would be considered A2 and therefore require 1 space per 30m². The existing use therefore generates a parking requirement in the area of 3 parking spaces (80m²/30 = 2.97).

The proposed use, based on RBC Parking Standards, generates a requirement of 3 spaces (1.5 spaces per 1 bedroom unit).

As the existing use generates a parking requirement at the same rate as that proposed it is not considered that the conversion would have a negative impact on highway safety or increase the pressure on parking requirements in the area. The site is also well located for ample public parking in the form of Dunstall Close Car Park (directly adjacent site) which provides free parking from 6pm.

Conclusion

In summary, the development proposed makes efficient use of the site in a manner that respects the character and amenities of its surrounding. The proposal will in much needed dwellings within the Local Centre of Tilehurst.

The proposal accords with all relevant Local and National Planning Policies.

In light of the above, this proposal is commended to the Officer's for their approval.