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Introduction.

This document is produced as a statement in support of a Detailed Planning Application for the redevelopment of 1015, Oxford Road, Reading, RG31 6TL., which presently contains an 8 room HMO.

The Statement must be read in conjunction with the detailed design documentation submitted in support of the application and adjusted following the advice received within the pre-application advice dated 9th April 2020, reference number 192037/PREAPP by James Overall.

This Statement has due regard to the design policy objectives, together with sustainable development and that the design fully meets these conditions.

This document will describe the location, the development in relation to its surroundings and it will outline the relevant information and planning policy together with the philosophy used in the preparation of the submitted design.

- SITE LOCATION CONTEXT ANALYSIS

The site is fronted by Oxford Road the A329. Presently the site is occupied as an 8 bed HMO. It is to the East of Reading Centre in the District of Tilehurst. It is well within the Settlement Limit and is surrounded in the main by existing housing.

The existing building is a two story in height, its neighbouring building a hotel is a three-storey building. Much of this part of the Oxford Road, street scene is characterised by a dominant presence of residential type of development, with some examples of groups of dwellings with repeatable design features, with mostly consistent roofscape, however containing inconsistent frontages arrangement and due to mix of various elevations' materials, relatively diverse appearance. The proposed design of the building intends to blend into the surrounding area and at the same time preserve repeatable features such as front gables and predominant white colour of elevations.

Access:

There is an existing pavement crossover into the site which will continue to be used and adjusted in conjunction with the redevelopment of the site.

Boundaries:

The existing boundaries between adjacent lands and dwellings are well defined. Where these have failed, adequate repair will be carried out to maintain a reasonably secure boundary to the residential units.

Site Features:

The proposed design of the building intends to blend into the surrounding area and at the same time preserve repeatable features such as front gables and predominant white colour of elevations. There are two small trees to the front boundary which according to Arborilogical Report prepared by Atworth Arborilogical Ltd., can be taken down because they are of a very low value.

The general topography of the site is that it rises gently from North to South. Detailed site sections are provided as part of the detail being submitted. There are numerous constraints that have been considered when creating the new proposal for the re-development. Impact on adjacent existing residential dwellings in relation to privacy, sunlight, traffic noise and the possible noise from the road, all of this will be considered during the design and production process. There is sufficient amenity areas for the new dwellings.

Context Analysis:

The proposal is sited in an ideal location and is fully sustainable. There are bus services go in both directions along Oxford Road, and the stops are available in both directions from the Kenwood Circle, (Route Nos: 16). Local amenity and shopping centres to the East a few hundred metres. Tilehurst Train Station is located a few hundred yards to the east which links Reading town Centre and on to London and the whole of British Rail system. There are shops and amenities all within walking distance of the site.

– POLICY CONTEXT

Paragraph 68 of the NPPF encourages to prioritise small development sites with regards to housing land provision and it emphasises that “Small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area and are often built out relatively quickly. To promote the development of a good mix of sites local planning authorities should: support the development of windfall sites through their policies and decisions – giving great weight to the benefits of using suitable sites within existing settlements for homes”.

Furthermore, an effective use of land is significantly highlighted in paragraph 71, which says that development suitable for first time buyers or entry-level sites should “be adjacent to existing settlements, proportionate in size to them, not compromise the protection given to areas or assets of particular importance in this Framework, and comply with any local design policies and standards”, whereas paragraph 117 and encourages Local Planning Authorities to “promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions”.

Paragraph 122 in the 'Achieving appropriate densities' part of NPPF, emphasizes that "Planning policies and decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land, considering:

the identified need for different types of housing and other forms of development, and the availability of land suitable for accommodating it.

- 3.3.2 local market conditions and viability.
- 3.3.3 the availability and capacity of infrastructure and services – both existing and proposed – as well as their potential for further improvement and the scope to promote sustainable travel modes that limit future car use.
- 3.3.4 the desirability of maintaining an area's prevailing character and setting (including residential) the importance of securing well-designed, attractive, and healthy places.

Paragraph 124 of the NPPF states that the "creation of high-quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve" and that "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".

Furthermore, NPPF paragraph 126 emphasizes an important role of the design codes and guides, which should "provide a framework for creating distinctive places, with a consistent and high-quality standard of design" and that "their level of detail and degree of prescription should be tailored to the circumstances in each place and should allow a suitable degree of variety where this would be justified".

The current lawful use of the site is as a large Sui Generis HMO. The proposal would provide additional dwellings to the Borough's housing stock - the principle of which aligns with the broad objectives of Policy H1 (Provision of Housing) in assisting meeting annual housing targets. The application site is also situated within a predominately residential area, whereby its location and accessibility is considered to accord with Policy CC6 (Accessibility and the Intensity of Development). The need for housing is considered to outweigh the need for HMO's and as such it is likely that the loss of the current use of the site would be acceptable in policy terms.

Affordable Housing Units would normally be required on a site proposed this density, however the management of such units in a block such as is proposed in this application would prove difficult. The social landlord would have to pay the Management Company a share of the total running costs of the site each year. The Council in its pre-application advice is proposing a contribution towards the provision of affordable housing off site.

– DESIGN ANALYSIS

The site generally sits within a dense residential area. When facing the front of the site, 1013 Oxford Road is smaller than the existing building on the application site, and 1017 Oxford is taller. In addition to this, the existing property at 1015 extends right up to the boundary with 1017.

The proposed structure whilst three storeys has been designed in a way which respects the properties on either side, and has subservient wings, which aid in preventing the proposed structure from dominating 1013 and 1017 Oxford Road.

In terms of materials, the properties in the area vary significantly. White render is common, with black timber, but other properties are solely brick, and there is an example of a property which utilises some grey cladding.

The proposed building intends to utilise white render and grey cladding on the first floor & second floor with multi-red brick on the ground floor, which is considered to respect the character of the surrounding area.

The proposed grey slate roof tiling is not a material which is used within surrounding properties; however, it is considered that this material brings about a contemporary appearance, which would add additional positive character to the surrounding area.

The proposal appears to be of a similar depth to that of the adjoining dwellings and respects the building line. Whilst the property extends slightly further back when compared to 1017 Oxford Road, the rear elevation has been stepped, which prevents it from overly dominating the surrounding area. The roof has pitched edges and three elements which are flat. This design helps to prevent the property from dominating other properties within the surrounding area, whilst still allowing for it to fit in with other designs amongst neighbouring properties.

Amenity space has previously been mentioned; this will be provided on the secluded Northern edge of the site and is well away from the roadways.

– ACCESS & MOVEMENT

Policy CC8 seeks to ensure that the amenity of neighbouring properties and inhabitants of the proposal are all protected. The elements which are assessed are

1. Privacy and overlooking,
2. Access to sunlight and daylight
3. Visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development;
4. Harm to outlook;
5. Noise and disturbance;
6. Artificial lighting
7. Vibration
8. Dust fumes
9. Smell
10. Crime & Prevention.

As discussed previously, the proposed building has been designed in a way which allows for a clear level of subservience, and furthermore their structure will not cause any overshadowing to the neighbouring properties. In addition to this all the windows are proposed within the front and rear elevations, and therefore there will not be any overlooking because of the proposed scheme.

In terms of outlook, the residents of the proposed flats will have sufficient outlook, with views looking out towards the railway track and the river Thames beyond (front) as well as the amenity space to the rear. In terms of the outlook of other properties within the surrounding area, this is not anticipated to be significantly impacted because of the proposed scheme.

– COMMUNITY SAFETY/SAFER PLACES

Controlled access to all entrances will be provided in relation to the residential block and it will be protected by a gated entry. This will include anti-intruder fencing.

The principal defined access is from a public highway and pavements directly onto a shared access for both Cars and Pedestrians. Turning facilities will be part of the comprehensive scheme which will ensure that all traffic will leave the site in forward gear. The existing access to the site is to continue in use, this will have little effect or impact on transport as mentioned earlier.

In terms of crime and safety, within the property, each set of two flats has its own 'entrance hall' with an additional door to access. This would allow someone to realise if they were being followed and protect themselves accordingly. As for artificial lighting, none has been shown on the submitted elevations, and it is assumed that there would not be any. If artificial lighting were to be proposed, it is suggested that this should be kept to a minimum and if necessary, can be controlled by appropriately worded conditions.

– CONCLUSION

The development is designed in a sympathetic way to ensure that no significant harm is caused to neighbouring properties or the character of the surrounding area. It has addressed the policy referred to in the Council pre application response and various telephone communication with the planning office to meet all the council's concerns.