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DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

in respect of three new town houses proposed at

**Land adjoining 19 & 21 Western Elms Avenue
Reading
Berkshire**

Project ref: 1314

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DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

In respect of proposals to construct three self-contained town houses at

Land adjoining 19 & 21 Western Elms Avenue, Reading, Berkshire RG30 2AL

1. ENVIRONS

The site is situated on the eastern side of Western Elms Avenue behind the semi-detached residential properties at Nos.19 and 21. It backs onto a railway line and is accessed from Ivanhoe Close, which serves a similar development recently built there. It is a short walk to Tilehurst Road and to commercial facilities in Oxford Road, from where there are bus services to Reading town centre and Tilehurst. The site is located within a well established residential area.

Apart from the recently built town houses in Ivanhoe Close, surrounding houses, generally built in the late 19th century and early 20th century, are of traditional two-, three- and four-storey construction, with brick walls supporting timber-framed pitched slate roofs punctuated by facing brick chimneystacks. The external walls at the front, including those at Nos.19 and 21, are mainly of brickwork embellished with stone or stucco quoining, bands, projecting stone sills, brackets, arch tympani and lintels with keystones.

The existing residential houses have the benefit of front and rear gardens providing outdoor private amenity space.

The newly built houses in Ivanhoe Close are mainly three-storey town houses of similar construction to the mostly Edwardian houses on Western Elms Avenue. They are separated from Ivanhoe Close by open plan front gardens and car parking bays, and each has a rear garden bounded by the railway land to the rear, adjacent to which are reptile habitat zones created after consultation with specialists acting for the planning authority.

2. THE SITE

The site is broadly level and is separated from Ivanhoe Close and from the rear garden of No.23 Western Elms Avenue by original brick garden walls. It is separated from No.5 Ivanhoe Close, from the rear railway and from Nos.19 and 21 by timber fencing. It has an area of about 900m² and is generally treeless.

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The site previously constituted lengthy rear gardens to Nos.19 and 21 Western Elms Avenue from which some trees were removed in February 2019, and the remainder in September that year. Some of these were undermining the boundary wall between the two properties which, as a result, had to be demolished. Other trees were in the process of collapsing and some of these were leaning against neighbouring houses (see photos), so the site was generally cleared in July 2020. Some levelling subsequently took place in February 2022.

3. PROPOSALS

3.1. Previous Proposals

A previous application sought planning permission for three town houses that, constituting a similar scheme as that of the recently built town houses in Ivanhoe Close, were designed to read as an extension of them. They would have had similar decorative features to match original architectural features in the villa-style residential houses in Western Elms Avenue, and would also have similarly sized private amenity spaces characteristic of this area. The new houses were to be set back about 4.0m from those in the neighbouring Ivanhoe Close.

Planning consent was refused for this scheme due to the likely detrimental impact on biodiversity and failure to demonstrate no harm would result to trees in the adjacent railway land, which is recognised as a 'green corridor' in the adopted Local Plan. It was also considered that the private amenity space was insufficient for the four-bedroom houses due to overshadowing from those same trees.

3.2. Current Proposals

The current proposals are for three town houses of the same design as before but in near-alignment to the town houses with the original scheme in Ivanhoe Close. This will enable the rear of the new gardens to be similarly reserved as reptile habitats on the obvious probability that the biodiversity requirements of the new site will be very similar to those of the closely related adjacent site in Ivanhoe Close

As before, it is proposed to form an access road from Ivanhoe Close to comply with 'Manual for Streets 2007', as provided by the developers of the original scheme there. This will lead to car parking bays, two for each proposed town house augmented by two bays for visitors' parking.

Also as before, the proposed accommodation for each town house shall be for four bedrooms serving seven persons (4B7P) and is designed to comply with the government's Technical Standards, adopted by the local planning authority, in respect of bedroom sizes and dimensions. Each will also have a separate dining room, lounge, utility room, sanitary facilities and kitchen.

The private amenity space to the proposed town houses 1-3 would be 119m², 111m² and 89m² respectively, inclusive of the reptile habitat zones but in addition to the front gardens. This compares with the area of each house approaching 140m², but a common amenity area with soft landscaping is proposed on the other side of the access road to positively contribute to the setting and spacing around the proposed building, as encouraged by Policies H10 and H11 of the Local Plan.

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Opposite the town houses will be some of the car parking bays and that area of soft landscaping, and the application is now supported by an arboricultural report for protection to the trees abutting the site. There are no trees within the site boundary.

All major utility services and main foul sewers are available in Western Elms Avenue, and it is proposed to provide surface water drainage to new soakaways on site min.5.0m away from any building. Rear garden access will be provided for refuse bins and for nom.2.4 x 1.8m garden sheds.

5.0. ACCESS

5.1 Specific Access Issues

The proposed development is situated on a broadly level site that is unlikely to provide unusual difficulties for those with mobility problems. Access roads, drives and footpaths will be constructed from bonded materials, and no loose or gravel surfaces are proposed.

The new town houses will be in general compliance with Part M of the Building Regulations, including flush thresholds to front doors, mounting heights of electrical switching, and max.1:20 ramps where necessary.

5.2 Access from Existing Transport Network

The site lies a short distance from public transport links to commercial facilities in Reading town centre and all destinations westwards and eastwards along Oxford Road and Tilehurst Road; and within walking distance of local commercial, religious and social establishments.

The access road and footpath will connect with those already constructed in Ivanhoe Close, which connects to the existing path and roadway in Western Elms Avenue.

5.3 Access Points and Layout

The site is within walking distance of Oxford Road and Tilehurst Road, each with good bus routes to Reading town centre and Tilehurst. Reading West railway station is also within walking distance, giving access to Reading main line station and all rail routes therefrom.

5.4 Maintenance of Access

The access points will be of robust hard materials requiring minimal maintenance.

6.0. DESIGN

The principal concepts of the design are:-

-6.1 To provide good quality self-contained residential accommodation in accordance with the Council's policies that seek to maintain standards of residential accommodation while restricting impact upon public resources;

-6.2 To maintain the prevailing relative residential density in the immediately surrounding area;

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-6.3 To respond to government policy seeking to better utilise underused urban sites;

-6.4 To bring an existing site into improved economic use without undue detriment to its surroundings, thereby maintaining the quality of the local environment in a sustainable way and in the long-term public interest.

7. INFRASTRUCTURAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The applicant agrees to reasonable Section 106 contributions and to enter into such an agreement when advised of the figures.

November 2022

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