

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Battle

App Ref: 221069/FUL

Address: 6 Gloucester Road, Reading

Proposals: Amalgamate two flats into a single dwelling house

Case Officer: Beatrice Malama

Applicant: Mr Eddie McGreevy

Date received (valid from): 16 August 2022 **Agreed Decision date:** 25 October 2022

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is a two storey mid-terraced residential property located on the northern side of Gloucester Road. The site is within a predominantly residential area comprising of mainly terraced properties of similar size, style and design. There are also a small number of detached and semi-detached dwellings within the wider area particularly the area south of Gloucester Road. The site is not Listed and not in a conservation area.

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Planning permission is sought for the amalgamation of two self-contained one-bed flats (C3 Use Class) to a single dwelling (C3 Use Class). No external alterations are proposed as part of this application.

Plans considered:

Drawing No. 9154 - Block and Location Plan

Drawing No. 9154 - Existing Ground and First Floor Plans

Drawing No. 9154 - Existing Roof Plan

Drawing No. 9154 - Front Elevation

Drawing No. 9154 - Rear Elevation

Drawing No. 9154 - Proposed Ground and First Floor Plans

Drawing No. 9154 - Proposed Roof Plan

Drawing No. 9154 - Frontage Visual

Received on 20th July 2022

Planning Design and Access Statement ref 9154

Received on 16th August 2022

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

03-00009-CLE (031138) - Certificate of Lawfulness for existing use as two flats - Application permitted - 27/ 2/2003

4. CONSULTATIONS

The following addresses were consulted by letter.

Flat 3, 174 Elm Park Road, Reading, RG30 2TJ

Flat 1, 174 Elm Park Road, Reading, RG30 2TJ

Flat 2, 174 Elm Park Road, Reading, RG30 2TJ

8 Gloucester Road, Reading, RG30 2TH

Flat 4, 174 Elm Park Road, Reading, RG30 2TJ

4 Gloucester Road, Reading, RG30 2TH

Flat 6, 174 Elm Park Road, Reading, RG30 2TJ

Flat 5, 174 Elm Park Road, Reading, RG30 2TJ

No letters of representation have been received

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

National Planning Policy Framework 2021

National Planning Practice Guidance 2014 onwards

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

H2: Density and Mix

H7: Protecting the Existing Housing Stock

H8: Residential Conversions

TR3: Access Traffic and Highway-related Matters

TR5: Car and Cycle Parking

Other Documents

Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD 2011

Sustainable Design & Construction SPD (2019)

Residential Conversions SPD (2013)

6. APPRAISAL

The main issues considered for these three separate applications are as follows:

- a) Principle of Development
- b) Residential Conversions and Existing Housing Stock
- c) Safeguarding Amenity
- d) Design
- e) Transport

a) Principle of Development

The application seeks the loss of a residential unit and the formation of a single dwelling house. Policy H7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan states that *“Planning permission will not be granted for any loss of residential accommodation or land unless there are exceptional circumstances. Planning permission will not be granted for a net loss in the number of residential units or gross floor area.”*

Paragraph 4.4.56 of the Reading Borough Local Plan also states that; *“(…) There may be exceptional circumstances where a loss of a limited amount of general residential would help to meet other key identified needs, for instance for a specific identified need for accommodation for vulnerable groups (see policy H6) or to reinstate a use more appropriate to the significance of a heritage asset, and this should be clearly demonstrated as part of any planning application.”*

The principle of the development proposed is acceptable, provided that the policy requirements of the Reading Borough Local Plan are satisfied, and that “exceptional circumstances” can be demonstrated.

b) Residential Conversions and Existing Housing Stock

In this instance, great weight is given to Policy H8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan when assessing the pre-existing arrangement of 6 Gloucester Road as two self-contained one-bed flats. Policy H8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan states that;

“Proposals to convert properties into self-contained flats or for multiple occupation will only be acceptable where:

- The proposal respects the physical character of the area in terms of scale, location, materials and design, the arrangement of doors, windows and other principal architectural features;*
- The proposal would not, either individually or cumulatively, unduly dilute or harm an existing mixed and sustainable community through the significant loss of single family housing;*
- There are no unacceptable adverse impacts to residents of the scheme or surrounding properties arising from noise and disturbance in terms of the number and layout of units proposed and the proximity to other properties;*
- There is no inappropriate stacking and location of rooms between units;*
- Bin and cycle storage is of an appropriate size and standard for the units proposed and should be located at ground floor level with easy access; and*
- The resulting property or properties would provide adequate internal floorspace and headroom for residents.*

Additionally, in the case of conversions of houses to self-contained flats:

- The property to be converted measures more than 120 square metres gross;*
- At least 25% of the units formed and, where there are 4 or fewer units at least one unit of accommodation, should be suitable for family occupation with a minimum of two bedrooms.*

The total site area for No 6 Gloucester Road 101.4 square meters and the total Gross Internal area of the building is 82. 4 square meters. Based on these figures it is clear that the sub-division of 6 Gloucester Road to two self-contained one bed flats would not have been acceptable under Policy H8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan as the development would have

failed to meet the Gross Internal Space requirement. In addition, the development would not have been acceptable as it resulted in the creation of two one-bed flats, and no two bed flats “suitable for family occupation”.

Given that the existing two self-contained one bed flat do not meet the minimum policy requirements in terms of floor space and provision of accommodation suitable for family occupation, the development would not be compliant with Policy H8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan if submitted for consideration under the current Development plan. In this instance it is considered that the conversion to a family dwelling is far more desirable than retaining 6 Gloucester Road as two self-contained one-bed flats.

Policy H8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan also states that proposals to convert properties into self-contained flats will only be acceptable where the proposal would not, either individually or cumulatively, unduly dilute or harm an existing mixed and sustainable community through the significant loss of single-family housing. The development approved under application 03-00009-CLE (031138) in 2003 resulted in the loss of a family dwelling and the creation of two one-bed flats. Therefore, had the proposal been considered against Policy H8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan the proposed development would not have been in accordance with this aspect of the policy given that the character of the surrounding area is mostly that of family sized homes.

Policy H2 of the Reading Borough Local Plan states that *“Wherever possible, residential development should contribute towards meeting the needs for the mix of housing set out in figure 4.6, in particular for family homes of three or more bedrooms”*.

Figure 4.6: Estimated size of accommodation type required in Reading (Source: SHMA 2016)

	1 bedroom	2 bedroom	3 bedroom	4+ bedroom
Market	10.3%	29.6%	41.5%	18.5%
Affordable	43.4%	32.9%	21.6%	2.1%
Overall	18.6%	30.5%	36.5%	14.4%

The development contributes positively towards the objectives of Policy H2 by providing a 3-bed dwelling. It is acknowledged that the development would result in the loss of one dwelling unit, however, this is outweighed by the overriding need at this time for three-bed dwellings in the Borough as evidenced in figure 4.6 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

Therefore, the development is supported on the basis that, exceptional circumstances are considered to have been appropriately demonstrated for the conversion of 6 Gloucester Road back to a single dwelling, the existing converted two 1-bed flats are not in accordance with Policies H8 and CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan, and on the basis that the development would contribute positively towards providing sought after family accommodation within the Borough in accordance with Policy H2 of the Reading Borough Local Plan. A condition is recommended to restrict change of use to a C4 HMO as this would fail to meet the identified housing need for 3 bed dwellings which forms the basis of this recommendation.

c) Safeguarding Amenity

This proposal has also been assessed against Reading Borough Local Plan policy CC8: Safeguarding Amenity, which states that proposals are acceptable where they will not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties with regard to various factors, including (amongst others):

- Privacy and overlooking
- Access to sunlight and daylight;
- Visual dominance and overbearing effects of development
- Noise and disturbance
- Dust and fumes

The conversion of 6 Gloucester Road to a single dwelling is not considered to harm the living conditions of neighbouring residents as no exterior alterations to the existing building are proposed. In this regard, concerns such as overbearing effects of development or loss of privacy or natural light would arise. In addition, the conversion to a family dwelling is unlikely to result in any harmful noise levels or disturbance. Furthermore, the conversion to one family dwelling is considered more desirable in terms of the living conditions of future occupants than the retention of the property as two self-contained flats. The use of 6 Gloucester Road as a family home is considered an acceptable use that would not unduly harm the living conditions of future occupants and of neighbouring properties as the proposed residential use is characteristic of the surrounding area.

d) Design

The proposal does not include any material changes to the exterior of the existing building as such the proposed development would not result in any harm to the character and appearance of the existing dwelling, neighbouring buildings and the street scene. The proposed development therefore is considered to comply with Policy CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

e) Transport

It is considered that the conversion of 6 Gloucester to a single dwelling is unlikely to result in any additional parking requirements than currently needed and therefore a three bed-dwelling house would not create any pressure on parking or result in harm to the area. The proposal therefore is considered to comply with Policies TR3 and TR5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

7. CONCLUSION

The proposed development has been assessed as set out above and is considered to be acceptable on that basis, subject to the following conditions.

8. RECOMMENDATION

Application Permitted

Recommended Conditions:

Time Limit (Standard)

Approved Plans

Materials (To Match)

Change of use to HMO