



301 London Road, Reading, RG1 3NZ

Proposed conversion from two flats to a single dwellinghouse.

Planning Statement

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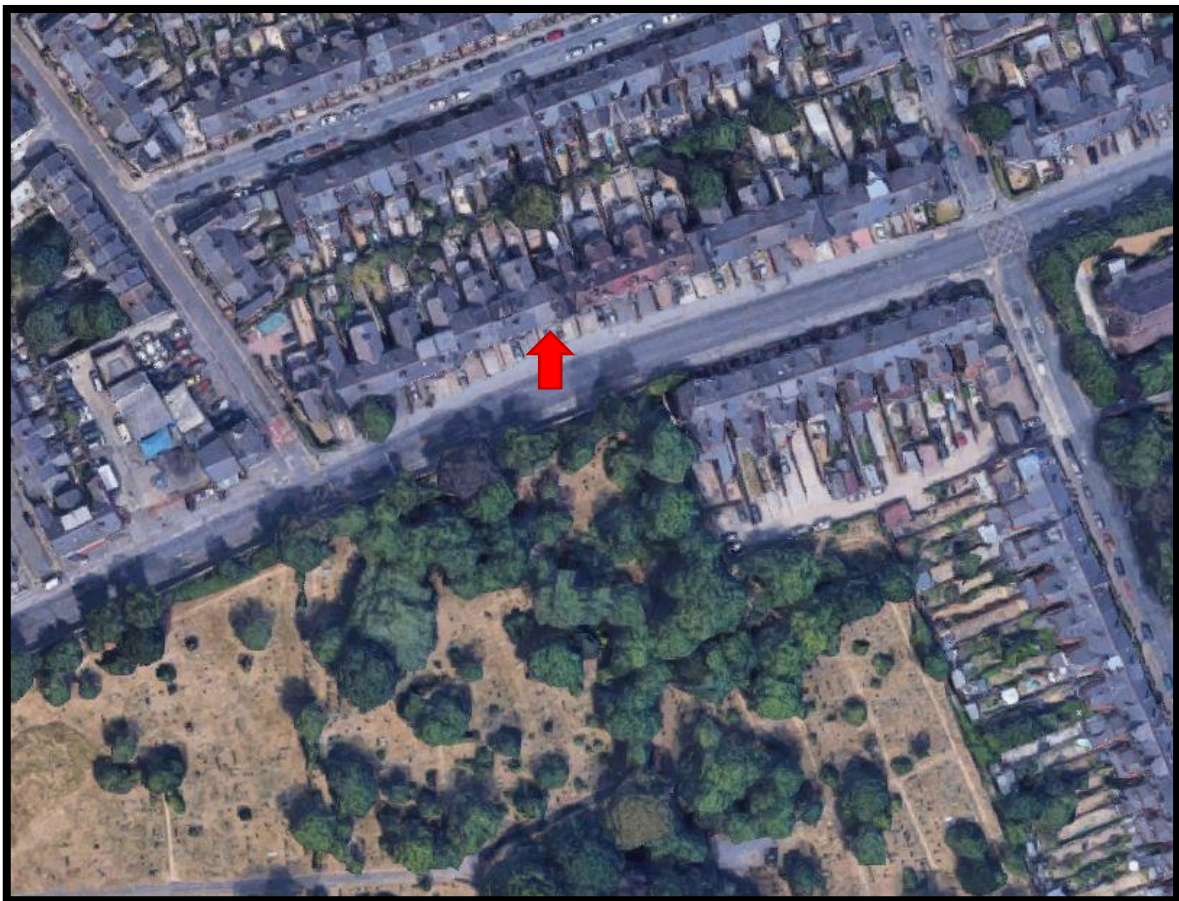
1. Introduction

1.1. Preface

This planning statement has been prepared in support of a full application for conversion from two flats to a single dwellinghouse (retrospective) at 301 London Road in Reading.

The following statement covers the subject and information required for submission as set in the National Planning Policy Framework (2021), Reading Borough Local Plan. This document will outline the application site history and the design strategy for the proposed development. It should be read in conjunction with the submitted drawings.

1.2. Site Location



Aerial photograph





Bird's eye photograph (front of the application site)



Bird's eye photograph (rear of the application site)



1.3. Site Description

The site is occupied by a two storey residential terraced building, which comprises private amenity space to the rear and the front driveway. The entire area of the application site is circa 165.0m², where the host building includes approximately 70.0m² footprint. The application property benefits from off-street parking space with lack of any screening landscaping to the front and given close distance from the highway, it is considered to be prominent and clearly visible within the streetscene. Below are the photographs.





1.4. Surrounding Area Description

The application site is located on the northern side of London Rd. The application site is surrounded by cohesively designed terraced buildings, which are relatively repeatable in terms of their scale, appearance, architectural details or size of the plots. The existing group of residential terraced buildings located on the northern side of London Road include dwellings of a double or 2.5 storey height, usually typical pitched roof forms (or front facing gables) and relatively cohesive external



materials pattern. The host dwelling is one out of many terraced properties along this side of London Road, where single terraced houses are characteristic and repeatable within the streetscene.

Examples of adjacent buildings are presented in the below photographs included in this paragraph.

Summarising, within the closest proximity from the application property, there are numerous of buildings, cohesive in terms of their:

- type (terraced);
- fenestration and architectural details;
- roof forms (angle, design, ridge/eaves height);
- scale/footprint/volume;
- landscaping;
- distance from the highway;
- boundary treatment;
- front driveways.







2. Planning Policy

2.1. NPPF

Sustainable Development

Paragraph 7 of the NPPF emphasises that *“The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development”* and expands that in the paragraph 8, that it *“has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive:*

- *an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;*
- *a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible*



services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being;

- *an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy”.*

Furthermore, a decision-making in favour of sustainable development is strengthened and its significant weight is confirmed in paragraph 38, which states that *“Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available, including brownfield registers and permission in principle, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible”.*

Residential redevelopment location and appropriate density

Paragraph 69 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:*

- *identify, through the development plan and brownfield registers, land to accommodate at least 10% of their housing requirement on sites no larger than one hectare;*
- *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 72, 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 119 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”* and *“makes as much use as possible of previously-developed or ‘brownfield’ land”*. Additionally, paragraph 120 says that decisions should *“promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings, especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing where land supply is constrained and available sites could be used more effectively”*.



Paragraph 124 in the 'Achieving appropriate densities' part of NPPF, emphasizes that *"Planning policies and decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land, taking into account:*

- a. the identified need for different types of housing and other forms of development, and the availability of land suitable for accommodating it;*
- b. local market conditions and viability;*
- c. 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;*
- d. the desirability of maintaining an area's prevailing character and setting (including residential gardens), or of promoting regeneration and change; and*
- e. the importance of securing well-designed, attractive and healthy places."*

Housing Quality and Design

Paragraph 126 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 *"local framework for creating beautiful and 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"*.

Paragraph 130 of the NPPF comprises a list, in terms of what decisions should ensure with regards to proposed developments, inter alia:

- *"function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
- *are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*
- *are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);*



- *establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;*
- *optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and*
- *create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users⁴⁶; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience”.*

2.2. Reading Borough Local Plan

Residential redevelopment

The proposed dwelling would be accommodated within the settlement boundaries for Reading. Local Plan Policy H7 ‘Protecting the existing housing stock’ 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.”* It is considered that such circumstances are included in the Cover Letter submitted with this application, which clarify the owner’s circumstances and why the proposed development is required.

Effectively, due to residential character of the proposed development in the current application, Local Plan confirms a clear assumption in favour of such redevelopment, as described in this statement. The proposed single dwellinghouse would be one out of numerous similar properties along this side of London Road. Besides major development locations, small-scale housing development has been strengthened also in Paragraph 4.4.108 states that *“...there may still be opportunities for smaller scale regeneration, renewal and reconfiguration of some of Reading’s suburban areas. The principle of this is generally to be welcomed, and the policy aims to provide support to such proposals where they do not result in unacceptable impacts on the existing area.”.*

Accessibility

Number of Local Plan Policies relate to sustainable development, such as CC6 ‘Accessibility and the intensity of development’ part, which emphasises importance of sustainable location of development – *“The scale and density of development will be related to its level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport to a range of services and facilities, with the densest and largest scale development taking place in the most accessible locations. Unless it can be demonstrated that the accessibility of a*



site is to be significantly upgraded, for example, by providing high quality pedestrian routes or providing access to good public transport services, any new development must be at a scale, density and intensity appropriate to that level of accessibility.”.

Policy CC6 explains in paragraph 4.1.25 that “...primary locations for new development will be those accessible by walking and cycling to a wide range of employment, services and facilities, leisure, education and health facilities, or which are accessible by walking to routes/stops of frequent public transport services that provide easy access to the aforementioned uses”. Paragraphs 4.1.27 continues that good level of accessibility means - “to be that within 400m of a defined centre with a good range of facilities by pedestrian routes, and within 400m by pedestrian routes of a bus stop served by a service with a frequency of better than one bus every 20 minutes in each direction within daytime hours (7.00 a.m. to 7.00 p.m.).”

The general health targets, accompanying appropriately located developments, mentioned in the explanation of this policy include:

- *“increased physical activity;*
- *decreased incidences of cardiovascular disease and obesity;*
- *reduced levels of stress caused by traffic noise and congestion;*
- *fewer cases of lung or heart disease associated with poor air quality;*
- *proximity to healthcare services;*
- *access to open space for recreation”.*

It is considered that the proposed conversion would positively impact upon the above aspects, as the single unit of occupancy would provide a family size unit in a convenient location, sustainably sited closely to the necessary services and facilities.

Design Quality

Policy CC7 states that “All development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. The various components of development form, including:

- *Layout: urban structure and urban grain;*
- *Landscape;*
- *Density and mix;*
- *Scale: height and massing; and*
- *Architectural detail and materials”.*



The above components are linked with the subsequently highlighted urban design objectives, which should be enhanced by the proposals, inter alia:

- *“Character - a place with its own identity and sense of place;*
- *Continuity and enclosure;*
- *Quality of the public realm and provision of green infrastructure and landscaping;*
- *Ease of movement and permeability;*
- *Legibility - clear image and easy to understand;*
- *Adaptability – capable of adaptation over time;*
- *Diversity – meets a wide range of needs”.*

In addition, CC7 summarizes and encourages to ensure that proposed developments:

- *“Respond positively to their local context and create or reinforce local character and distinctiveness, including protecting and enhancing the historic environment of the Borough and providing value to the public realm;*
- *Create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder or fear of crime does not undermine quality of life or community cohesion;*
- *Address the needs of all in society and are accessible, usable and easy to understand by them, including providing suitable access to, into and within, its facilities, for all potential users, including disabled people, so that they can use them safely and easily;*
- *Are visually attractive as a result of good high quality built forms and spaces, the inclusion of public art and appropriate materials and landscaping.”.*

It is extremely important to note that the application property no. 301 London is one out of many properties along this part of the road, which is a typical terraced dwelling, single occupancy. The retrospective proposal to convert it from two flats would appear in keeping with the character of the area.

3. Appraisal

3.1. General concept

The overall aim of the proposal is to make efficient use of the existing site and its assets and adjust it to the current circumstances of the applicant, by proposing a conversion to a single terraced dwellinghouse and remove the existing two flats at the application property, through the above proposal. The proposal would have an appropriate level of impact upon the surrounding area, as described below in this chapter.



3.2. Impact on the Character of the Area

Planning history

It is acknowledged that the application site was a subject of one recent planning permission:

- 211303 - Certificate of Lawfulness for Existing use for over 4 years - Ground floor used as a one bed, self contained flat. First floor used as a one bed, self contained flat;

Additionally, a significant weigh should be given to lack of any recent planning permission to subdivide the any of the existing units under the same postcode as the application property. Furthermore, applications for additional units at 341 Reading Road was refused under ref. 161514 and 170276.

The proposed development is therefore considered to result in a less significant impact in comparison with the above proposals and with the previous arrangement of two flats.

Design

The proposed conversion would retain a sympathetic design and compliant appearance of the main dwelling. The proposal would not change the traditional fenestration elements installed within elevations of the building, which would preserve a typical appearance and character of the residential properties in the surroundings. The proposal would be considered to visually fit within the surrounding area, not resulting in any detrimental impact, due to lack of external changes.

3.3. Impact on neighbours

Loss of Light, Privacy and Overbearing

Due to lack of any extension or changes to fenestration, no changes to neighbours impact would occur.

3.4. Transport, parking and waste

The proposed site is located in a sustainable location, in close proximity from services at London Road and in a walking distance from the necessary shops and facilities. The host property is within close proximity from adjacent bus stops on London Road (about 1-2 min walk) In addition to the above, the host dwellings includes enough space for 2x parking spaces each and secured bike storage at the back garden with waste storage located at the front of the properties.

3.5. Private Outdoor Amenity Space

It is acknowledged that currently the application property comprises a sufficient outdoor amenity space within its residential curtilage for a single dwelling. In this arrangement all of the occupiers of



the dwelling have access to private amenity space, whereas when it was divided into two flats, the upper level units did not have such access. Notwithstanding the above, the application site is located within close proximity of numerous green public spaces, accessible within walking distance. All recreational areas are of high quality, large and offering extensive activities (various sports, playgrounds, lake, or green open grass areas), such as adjacent Palmer Park.

3.6. Internal Amenity Space

The proposed dwelling would include an internal space of circa 126.0m², sufficient and appropriate for a three bedroom dwelling. The layout provides appropriate level of privacy and living quality, due to appropriate internal ground and first floor arrangement. It is confirmed, that the host dwelling would comply with the 'Technical housing standards - nationally described space standard' adopted by Department for Communities and Local Government in March.

4. Conclusion

By virtue of the scale and nature of the proposed development, it is considered that it would comply with the relevant parts of NPPF, Reading Borough Local Plan, therefore we kindly appeal, to approve the submitted application.

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