

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Application No: 221356/FUL

Address: 9 Priest Hill, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7RZ

Proposal: Proposed de-conversion of two small flats to revert to the original single family semi-detached house

Case Officer: David Brett

Applicant: Ms J Calcutt

Received on: 13/09/2022

Valid from: 14/09/2022

Target Date: 09/11/2022

Site Description and Surrounding Area

The proposal site is a two storey semi-detached terraced property located on Priest Hill, Caversham. 9 Priest Hill is located approximately 150m north of Caversham District Centre, and is 150m north east of the St Peters Conservation Area. The south side of Priest Hill is considered predominantly residential, with a mix of semi-detached dwellings that vary in design and style but predominantly similar size and scale. The north side of Priest Hill is again considered predominantly residential, however, with a wider variety of residential scales from three storey townhouses, to two storey terraced rows.

The proposal site is not within a Conservation Area or Listed.

Proposal

Planning permission is sought for the amalgamation of two self-contained one-bed flats (C3 Use Class) to a single dwelling (C3 Use Class).

The external alterations proposed consist of the removal of a ground floor side facing window serving the bathroom to the ground floor flat. The removal of an internal wall is proposed to the ground floor flat to facilitate the conversion to a single-family home.

Plans/Documents Considered

The following plans and documents have been supplied for this application:

- Location Plan
- ~~Proposals - 2033 PRO 1~~
- Existing Elevations - 2033 Ex E1
- Block Plan - 2033 BLOC 1
- Design, Access and Planning Statement prepared by Stanway Little Associates
- Proposed Conversion to 2 Flats at N° 9 Priest Hill. Caversham - Approved Plans for application 0000012233 (See Relevant Planning History section of this report for further details)
- Proposals - 2033 PRO 1 (Existing Floor Plan) (DAPS - Appendix 2)
- Appeal Decision (Appeal Ref: APP/E0345/A/20/3250600) - 85 & *7 Longships Way (DAPS - Appendix 3)
- "Council Calls on Developers to Building the Homes which Reading Needs" - Reading Council Article dates 25/01/2022 (DAPS - Appendix 4)

Received on 13/09/2022

- Proposals - 2033 PRO 1A

Received on 17/10/2022

Relevant Planning History

0000012233 - Convert into 2 Flats - Application Permitted on 11/12/1964

220645/CLP - Certificate of Lawfulness for Proposed conversion of property containing 2x maisonettes into 1x dwelling. - Application Withdrawn on 23/05/2022

Officer Note: The applicant was advised to withdraw the Certificate of Lawfulness (Proposed) application and submit an application for full planning permission as the proposal would need to be assessed against Policy H7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

Internal Consultations

Reading Borough Council, Planning Enforcement - Responses received on 27/06/2022

- No comments on this application

Reading Borough Council, Transport Development Control - Response received on 10/10/2022

- *The existing and proposed uses would require a similar level of car parking and therefore the change to a 3 bed dwelling would not create harm to the area.*
- *We would however, require cycle parking to be provided as the proposal would increase the demand as specified in the SPD. The existing use would require 0.5 spaces per unit resulting in a total of 1 cycle space whereas the 3 bed house requires 2 cycle spaces. I would be happy for the uplift to be provided which could be in something as simple as a shed in the rear garden. Given that this is a single house it would not be required to include a Sheffield stand or similar.*
- *As long as refuse is store as per the image below I would have no objection to this given that it is off the Highway and is a continuation of the existing arrangement.*

Responses were also received from Councillor Brock and Councillor Yeo, both in support of the application.

External Consultees

7 Priest Hill, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7RZ - No response received.

11 Priest Hill, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7RZ - No response received.

11A Priest Hill, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7RZ - No response received.

26 Rectory Road, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7SH - No response received.

28 Rectory Road, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7SH - No response received.

30 Rectory Road, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7SH - No response 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.

Relevant Planning Policy and Guidance

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. The Development Plan for Reading relevant to the application site comprises the Reading Borough Local Plan (adopted November 2019).

The 'National Planning Policy Framework' ('NPPF') 2021 states clearly that its content is to be a material consideration in the determination of applications. The 'NPPF' states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the Local Plan according to their degree of consistency with the 'NPPF' (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the 'NPPF', the greater the weight that may be given).

Relevant Policies

The application has been assessed against the following policies:

National

National Planning Policy Framework 2021;
National Planning Policy Guidance 2014 onwards;

Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019)

- CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction
- CC3: Adaption to Climate Change
- CC5: Waste Minimisation and Storage
- CC7: Design and the Public Realm
- CC8: Safeguarding Amenity
- H2: Density and Mix
- H7: Protecting the Existing Housing Stock
- H8: Residential Conversions

Other documents

Sustainable Design & Construction SPD (2019)
Residential Conversions SPD (2013)

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
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- 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 9 Priest Hill 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.*

It is acknowledged that 9 Priest Hill has a gross internal area of more than 120m², however, the sub-division of 9 Priest Hill to two self-contained one-bed flats would not have been acceptable under Policy H8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan, as the development resulted in the creation of two one-bed flats, and zero two-bed flats “suitable for family occupation”.

In this instance it is considered that the conversion to a family dwelling is far more desirable than retaining 9 Priest Hill as two self-contained one-bed flats, particularly as the proposed conversion of the family dwelling to two self-contained 1-bed flats would not be compliant with Policy H8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan if submitted for consideration under the current Development Plan.

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 0000012233 in 1964 resulted in the loss of a family dwelling and the creation of two 1-bed flats. Therefore, had the proposals 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.

Therefore, exceptional circumstances are considered to have been appropriately demonstrated for the conversion of 9 Priest Hill back to a single dwelling, and the development is in accordance with Policy H7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

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 two 1-bed dwellings, 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 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.

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
- Visual dominance and overbearing effects of development
- Noise and disturbance
- Dust and fumes

The conversion of 9 Priest Hill to a single dwelling is not considered to harm the living conditions of neighbouring residents along Priest Hill, or residents to the rear along Radstock Road. It is considered that the conversion to one family dwelling is more desirable than the retention of the property as two self-contained flats.

The proposal was further considered against the criteria specified within Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan. The proposed development would not harm the amenity of the surrounding area in accordance with Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan. The use of 9 Priest Hill as a family home is considered an acceptable use that would not unduly harm the living conditions of neighbouring properties as the proposed residential use is characteristic of the surrounding area.

d) Design

The only external alteration proposed within this application is for the removal of the ground floor side facing window serving the bathroom to the ground floor flat. It has been

indicated that the side facing window will be bricked up using bricks that match the existing dwelling. The proposed alteration is considered very minor in scale and would not be visible from the highway. The development would not meaningfully alter the character and appearance of the existing dwelling or the surrounding area. Therefore, the proposed development is considered in accordance with Policy H7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

e) Transport

As per the response from Transport Development Control to this application, there are no transport objections to this proposal. It has been requested that details of cycle parking be secured within this application. It is, however, considered that there is ample space within the garden for cycle storage, or even within the main house. Therefore, it is not considered necessary to secure cycle parking details within this application.

Conclusion

The development has been assessed and the works are considered to be in accordance with the above relevant policies and planning permission can be granted.

Recommendation

GRANT

Conditions

TL1: Time Limit (Standard)

The development hereby permitted shall begin no later than three years from the date of this planning permission.

REASON: In pursuance of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004) in order to prevent an accumulation of unimplemented planning permissions.

AP1: Approved Plans

The development hereby permitted shall ONLY be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

- Location Plan
- Existing Elevations - 2033 Ex E1
- Block Plan - 2033 BLOC 1

Received on 13/09/2022

- Proposals - 2033 PRO 1A

Received on 17/10/2022

REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is carried out and adhered to in accordance with the application form and associated details hereby approved.

M1: Materials (To Match)

The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used on the existing building.

REASON: In the interests of visual amenity and ensuring the new development responds positively to the local context and character in accordance with Policy CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

Change of Use to HMO

Notwithstanding the provisions of Part 3, Schedule 2, of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (or any order revoking or re-enacting that Order with or without modification), no development within Class L (small HMOs to dwellinghouses and vice versa), shall be carried out within the curtilage of the dwelling without express planning permission from the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: In the interests of ensuring that the development responds positively to the local context and character, and provides a 3-bed dwelling in accordance with Policies CC7 and H2 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

Informatives

IF1: Positive and Proactive Working - approval

The Local Planning Authority has worked positively and proactively with the applicant to resolve relevant matters to allow permission to be granted within the agreed timescale for the decision to be issued.

IF5: Terms

Your attention is drawn to the terms and conditions of this permission. Any development which is carried out but which differs materially from the approved plans and details, or does not comply with any condition(s) or planning obligation(s) attached to the permission may result in the Council taking action to remedy the breach of planning control. If you are in any doubt please contact the Council.