

DELEGATED REPORT

Ward: Katesgrove

App No.: 190478

Address: Land to the rear of, 84 London Street, Reading

Proposal: Demolition of B8 Commercial Unit & construction of three one-bedroom flats over three floors including bin & cycle storage.

Applicant: Mr Abdul Naveed

Case Officer: James Overall

RECOMMENDATION:

Grant subject to S106 for payment of a financial contribution (£36,000) for affordable housing and relevant planning conditions.

Confirm that any pre-commencement conditions have been agreed

1. INTRODUCTION

The site is located to the rear of No 84 London Street, a Grade II Listed Building, and adjacent to Folk House, a Building of Townscape Merit within the Market Place and London Street Conservation Area. The site is occupied by a garage and land the rear of London Street.



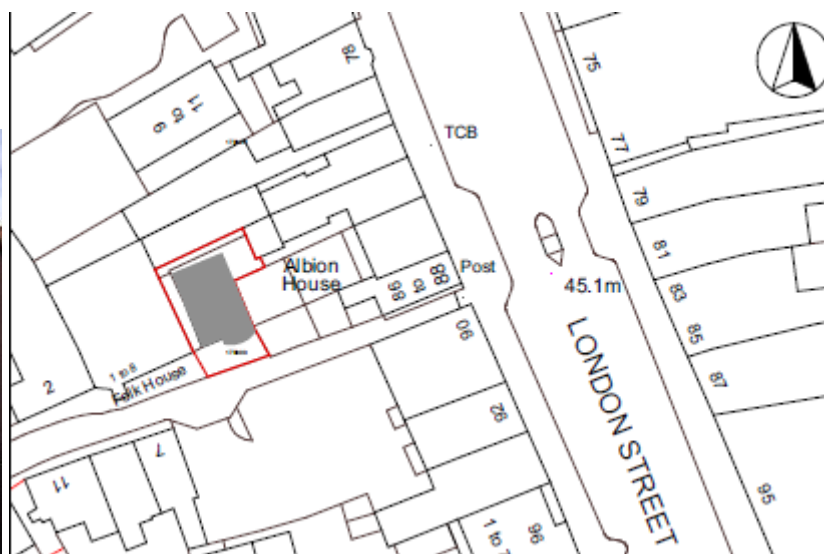
The garage



Looking towards London St



Folk House adjacent to the west



Location Plan

2. PROPOSAL

The proposal is for the demolition of the garage and redevelopment of the site to provide a three storey building with a one bedroom flat on each floor. There would be no on-site parking but a cycle store and bin store is proposed.

The original design included an over sailing upper floor but amended plans have removed these and improved the articulation of the front of the building on request from officers.

Submitted Plans and Documentation:

The submitted plans were revised twice- below are listed the final set - received on 28 Jan 2022 for consideration:

- PL-01 - Location Plan
- PL-02 - Rev B Block Plan
- PL-03 - Existing Site Plan
- PL-04 - Existing floor Plans
- PL-05 - Existing Elevations
- PL-06 - Rev B Proposed Site Plan
- PL-07 - Rev B Proposed Ground Floor Plan
- PL-08 - Rev B Proposed First Floor Plan
- PL-09 - Rev B Proposed Second Floor Plan
- PL-10 - Rev B Proposed Roof Plan
- PL-11 - Rev B Proposed Front & Rear Elevations
- PL-12 - Rev B Proposed Side Elevations
- PL-13 - Rev B Proposed Side 3D views
- PL-14 - Rev B Proposed Site Plan GF
- PL-15 - Rev B Proposed 3D view front

- Heritage Statement Rev A
- Planning Statement
- Design & Access Statement
- Valuations

Community Infrastructure levy (CIL):

In relation to the community infrastructure levy, the applicant has duly completed a CIL liability form with the submission. The additional residential floorspace (144.5 sq.m) proposed will be liable to make a CIL payment.

3. PLANNING HISTORY

None on record relevant to the application site.

4. CONSULTATIONS

a. Statutory

None

b. Non Statutory

Transport:

The area for the proposed development is located at the rear of 84 London Street which fronts onto Church Street. The application site is only accessible from London Street by a 3.0 metre wide footpath that provides pedestrian access to Church Street. Vehicular access to the appeal site is derived from Church Street by way of Letcombe Street off Mill Lane or Deansgate Road from Southampton Street. There are 'No Waiting' restrictions in place along Church Street which extends to the edge of the site boundary.

The proposal consists of the demolition of the B8 commercial unit and construction of three one-bedroom flats. According to the Highways register, the land to the front of the existing building is adopted highway. It appears the proposed building will encroach onto highway land. The proposed boundary wall and hedging will also be situated onto highway land. Please see the extract below identifying this area.



The extent of the public highway is shown in red and the area covers most of the hard standing to the front. Therefore, the process of stopping up the highway will need to be undertaken and the Council's Valuation and Highway departments needs to be consulted to establish whether there are any objections to the stopping up. An Order authorising the stopping of any highway can be made, if the Secretary of State is satisfied to do so, to allow development to be carried out in accordance with a valid and relevant planning permission granted under Part III of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. The highway to be stopped up must be being developed upon and fall within the planning boundary or be a condition of the planning permission. If Highway land is stopped up then the interest in the surface will revert back to that owner of the subsoil. The sub soil owner will then require transfer the land to the purchaser (if applicable). Therefore, the title deeds for the property will need to be provided to show what land is within the curtilage of the property.

The site is located within the Zone 2, the primary core area but on the periphery of the central core area which lies at the heart of Reading Borough, consisting primarily of retail and commercial office developments with good transport hubs. This area is well served by rail and bus links and also contains the largest proportion of public car parking spaces. The parking standard for 1 bed flat within Zone 2 is 1 space per unit, while the parking standard for 1 bed flat within Zone 1 is 0.5 spaces per dwellings.

A review of the area confirms that Church Street and the surrounding road network all have parking restrictions preventing on-street parking. There are 'No Waiting' (no parking Monday - Saturday 8am-6.30pm) restrictions in place along Church Street which extends to the edge of the site boundary.

Given the site's close proximity to the centre of Reading, and its easy access to public transport connections and the facilities within the town centre, it is considered that the site is located in a sustainable location. The surrounding road network all have parking restrictions preventing on-street parking, therefore, a reduction in the residential parking

provision is considered acceptable and will not lead to on street parking being detrimental to road safety.

However, the applicant should be advised that the future residents of the properties would not be entitled to apply for a residents parking permit for the surrounding residential streets. This will ensure that the development does not harm the existing amenities of the neighbouring residential properties by adding to the already high level of on street car parking in the area.

The development is required to provide 0.5 cycle parking spaces per unit within a lockable covered store. The ground floor layout illustrates a bicycle store, however, the proposed dimensions are too small to accommodate 2 bicycles. Given that the development will be car free, it is essential that good quality cycle storage is provided. The applicant is requested to review this.

A refuse area will be provided which will be accessed from Church Street. Servicing of the site will not be affected as the situation is unchanged for refuse collection & deliveries.

Therefore, the applicant is requested to address the points above before determining this application.

Conditions for cycle parking, bin storage, construction methods and parking permits requested if permission granted.

Conservation Advisor:

The proposed site is located within the Market Place and London Street Conservation Area. The Market Place/London Street Conservation Area was designated in 1972 and extended in 1982, and the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area Appraisal document was adopted by Reading Borough Council in 2007 (Conservation Studio, 2007).

The special interest that justifies designation of the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area derives from:

- the northern half of the conservation area contains the site of the town's medieval market place, now formally known as 'Market Place', and the recently restored 19th century Town Hall within which are the Museum of Reading and the Reading Concert Hall.
- to the west is the commercial heart of Reading i.e. Broad Street and the modern Oracle Shopping Centre.
- to the east is Forbury Gardens, the site of the outer precinct of Reading Abbey, now a public park and the town centre's largest public open space.
- southern half of the conservation area, comprising London Street and Church Street, lies on the south side of the River Kennet which flows eastward under High Bridge, shortly to join the Thames.

The southern half is severed from the town centre by the Inner Distribution Road (IDR), a wide dual-carriageway that is difficult for pedestrians to cross. The River Kennet passes through the narrow mid-point of this linear conservation area. The land rises gently northward from the river to St Laurence's Church where it becomes level. Similarly, the land rises gently southward from the river to the upper end of London Road.

Proposals

The main elements of the proposed development within the Conservation Area are:

- Demolition of existing single storey garage
- Replacement with three storey building;

The proposed site is located to the rear of London Street. A new building is proposed to replace the existing single storey garage. The garage is considered to detract from the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and therefore its demolition is an opportunity to improve the Conservation Area. The proposed replacement building would be 3 storeys high built, being lower than the adjacent Folk House building. The building would be built of red brick, with buff brick detailing and parapet walls in buff render or stone. Gauged brick detailing is proposed over the windows, which would consist of 2 pane sash windows. Brickwork is indicated as in English bond. One bay of the building projects forward as a bay. The boundary treatment is indicated as a low wall with railings.

The site is located to the rear of No 84 London Street, a Grade II Listed Building, and adjacent to Folk House, a Building of Townscape Merit within the Conservation Area which, due to extensions, forms a four storey building in red brick with an incongruous front elevation lift shaft extension.

Discussion

The design for the new building is considered to be appropriate in terms of its scale and detailing and would offer the opportunity to remove the single storey garage building, which has a negative effect on the Conservation Area. The proposed detailing of the replacement building would harmonise well with the surrounding architecture and would preserve its character and appearance. There is a minor concern regarding the projection of the front bay beyond the existing building line. However, given the projection to the adjacent Folk House and the fact that the proposed bay would add architectural interest to the building, on balance there is no objection to this element.

Conclusions

The local authority has a statutory duty to have special regard to the desirability of preserving Listed Buildings or their settings under Section 66(1) and 'with respect of any building or other land in a conservation area.....special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area under Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Area Act) 1990.

The proposed building is considered to preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and would not harm the setting of the surrounding Listed Buildings. Therefore, should RBC be minded to grant consent, the following conditions are recommended:

The following, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority before the relevant part of the work is begun:

- a) Sample panel of all facing materials, including a sample panel of brickwork which demonstrates brick type, colour, texture, face bond, mortar mix and pointing, to be erected on site and maintained there during the course of construction;*
- b) Samples and/or manufacturer's details of the roof materials for the proposed works are to be provided on site and retained on site during the course of the works;*
- c) Detailed specification for all windows with materials annotated;*
- d) Detailed specification for all doors with materials annotated;*

The relevant part of the works shall not be carried out otherwise than in accordance with the details thus approved.

Reason: In order to safeguard the special architectural and historic interest of the area in accordance with the requirements of policy

Archaeology:

The site of this application is very modest in area but lies within the known extent of the regionally important medieval town of Reading. London Street was part of the medieval street plan and was the main route leading south from the town to Winchester, Southampton and the south coast. Church Street was also probably a lesser medieval street, linking London Street to Southampton Street.

The archaeological potential of this site at 84 London Street is exemplified by the results of investigations immediately to the north, to the rear of 74-76 London Street, and to the south, at 96-106 London Street. At the former, three medieval pits, backfilled between the 11th and 14th centuries AD, were recorded in 2012, while at 96-102 London Street exploratory investigations in 2002 revealed two medieval pits, and a larger number of both early and late post-medieval pits (16th - 19th century). One very large pit suggested that quarrying previously took place on the site while redeposited medieval pottery was recovered from several of the later features.

There is therefore the potential for medieval and later archaeological remains to be located within the application area. Similar locations within medieval Reading south of the River Kennet have revealed significant buried remains, such as at Silver Street.

Therefore, although this is a modest site in terms of area, it lies within an area of high archaeological potential with a proposed development that will significantly impact on below ground deposits. Should the proposal be permitted, it is therefore appropriate that a programme of archaeological work should be undertaken to mitigate the impacts of the development. It is likely that the excavation of an exploratory trench, after demolition and prior to the commencement of development, would be appropriate but it is acknowledged that the site area is small in size and it may be that archaeological monitoring during construction would be an appropriate alternative strategy.

This archaeological work can be secured by an appropriately worded condition should permission be granted. This is in accordance with Paragraph 141 of the NPPF which states that local planning authorities should 'require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible'.

I therefore recommend that the following condition is attached to any planning permission granted, to mitigate the impact of the development.

Condition:

No development shall take place within the site, other than demolition to ground level, until the applicant, or their agents or their successors in title, has secured and implemented a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation, which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall only take place in accordance with the detailed scheme approved pursuant to this condition.

Landscape:

I have no objections in principle to this application - the applicant has proposed a native hedge around the front. The Borough Council would not necessarily demand native planting in this urban location and preference will be given to a suitable compact hedge species which will thrive in the urban setting and enhance the site without unduly onerous maintenance requirements.

In terms of the impact of the building on climate change, I note that the building has a flat roof - are there any means by which we can request the addition of a Green roof in order to

improve the green credentials and reduce water run-off from the new building in accordance with Policy DM1?

Officer note: This request for a green roof was agreed by the applicant and relevant conditions recommended.

Ecology:

The application site comprises a single-storey flat-roofed brick building which it is proposed to demolish and replace with a three-storey building containing 3 flats. The building is located in a highly urbanised and the building appears not to have any features potentially suitable for use by roosting bats. It is therefore unlikely that the proposals will affect bats (or other protected species) and there are no objections to this application on ecological grounds.

Thames Valley Police Crime Liaison:

I have reviewed the submitted documents, the re-development of the site is the perfect opportunity to design out crime from the outset.

LIGHTING - Please ensure the lighting for the site complies with BS 5489-1:2003 with a min uniformity level of 0.25Uo (25%).

ACCESS CONTROL - Please ensure access control to the gated side of the property. I ask that communal doors meet the current Document Q and SBD Homes 2019 requirements relating to physical security and access controls. All communal doors should be minimum LPS 1175.

The comments above are made on behalf of Thames Valley Police and relate to crime prevention design only.

Environmental Protection:

Main concerns are:

- **Noise transmission between dwellings**
- **Construction and Demolition phase**

We have no concerns regarding noise or air quality at this location.

Noise between residential properties - sound insulation of any building

Informative

To minimise the disturbance by noise of future residential occupiers of the flats and its effect on neighbouring residents, residential accommodation must be designed and constructed or converted so as to achieve the insulation requirements set out in Building Regulations Approved Document E.

Construction and demolition phases

We have concerns about potential noise, dust and bonfires associated with the construction (and demolition) of the proposed development and possible adverse impact on nearby residents (and businesses).

Fires during construction and demolition can impact on air quality and cause harm to residential amenity. Burning of waste on site could be considered to be harmful to the aims of environmental sustainability.

Thames Water: no objections but advise given.

c. **Public**

Adjacent properties on London street and Church St were notified and a press notice and site notice displayed. One comment received raising the following concerns:

- The proposed site is an ancillary part of the main building situated in London Street, originally used just as storage space
- There is supposed to be a mixture number of units, i.e one and two bedrooms, whereas currently all one bedroom flats are proposed
- There is considerable problem with bins on that location, for waste collections
- The proposed development is over size in terms of mass and density
- More importantly all buildings in London street are listed, and it is proximity to 86 and 88 will have a negative impact, due to its height and density
- Apart from anything else it is over development, and the gardens on both 86 and 88 will be impacted by shadows of the proposed development, does it comply with national planning policy for floor space??

5. 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. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which states at Paragraph 11 “Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development”.

The development plan for this Local Planning Authority is the Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019). The relevant policies are:

- CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction
- CC3: Adaptation to Climate Change
- CC5: Waste Minimisation and Storage
- CC6: Accessibility and the Intensity of Development
- CC7: Design and the Public Realm
- CC8: Safeguarding Amenity
- EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
- EN2: Areas of Archaeological Significance
- EN3: Enhancement of Conservation Areas
- EN6: New Development in a Historic Context
- EN15: Air Quality
- H1: Provision of Housing
- H2: Density and Mix
- H3: Affordable Housing
- H5: Standards for New Housing
- H10: Private and Communal Outdoor Space
- TR4: Cycle Routes and Facilities
- TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging
- CR1: Definition of Central Reading
- CR2: Design in Central Reading
- CR3: Public Realm in Central Reading
- CR6: Living in Central Reading

Relevant Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) are:
Affordable Housing

6. APPRAISAL

The main matters to be considered are:

- Principle of development
- Design considerations and effect on heritage
- Impact on residential amenity
- Transport
- Landscape/ecology
- Sustainability
- Affordable Housing /S106
- Comments from neighbour
- Equalities impact

- Principle of development

The NPPF (paragraph 117) states that “Planning policies and decisions should 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. Strategic policies should set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously-developed or ‘brownfield’ land”.

Therefore, it is clear that the priority for development should be on previously developed land, in particular vacant and derelict sites and buildings. The site is in a sustainable town centre location and on a site that has been previously developed. The proposal to redevelop the site for 3 no.1 bed apartments has been considered against relevant central Reading policies and policies applicable Borough wide and generally, there are no in principle objections to the proposed new use. The following sections consider the detail of the proposed residential development with reference to comments provided by consultees.

- Design considerations and effect on heritage

The network of streets to the west on London Street have a distinctive character reminiscent of earlier times and thus worthy of being identified as part of the conservation area.

The site is located to the rear of No 84 London Street, a Grade II Listed Building, and adjacent to Folk House, a Building of Townscape Merit within the Conservation Area which, due to extensions, forms a four storey building in red brick with an incongruous front elevation lift shaft extension.

The photos below show views towards the site from London Street (Listed Building) and Church Street and it is considered that the proposed development would not harm these views - in fact the Conservation Consultant has commented that removing the garage would enhance the conservation area.



The proposed replacement building would be 3 storeys high built, being lower than the adjacent Folk House building. The building would be built of red brick, with buff brick detailing and parapet walls in buff render or stone. Gauged brick detailing is proposed over the windows, which would consist of 2 pane sash windows. Brickwork is indicated as in English bond. One bay of the building was originally designed to project forward as a bay, however as this would have encroached over highway land the design has been amended to create a flat elevation with Juliette balconies instead. The boundary treatment is indicated as a low wall with railings. Amended plans also resolve a problem with the proposed design of the front door and porch and to provide a recess to the upper windows.

Policy CR2 - Design in Central Reading requires applications to meet a number of criteria and officers consider that many parts of these criteria are met by this proposed development:

- a. *Development will build on and respect the existing grid layout structure of the central area, providing continuity and enclosure through appropriate relationships between buildings and spaces, and frontages that engage with the street at lower levels, and contributing towards enhanced ease of movement through and around the central area;*
- b. *Development will provide appropriate, well designed public spaces and other public realm, including squares, open spaces, streetscape, utilising high quality and well-maintained hard and soft landscaped areas, and public art, that provide suitable functions and interest, sense of place and safe and convenient linkages to adjoining areas;*
- c. *Development should consider and, where possible, include ways of providing green infrastructure designed into the development, for instance through roof gardens, green walls and green roofs, to enhance the otherwise very urban environment;*
- d. *The architectural details and materials used in the central area should be high quality and respect the form and quality of the detailing and materials in areas local to the development site;*
- e. *Development and any associated public realm should contribute to the diversity of the central area, be capable of easy adaptation over time to meet changing circumstances, and be designed to enhance community safety; and*

f. Development should be designed with consideration of adjacent development sites, and should not prevent or cause unreasonable burdens on the future development of those sites.

In terms of archaeology see comments provided above. The site has high potential to be of interest and therefore it is relevant to apply the pre-commencement condition as requested to ensure the correct steps are taken to record anything of interest on the site once the garage is demolished.

These measures would meet the objectives of policies EN1 and EN2 in respect of protecting and preserving sites of archaeological interest.

Therefore with relevant conditions to require samples of materials to be approved, landscaping and boundary treatments to be approved and archaeological methods followed the proposed development is considered compatible with the objectives of policies CR2, CC7, EN1, EN2, EN3, EN6, of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

- **Impact on residential amenity**

Future residents:

The internal floor layouts would provide in Gross Internal Floor Area:

Ground Floor - 47 sq.m
First Floor - 49 sq.m
Second Floor - 48.5 sq.m

Policy H5 sets out internal space standards to be achieved but also accepts that in the town centre these may be relaxed to ensure that the typical smaller sites can come forward.

In terms of amenity, the ground floor flat has some access to a small garden at the rear and front but the upper floors do not. Again, by virtue of being within the central Reading area Policy H11 does not require the apartments to have outside amenity areas although small sitting out areas are encouraged.

There is no on-site car parking but this is not unusual within central Reading but a cycle store is proposed within the building where it can be secure and easily accessed. This is next to the waste storage area. See comments above from Transport.

Noise between the flats can be managed by building regulation provisions.

Neighbours:

There are a number of residential apartments near to the site. However, the orientation of the proposed block will mean that very little loss of privacy or overlooking will occur. Apart from the ground floor flat, which has a French window leading on to a small outdoor space, there are no side facing windows looking east or west. Folk House to the west also has no side facing windows and the rear facing windows for flats on upper floors of dwellings on London Street are a sufficient distance from the new building to avoid the sense of over bearing on the outlook from facing windows. There are no residential properties close to the site on the south side of the access lane.

The conclusion is that the residential amenities of future and existing occupiers will not be harmed by the proposed development, once completed. During construction some disturbance will occur but conditions can be used to attempt to manage this process. The proposal development meets relevant policies CC8, CR6, H5 and H10.

- **Transport**

See comments provided above. There are no objections to the proposed development being free of car parking subject to the requested planning conditions.

- **Landscape/ecology**

The site is of no landscape or ecological interest and the layout of the site offers very little opportunities for landscaping or ecological enhancement. However, what is proposed - green roof, small rear amenity space and front landscaped area - is welcomed and would help to make this otherwise barren location more attractive.

These measures would meet the objectives of Policy CR2 (see above) in respect of landscaping and improving the public realm.

- **Sustainability**

Policy H5 (Housing Standards) requires that all new build housing integrate additional measures for sustainability. In light of this conditions can be applied to ensure the development meets the following requirements:

- Higher water efficiency standards of 110 litres per person per day; and
- A 19% improvement over building regulations energy requirements

Although part of a planning condition, these requirements could be met through meeting Building Regulations.

- **Affordable Housing**

The proposed development would need to accord with policy H3 in terms of making a financial contribution to affordable housing. Policy H3 (Affordable Housing) of the Reading Borough Local Plan seeks to ensure that on sites of 1-4 dwellings, a financial contribution will be made that will enable the provision of affordable housing elsewhere in the Borough.

An Affordable Housing Statement has been submitted and it has been agreed that a contribution of £36,000 will be paid and have agreed to complete a S106 legal agreement to secure this.

- **Comments from neighbour**

In response to the concern raised for developing what was once an ancillary part of the main building situated in London Street officers point to the encouragement in the NPPF to develop on previously built and vacant sites in sustainable locations such as this.

In the town centre the relevant policy CR6 - Living in Central Reading does refer to seeking a mix but this normally applies to larger sites where a mix of units is possible. It accepts that the town centre is better suited to single people. The characteristics of this site with no on-site parking or garden space would support in this case the proposed small 3 unit 1 bedroom scheme.

Sufficient facilities are proposed for waste storage and collection.

The proposed development has been carefully considered and the officer view is that the proposed building is in keeping in terms of its size with that immediately to the west and is in proportion with others on London Street.

The heritage concerns have been considered and as explained above, have found that the proposed development would be an improvement to the area and would look acceptable.

- **Equality Act**

In determining this application the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation. It is considered that there is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the current applications) that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 This proposal has been carefully considered in the context of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and supplementary planning documents. The recommendation is shown above.