

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

App Ref: 220091/FUL and 220092/LBC

Address: 49 South Street, Reading

Proposal: Change of Use from Office (Class E) to single residential dwelling (C3) with internal alterations to Grade II Listed building

Case Officer: Connie Davis

Target Decision date (agreed extension of time): 10/08/22

INTRODUCTION

The application site is an end of terrace property located on the north-western side of South Street, on the corner with Livery Close. The site is currently in use as an office on ground and first floors, with a self-contained basement flat.

The building is Grade II Listed. The Listing of the building is as follows:

SOUTH STREET 1. 5128 Nos 43 to 49 (odd) SU 7273 7/570 II 2. Circa 1852, possibly by J J Cooper. 2 storey and basement terrace with Bath ashlar front and flint with brick dressings and quoins behind. 2 bays each, glazing bar sash windows. Ground floor channelled with band over. Plain fascia to cornice and parapet. Doors altered. Slate roof, No 43 retains fleur-de-lys arrow head rails to basement.

The surrounding area is predominantly residential with some office buildings also in the vicinity.

The site is also within an Air Quality Management Area.

PROPOSAL

Planning permission and Listed Building Consent is sought for the conversion of the existing office building to a residential dwelling.

In order to facilitate the conversion, a number of internal works to the Listed building are also proposed:

- The removal of the existing carpets and floor coverings.
- Removal of GF disabled WC and replacement with new finishes and sanitaryware
- Rewiring throughout including mains wired smoke detection.
- Removal of existing ground floor kitchen and replacement in new location.
- Removal of fire signage and extinguishers.
- Removal of first floor bathroom sanitaryware and finishes. New bathroom fittings and finishes.
- Removal of modern stud wall at first floor level containing wc. Removal of adjacent kitchenette. New ensuite in this location with new doorway through to bedroom. Reuse existing door and architrave. Block up existing doorway.
- Refurbishment and redecoration of the existing rear timber sash windows and fitting of draught excluders to the frames.

Submitted Plans and Documentation:

Elevations Existing and Proposed

Air Quality Statement rev.00

Planning Statement rev.00

642 05 - Existing and Proposed Site Plan

Received 6th February 2022

Heritage Statement rev.00
642 01 - Existing Floor Plans
642 02 - Proposed Floor Plans
Site Location Plan
Application Form
CIL Form

Received 24th January 2022

PLANNING HISTORY

200749/LBC - Change of 4 sash windows at rear of property - Application under consideration

141483/LBC - Listed Building planning application relating to the retention of first floor residential accommodation and change of use from office to residential of ground floor - Application Closed

141476/FUL - Retention of first floor residential accommodation and change of use from office to residential of ground floor. (re-submission of application 131473) - Application Closed

140664/LBC - Removal of existing staircase and internal alterations and forming of new partitions and staircase - Application Withdrawn

131473/FUL - Change of use from office to 2 residential flats - Application Returned

CONSULTATIONS

Internal

Transport - No objection subject to conditions

Natural Environment - No objection subject to condition

Environmental Health - No objection but would recommend an electric vehicle charging point is installed given the site is within an air quality management area

Heritage Officer - No comments received

Public

Adjoining properties were formally consulted via letter on 08/02/22 (for both applications). In addition, a site notice for both applications was erected at the site.

No comments were received for either application.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special interest which it possesses.

Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority in the exercise of its functions to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

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”.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021)
National Planning Policy Guidance

Reading Borough Council Local Plan (2019)

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
CC9	Securing infrastructure
EN1	Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
EN6	New Development in a Historic Context
EN12	Biodiversity and the green network
EN14	Trees, Hedges and Woodland
EN15	Air Quality
EN16	Pollution and Water Resources
H1	Provision of housing
H2	Density and mix
H3	Affordable housing
H5	Standards for new housing
H10	Private and communal outdoor space
TR1	Achieving the transport strategy
TR3	Access, traffic and highway related matters
TR5	Car and cycle parking and electric vehicle charging

Relevant Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) are:

Affordable Housing (2021)
Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)
Planning Obligations Under Section 106 (2015)
Sustainable Design and Construction (2019)

APPRAISAL

The main matters to be considered are:

- Principle of development
- Impact on the Listed Building
- Residential amenity and quality of accommodation
- Amenity Space
- Transport Matters
- The Natural Environment
- Sustainability
- Affordable Housing and CIL

Principle of development

The development site is located within the urban area of Reading. As established by Local Plan Policy H1, there is a pressing need for additional housing in Reading and the surrounding area. This policy supports the principle of housing development within the borough on land which is not functional floodplain or open space and that which contributes towards social, economic and environmental wellbeing. There is an identified requirement to provide 15,847 dwellings and associated infrastructure over the plan period.

In meeting housing need, the NPPF states that LPAs should *“encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value”*. The NPPF definition of ‘previously developed land’ excludes private residential gardens in built up areas. The priority for development should be on previously developed land, in particular on vacant, under-utilised and derelict sites. The site is currently in an employment use, although the site has been vacant for approximately 2 years; since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. Whilst it is acknowledged that the proposal would result in a loss of employment land, the site is currently vacant (due to its size and access limitations it has limited interest by businesses), not in a core employment area, and a residential use was the original and former use of the building. As such, the conversion to residential is considered reasonable and a sympathetic use to the for the Listed Building and is not considered contrary to Policy EM3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

In pure land use terms, the utilization of the building would allow for the provision of an additional dwelling on already brownfield land.

As such, the principle of residential development is accepted as it reuses brownfield land in an area that does already occupies residential dwellings.

Impact on the Listed Building and surrounding area

Policy CC7 seeks to protect and enhance the character and appearance of the area and require a *“high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located.”*

Policy EN1 states that *“Historic features, areas of historic importance and other elements of the historic environment, including their settings will be protected and where possible enhanced... All proposals will be expected to protect and where possible enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings, the historic character and local*

distinctiveness of the area in which they are located... Applications which affect Listed Buildings will not have an adverse impact on those elements which contribute to their special architectural or historic interest including, where appropriate, their settings."

Minor external works are proposed (redecorating of existing rear timber windows) although these will have the same appearance as the existing when read in the context of the street scene.

A number of internal works are proposed to the Listed Building (as outlined earlier in the report). These works are considered of a modest and reasonable scale in the context of the heritage asset and would not affect the features specifically referenced within the Listing of the building. Furthermore, some of the internal works proposed are considered positive in restoring the building to its former use as a dwelling and removing non-original features. A condition will be applied ensure external and internal work match the original fabric in respect of using materials of a matching form, composition and consistency, detailed execution and finished appearance.

In terms of the change of use to residential, this is considered an appropriate and sympathetic alteration that will bring back the building's former and original use.

As such, the proposal is considered acceptable in relation to Policies CC7 and EN1 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

Residential amenity and quality of accommodation

Policy CC8 seeks to protect the amenity of surrounding occupiers in terms of:

- Privacy and overlooking;
- Access to sunlight and daylight;
- Visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development;
- Harm to outlook;
- Noise and disturbance;
- Artificial lighting;
- Vibration;
- Dust and fumes;
- Smell;
- Crime and safety; or
- Wind, where the proposals involve new development of more than 8 storeys.

Policy EN16 seeks to ensure development is not harmful in terms of pollution.

Future occupiers

Policy H5 includes a number of standards for new development. The proposed dwelling would meet internal space standards for a new 3 bedroom, 2 storey dwelling. Bedroom sizes would also meet minimum standards with the exception of bedroom 3 that would fall just short. Whilst Officers considered that a reduction in scale of the ensuite bathroom would allow the bedroom to meet the required minimum standards, this would involve the removal of an original wall. Given this would result in a loss of original fabric within the Listed building, this was afforded greater weight in the planning balance and the slight shortfall in bedroom size could be outweighed in this case.

All habitable rooms would be served by windows and therefore the dwelling would therefore be considered to provide acceptable light levels and outlook for future occupiers.

The proposed residential use is compatible with the residential basement flat. It is not considered that future occupiers would be unduly exposed to a harmful level of noise and disturbance from a dwelling of such small scale.

Amenity Space

Policy H10 states that “dwellings to be provide with functional private open space ... that allows for suitable sitting-out areas, children’s play areas, home food production, green waste composting, refuse storage, general outdoor storage and drying space. Houses will be provided with private outdoor space whereas flats may be provided with communal outdoor space, balconies and/or roof gardens.

Although no specific criteria exist, the supporting text of the policy (4.4.87) states *“In the past, the Council has sought the following minimum provisions for private or communal outdoor space for each type of accommodation, and they provide a useful guide for proposals:*

Houses: Useable private outdoor space should be no less than the gross floor area of the dwelling to which it relates (measured externally and including garage space).

Development in central Reading will not always be expected to comply with the standards set above. Open space is nonetheless required, unless exceptional circumstances prevail, to accommodate modest sitting out areas and clothes drying facilities.

The proposed dwelling would be provided with a private amenity space beyond the amenity space that already exists on site for the basement flat. This is considered positive given the town centre location, whilst also positive in relation to the setting of the Listed Building by bringing soft landscaping closer to the building itself and reducing the portion of hard standing. Whilst the amenity space could not be direct accessed from the new dwelling (due to the presence of the basement flat), on balance this is considered an acceptable arrangement given the positive benefits of introducing useable amenity space in the central core and the positive benefits identified in relation to the setting of the Listed Building.

The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in relation to Policy H10 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

Existing occupiers

The proposal sees no external works proposed and therefore the proposal will not result in a loss of light, outlook or privacy to neighbouring properties.

Whilst the proposal would introduce a new use to the property, a residential use is considered compatible with the residential/ office uses within the wider terrace. As such, neighbours will not be considered to experience a substantially harmful level of noise and disturbance from a single-family dwelling.

The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in relation to neighbours in accordance with Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

Transport Matters

Policy TR3 states that development should not result in a detrimental impact to the transport network.

Policy TR5 states development should promote sustainable transport measures.

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 zone is well served by public transport, with buses continuing either into or out of the Central Core Area via this zone. The site is located within restricted parking zone where pay and display restrictions are in force restricting parking to a maximum period of 2 hours 8am - 8pm Monday - Sunday.

It is accepted that the existing office use would have generated more vehicular trips in the peak hours than the proposed residential use, therefore, the proposed residential development will not increase traffic in the vicinity of the site. In the circumstances it is considered that the proposed change of use would not have a material impact on the character of the traffic in the vicinity of the site.

In accordance with the Council's adopted parking standards, the 3 bedroom dwelling would require 2 parking spaces. Proposed site plan 642 05 illustrates 1 parking space for the new dwelling and retention of a parking for the existing ground floor unit. The proposed provision for the new dwelling falls short of the Council's current standards, however given the site's central location and the extensive parking restrictions in place which also includes the operation of the Council's residential parking permit scheme which includes South Street a reduced provision can be accepted in this instance. A parking condition and informative should will be attached to the permission to inform the occupants of the new dwelling that they would not be eligible for a resident or visitor parking permits.

In accordance with the adopted Parking SPD, the development is required to provide a minimum of 2.0 cycle parking spaces for the new 3 bed dwelling; this should be provided in a secure and covered storage unit. Submitted site plan identifies a storage area within the amenity area for the new dwelling

Details of the bin storage has been illustrated on submitted plans adjacent to the cycle storage area.

Policy TR5 states that each new house should be provided with an electric charging point. The policy Where a house has its own off-street parking, this can be a relatively simple design measure factored into the construction and should generally be achievable in all cases.

In this case, in order to facilitate a charging point, an armoured cable along the side of the Listed Building and installing a charging box to the rear elevation of the Listed Building would be required. Throughout the course of the application, it was questioned as to whether a free-standing electric charging point could be provided rather than one that would be fixed to the Listed Building. Due to the installation requirements (digging up the access track which is not in the applicant's ownership to connect the charging point to the electricity supply), a free-standing charging point would not be possible. Officers also considered that a charging point fixed to the building would not represent a sensitive addition. As such, in this particular case, it is considered that the harm to the heritage asset (in terms of design would outweigh the requirement of an electric charging point in this specific instance, coupled with the central location of the site meaning hat reliance on private vehicles may be less. As mentioned above, Policy TR5 states that a charging point should '*generally be achievable in all cases*' however in this case it is not considered that the charging point can successfully be installed without result in visual and structural harm contrary to Policy EN1. As such, on balance, Officers consider this particular scheme

acceptable without the requirement of an electric vehicle charging point.

The proposal is therefore deemed acceptable from a Transport and Highways perspective subject to conditions securing vehicle and cycle parking as specified, along with bin storage in line with Policies TR3, TR5 and CC5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

The Natural Environment

Policy EN14 states: *‘New development shall make provision for tree retention and planting within the application site, particularly on the street frontage, or off-site in appropriate situations, to improve the level of tree coverage within the Borough, to maintain and enhance the character and appearance of the area in which a site is located, to provide for biodiversity and to contribute to measures to reduce carbon and adapt to climate change.’*

Part of the available space to the rear of the property is proposed as amenity areas for the existing and future dwelling, which is a positive addition, in terms of greening, given that the rear area is currently hard surfaced and used as parking at the moment, which offers little amenity, aesthetic and greenery value to the space.

No landscaping plans have been submitted to demonstrate improvements, i.e. planting, to these amenity areas for the benefit of their future residents. However given the policy context stated above, proposed amenity areas should be landscaped with appropriate resurfacing works, boundary treatment and new planting to improve the quality of life of future residents. In addition, privacy planting and/or boundary treatment are important in screening the amenity areas from the views from South Street and Livery Close.

As such, further details on landscaping and boundary treatment will be secured via condition to comply with Policy EN14 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

Sustainability

Policy CC2 states that all minor conversions to residential are required to meet BREEAM ‘Very Good’ standard. This will be secured via condition.

Affordable Housing and CIL

In accordance with Policy H3 (Affordable Housing) the proposed development, being for 1 additional dwelling, would be liable for an off-site affordable housing contribution equivalent of 10% of the GDV of the development. 5% to be provided as contribution by the applicant.

The applicant has agreed to provide a policy compliant contribution of £14,582.00. This will be secured via a S106 legal agreement in line with Policy H3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

The proposed development would generate a CIL liability.

Equalities Impact

When determining this application the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups have or will have different needs,

experiences, issues and priorities in relation to the 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.

CONCLUSION

As detailed above, the proposal is considered acceptable in relation to national and local level planning policy.

Recommendation: **GRANT full** permission subject to a S106 legal agreement to secure an affordable housing contribution, subject to the following conditions:

All pre-commencement conditions have been agreed with the applicant's agent.

- 1) Time Limit
- 2) Approved Plans
- 3) Internal and external works to match original fabric
- 4) BREEAM - Interim [**Pre-commencement**]
- 5) BREEAM - Post construction
- 6) Landscaping to be approved
- 7) No parking permits
- 8) Cycle storage as specified
- 9) Bin storage as specified
- 10) Vehicle parking as specified

Informatives:

- 1) Terms
- 2) Building Control
- 3) Complaints about Construction
- 4) Encroachment
- 5) Positive and Proactive
- 6) Pre-Commencement Conditions
- 7) S106
- 8) CIL
- 9) Highways
- 10) Parking Permits
- 11) Separate Listed Building Consent required

GRANT Listed Building Consent subject to the following conditions:

- 1) Time Limit
- 2) Approved Plans
- 3) Internal and external works to match original fabric

Informatives:

- 1) Terms
- 2) Separate planning permission required
- 3) Positive and Proactive