

Delegated Report

Ward: Minster

Extended Target Date: 17/11/2021

Address: 9 Bath Road, Reading

Application No: 211224/FUL

Proposal: The erection of a purpose-built meditation room extension and Internal refurbishment.

Case Officer: Nathalie Weekes

Introduction and Proposal

The proposal site is the Kadampa Meditation Centre, located at 9 Bath Road, roughly opposite the junction with Lima Court. The surrounding area comprises a mix of uses. The proposal site is located within the Russell Street / Castle Street / Oxford Road Conservation Area, and is within The Green Network and Air Quality Management Area. There are also several TPO protected trees within the proposal site. The Conservation Area Appraisal for Russell Street / Castle Street / Oxford Road (March 2020) describes 9 Bath Road as follows:

- *5, 7 and 9 Bath Road, date from c.1880-90 and were incorporated into the Conservation Area in the 2004 Appraisal. Each has a similar appearance to the villas of the same time period on Castle Crescent. The houses are set back from Bath Road, following a similar alignment to the grand housing present on the road earlier in the 19th century. These polychrome brick properties have attractive, deep front gardens with striking trees that are safeguarded by TPO's.*

The proposal is for the erection of a purpose-built meditation room extension to the rear of the main building, with internal refurbishment. The building measures approximately 9.4m in depth, 7.7m in width, 4m to the eaves with a hipped roof height of 6.4m and will be connected to the main building by an enclosed floating 5.6m from the original building. It will result in a new build area of 119.9m².

Red brick, Flemish bond with is proposed to match the existing building with buff stone finishing for the proposed colonnade to match the stone on the existing bow window with standing seam zinc roof cladding on the hipped roof and grey/light grey powder coated windows.

The main use is for contemplative, quiet meditation. Quiet amplified music is played occasionally during prayers to be conducted silently or very quietly. Expected use of the garden would be for groups of no more than 10-15 people at any time. Events are usually planned once or twice a month at the Kadampa Meditation Centre in person and online.

All existing 16 parking spaces would be retained.

Due to unforeseen circumstances a site visit cannot be undertaken however the applicant provided photographs of the site which have been verified and are considered acceptable in this instance.

Front of site



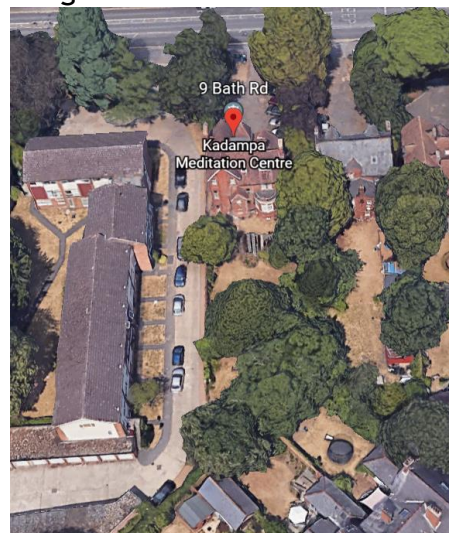
View from rear of the garden



Rear garden



Google Earth view of site



Plans Submitted

The applicant supplied the following plans and documents:

- Tree Survey Schedule - Kadampa Meditation Centre Reading, David Archer Associates, September 2020
- Tree Constraints Plan - TCP01
- Tree Constraints Plan - TCP01, with shadow pattern
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report - Kadampa Meditation Centre, Darwin Ecology, November 2020
- Ecology strategy, Kampa Meditation Centre - 659-03-13
- Site Location Plan 659 02-00
- Existing Side Elevations 659 05-02
- AH_232-Br-R_Heritage-Statement_Final.doc, Heritage statement, Archway Heritage, 20 July 2021
- Proposed Roof Plan - 659 03-10

- Proposed substructure plan - 659 03-12
- Proposed Front and Rear Elevation - 659 05-10
- Proposed Side Elevation East - 659 05-11
- Proposed Side Elevation West - 659 05-12
- 3d Renders - internal x3 pictures
- 3d Renders - external x3 pictures
- CIL

As received 27 July 2021

- Kadampa Meditation Centre - Design & Access Statement Rev A, Colony Architects - Project: 659
- Arboricultural Method Statement Rev A 01.10.21, July 2021, David Archer Associates
- Proposed Ground Floor Plan - 659 03-10 Rev A
- Proposed Site Plan 659 02-10 Rev A
- Proposed Section A-A 659 05-15

As received 11 October 2021

- Email from agent 10/11/2021 16:07 proposing a grey/light grey finish powder coated window frames rather than UPVC

As received 10 November 2021

Relevant Planning History

110295 - Free-standing sign to replace existing - Application Permitted on 19/05/2011

Pre-application advice was sought before the planning application was submitted.

Summary of Consultations

Neighbour Consultations

The following addresses were notified:

Flat 1a, 7 Bath Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 6HH
 5 The Firs, Bath Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 6HN
 Flat B, 4 Bath Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 6NB
 Flat A, 4 Bath Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 6NB
 4 Coley Avenue, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 6LQ
 4a Coley Avenue, Reading, RG1 6LQ
 Flat 1A Bath Road Reading, RG1 6HH
 Flat D, 4 Bath Road, Reading, RG1 6NB
 Flat C, 4 Bath Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 6NB
 Flat 3, 7 Bath Road, Reading, RG1 6HH

A site notice was sent to the agent and was displayed at the site on 17 August 2021 for a 21 day notice period. One letter of representation has been received, with

concerns raised in respect of the impact on neighbouring garden amenity for events held inside and outside the proposed building and for safeguards to be considered in respect of potential noise and disturbance.

Environmental Health

No objections subject to an informative. The Environmental Health officer sought additional information regarding the proposed use of the rear development. The applicant confirmed that it would be used for quiet meditation. It is advised that notwithstanding if planning permission is granted, the use will need to comply with other relevant environmental health legislation. Any permission to grant a structure could then curb any provision of use, if complaints are received in respect of noise.

Transport

Existing parking will be retained with no changes to existing access. No objections subject to a pre-commencement Construction Management Statement.

Natural environment

Natural Environment comments acknowledged the proposal as acceptable in principle but requested a number of tree related details which could not be secured via condition.

With reference to the documents and plans attached to your 14th October 2021 e-mail (indexed on file on the same date), the following are noted:

Four replacement trees are provisioned throughout the rear garden, which is positive. However, given the existing tree vegetation that is retained, the applicant is advised to choose tree species that are to some extent shade tolerant - as to thrive under the canopy of existing trees. Species will be secured via condition.

All the outstanding matters have been addressed therefore the proposal is now supported in terms of trees subject to conditions L1 and L7A.

L7A ARBORICULTURAL METHOD STATEMENT (AS SPECIFIED)

Protective measures, including fencing, ground protection, supervision and working procedures shall be carried out in accordance with the Arboricultural Method Statement and Tree Protection Plan Rev. A prepared by David Archer Associates dated 01.10.2021. Any deviation from the works prescribed or methods agreed in the report will require prior written approval from the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: In order to ensure that reasonable measures are taken to safeguard trees in the interests of local amenity and the enhancement of the development itself in accordance with Policy EN14 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

Ecology

There were no objections from the ecologist.

Conservation officer

Design considerations have been incorporated into the proposed design as a result of pre application advice. The proposed extension lines up with the exterior wall of the historic building and will not be visible from the front of the host building. There was a strong objection to the proposed use of UPVC and its detrimental impact on the original building, following consultation with the agent, powder coated frames

are now proposed which will be more in keeping with the original building. A pre-commencement condition for materials and stone specifications to be approved to match the existing building is required. The proposed development will enable the building to function in its role as a meeting place for meditation and involve minimal changes to the existing heritage building. The applicant has worked closely with Council officers to develop this scheme, and so the application is supported and recommended for approval.

GRANT - with conditions as follows:

1. DETAILS OF SAMPLES AND FINISHES

No development shall take place until further details and samples of the materials and finishes to be used in the repair of the external stonework of the building hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

2. MAKE GOOD: WORKS TO MATCH EXISTING

All new works and works of making-good to the retained fabric, whether internal or external, unless approved otherwise in writing by the local planning authority, shall be finished to match existing, original or adjacent work (as deemed appropriate by the local planning authority) with regard to the methods used and to materials, colours, textures and profiles.

Communications with the agent

Revised plans have been provided during the course of this application to address concerns raised by consultees. Additional information was submitted in response to noise and parking queries and to demonstrate that any impact on the neighbouring vicinity had been considered. Pre-commencement conditions have been agreed with the agent in respect of a CMS to be submitted and materials to be agreed.

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 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.

Recent legal cases have established that under section 70(3) the general power to grant planning permission under section 70(1) is expressly subject to section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Section 72(1) provides that the local authority has a statutory duty that:

‘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.

Reading Borough Council Planning Policy

Reading Borough Council Local Plan (2019) EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment states:

Historic features and areas of historic importance and other elements of the historic environment, including their settings, will be protected and where appropriate enhanced. This will include:

- Listed Buildings;
- Conservation Areas;
- Other features with local or national designation, such as sites and features of archaeological importance, and historic parks and gardens.

Planning permission will only be granted where development has no adverse impact on historic assets and their settings. All proposals will be expected to protect and where appropriate enhance the character and appearance of the area in which they are located.

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'. However the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making (NPPF paragraph 12).

In this regard, the NPPF states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the Local Plan 2019 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).

Accordingly, the National Planning Policy Framework 2019 and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019)

CC1: (Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development)

CC2: (Sustainable Design and Construction)

CC3: Adaption to Climate Change

CC7: (Design and the Public Realm)

CC8: (Safeguarding amenity)
EN1: (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment)
EN4: (Locally important Heritage Assets)
EN3: (Enhancement of Conservation Areas)
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)
TR3: (Access, Traffic and highway related matters)
TR5: (Car and cycle parking and electric vehicle charging)
OU1: New and Existing Community Facilities

SPG/SPD

Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011)

Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area - Conservation Area Appraisal - March 2020

Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule (January 2015)

Planning Obligations under Section 106 SPD (April 2015)

Supplementary Planning Documents & other relevant documents/guidance
Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (Historic England, 2015b).

Assessment

Principle of Development

In principle there are no objections to a proposal for a planning application for a rear extension to provide an additional contemplative meditation space that is subservient to the host building.

The principle of development is supported subject to compliance with any other relevant policy within the Local Plan.

The main issues in the consideration of this proposal are the impact on local residential amenity and the impact of the design on the character of the area.

Neighbouring Amenity

Policy CC8: Safeguarding Amenity of the Reading Local Plan states that “development will only be acceptable where it will not cause a significant detrimental impact to the living environment of neighbouring residents in terms of privacy and overlooking, access to sunlight and daylight and visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development”. Policy EN16: Pollution and water resources states that “development will only be permitted where it would not be damaging to the environment and sensitive receptors through land, noise or light pollution”.

The structure would be located away from neighbouring houses at 7 Bath Road, 2a and 4 Coley Avenue and across the road from neighbouring flats. It does not result in any overlooking due to established vegetation in the garden. It is not considered harmful to visual amenity due to its setback position to the rear, behind the walled garden and set away from neighbouring boundaries with adjacent gardens. It is considered that the proposed rear extension would not be overbearing or result in any significant overlooking onto any neighbouring properties.

The applicant has confirmed that the proposed use of the extension would be for peaceful meditation and quiet prayer, with limited use of quiet amplified music and that it is not intended that musical instruments will be played. It is not expected that there would be groups of any more than 10-15 people in the garden at any time, with events taking place once or twice a month during periods of good weather conditions. No outside heating is proposed and no alcohol is permitted on the premises. An informative is recommended stating that the applicant is advised that notwithstanding if planning permission is granted, legal legislation has to be followed. Any permission to grant a structure could then curb any provision of use, if complaints are received in respect of noise.

Design & Character

Policy CC7 in Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 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”. There is no objection to the design of the proposed shelter structure.

The proposed extension will replace an existing bomb-shelter/outbuilding in the garden.

The design is proposed to integrate and compliment with the host building with materials to match the existing brick and stone, whilst incorporating a modern element with a zinc roof and powder coated windows. It is set to the rear of the main dwelling and will not be visible from the Bath Road and set behind the boundary wall to the western side along The Firs flats development. Access will be retained along the side entrance on the western boundary from Bath Road, which will also allow wheelchair access.

It is therefore considered that the proposed rear single storey extension will not be obtrusive at the site and will not impact on residential amenity or character of the area, as it will be set back from the Bath Road, compatible with the existing meditation centre development and it will be sufficiently separated and screened from the site boundaries.

Heritage impact of the development

The proposed extension is set to the rear 9 Bath Road with a lower height link connecting both buildings. It will not detract from the character of the main building and not detract from the bow window, original features to the front elevation of 9 Bath Road and will not have a detrimental impact on the Castle Hill/Oxford Road Conservation Area. Any harm resulting in the loss of a small part of the original

building to be demolished and the removal of the bomb shelter is considered to be outweighed by the sympathetic design that compliments the main building. The Conservation officer had no objections to the proposal subject to material conditions. The proposal would not harm and preserve the character of the Castle Hill/Oxford Road Conservation Area in accordance with Policy EN1. The Local Authority has therefore discharged their duties under the relevant section of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Transport

There are no transport issues to this application subject to an informative. Adequate parking provision has been demonstrated and will be retained. A pre-commencement construction method statement is required.

Environmental Health

There are no objections subject to an informative on the potential impact of noise as a result of the development.

Trees

Proposed development is constrained by the number of established trees on site and their root protection zones. Works have been proposed to limit harm to the trees on site. A condition is proposed to ensure that works is completed as outlined in the Arboricultural Method Statement and Tree Protection Plan Rev. A prepared by David Archer Associates dated 01.10.2021.

Accessibility

The proposed extension will enable increase access due to the sloped boundary with level threshold for wheelchair users and disabled WC. Proposed works should be complaint with BS 8300 Design of an accessible and inclusive built environment.

Other issues

Building Control

The proposal will require building regulation approval in relation to structural design.

RECOMMENDATION:

The development is not considered harmful to the character or appearance of the site or its surroundings and does not have a detrimental impact on the original building or neighbouring properties. Subject to relevant condition on making good and materials and informatives concerning noise levels, the proposed development is considered to be in accordance with the Policies set out within the Local Development Plan, and as such planning permission is recommended for approval.

Grant Planning Permission