

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT - Application No. 201845OUT

Address: 77-79 Kings Road

Proposal: Outline application considering access, appearance and scale for demolition of existing pub & restaurant and erection of a part three, part four and part five storey C1 (hotel) consisting of 29 rooms incorporating restaurant at ground floor level with ancillary bar and associated external works (landscaping and layout reserved for future consideration)

Case officer: Matt Burns

Site Description and Surrounding Area

The application site relates to a part single part three storey end of terrace building located on the north side of Kings Road on the corner junction with Duncan Place. Historically the ground floor of the building has operated as a pub but appears in recent years to have been in use as more of pub/restaurant. The upper floors of the building consist of two residential flats (one x 5-bedroom unit and one x 2-bedroom unit) spread across three floors. The building has a small servicing yard to the rear and street-level external seating terrace to the west elevation frontage with Duncan Place.

The adjoined three storey terrace of buildings to the east consists of commercial units to the ground floor with residential above. Directly to the rear of the site is a three-storey development of flats (The Plummery Blakes Cottages) which fronts the River Kennet. To the west on the opposite side of Duncan Place is Abbey Wharf and five and a half storey office building. Directly opposite the site on the other side of Kings Road is House of Fisher, a serviced apartments complex of between two and five storeys.

The site is located within the Central area and Central Core of the town centre as defined by Policy CR1 of the Reading Local Plan 2019. The site is also within an air quality management area (AQMA).

Proposal

The application seeks outline planning permission considering matters of access, appearance and scale for demolition of the existing building and replacement with a part three, part four and part five storey C1 (hotel) consisting of 29 rooms and incorporating a restaurant at ground floor level with ancillary bar and associated external works. Matters of landscaping and layout are reserved matters for future consideration.

Plans Considered

Drawings ref:

- PL-08 - Proposed Plans REV B (06/10/2021)
- PL-09 - Proposed Elevations REV B (06/10/2021)
- PL-10 - Proposed Side Elevations REV B (06/10/2021)
- PL-12 - 3D Images REV B (06/10/2021)
- PL-13 - 3D Images REV B (06/10/2021)

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 6th October 2021

- PL-03 - Existing and Proposed Block Plan REV A (09/03/2021)

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 9th March 2021

- PL-05 - Existing Plans REV A (09/03/2021)
- PL-06 - Existing Elevations (06/06/202)
- PL-01 - Location Plan (05/06/2020)
- PL-07 - Existing Side Elevations (05/06/2020)
- PL-04 - Proposed Site Plan (05/06/2020)

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 18th December 2020

Planning History

030641 - Extend existing side terrace - Granted.

030538 - Raised terrace to rear. Fire escape stair. Extend side terrace - Refused.

010048 - New surfaces and perimeter railings to existing patio area. Alterations to existing windows to side elevation - Granted.

Consultation Responses

RBC Transport - No objection subject to conditions to secure provision of access, vehicle parking and bin storage and a condition for details of cycle storage to be submitted and approved.

RBC Natural Environment - Object due to failure to demonstrate that suitable landscaping can be incorporated within the development

RBC Environmental Protection - No objection subject to conditions to control hours of deliveries and servicing, hours of operation and constriction hours. Conditions are also recommended to secure submission and approval of a construction method statement, bin store details, contaminated land assessment/remediation scheme, air quality assessment and mitigation scheme, kitchen odour control scheme and noise assessment for an plant equipment to be installed.

Ecology Adviser - No objection, subject to conditions to secure submission and approval of scheme of biodiversity enhancements.

Berkshire Archaeology - No objection, subject to a condition to secure implementation of archaeological investigation works in accordance with a written scheme of investigation to be submitted and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

Public Consultation

No.s 1 to 8 The Plummery Blakes Cottages, 17 Blakes Cottages, 81 and 83 Kings Road, Flats A and B 83 Kings Road and 1st Floor Flat and 2nd Floor Flat 81 Kings Road were notified of the application by letter.

Eight letters of objection have been received raising the following issues:

- Overlooking and loss of light to Blakes Cottages and The Plummery to the rear
- Scale and massing of the proposals would be overbearing to Blakes Cottages and the Plummery to the rear

- Appearance and scale of the proposed building is out of keeping with the site, adjoined row of shops and surrounding area
- Façade of the existing building should be retained
- Noise and air pollution concerns from the proposed plant room
- Another hotel in Reading is not required
- Conversion of the existing building to flats would be more suitable and meet demand for housing
- Insufficient parking

Equality Act

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. 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.

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

Reading Borough Local Plan 2019

CC1: PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

CC2: SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

CC3: ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE

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

EN2: AREAS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

EN11: WATERSPACES

EN12: BIODIVERSITY AND THE GREEN NETWORK

EN15: AIR QUALITY

EN16: POLLUTION AND WATER RESOURCES

EN17: NOISE GENERATING EQUIPMENT

H7: PROTECTING THE EXISTING HOUSING STOCK

TR1: ACHIEVING THE TRANSPORT STRATEGY

TR3: ACCESS, TRAFFIC AND HIGHWAY-RELATED MATTERS

TR5: CAR AND CYCLE PARKING AND ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING

RL1: NETWORK AND HIERARCHY OF CENTRES

RL6: PROTECTION OF LEISURE FACILITIES AND PUBLIC HOUSES
CR1: DEFINITION OF CENTRAL READING
CR2: DESIGN IN CENTRAL READING
CR3: PUBLIC REALM IN CENTRAL READING
CR4: LEISURE, CULTURE AND TOURISM IN CENTRAL READING
CR5: DRINKING ESTABLISHMENTS IN CENTRAL READING
CR6: LIVING IN CENTRAL READING
CR9: TERRACED HOUSING IN CENTRAL READING

Supplementary Planning Guidance

Sustainable Design and Construction SPD 2019
Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD 2011
Section 106 Planning Obligations SPD 2013

Appraisal

Principle

In terms of land uses principles, 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*”. Therefore, it is clear that the priority for development should be on previously developed land such as the application site.

At ground floor level the proposals seek to replace the existing bar and restaurant with a new bar and restaurant, albeit one which would be linked to and ancillary to the proposed hotel above. Nonetheless, in terms of land use principles the proposed replacement ground floor use is considered to comply with Policy RL6 (Protection of Leisure Facilities and Public Houses) which seeks to retain existing public houses or leisure facilities (including bars) given the bar element of the use would be retained. The proposed ground floor use is also considered to adhere to Policy CR5 (Drinking Establishments in Central Reading) which seeks that leisure and tourism uses and complementary evening and night time uses will be provided in the town centre (subject that such uses do not give rise to adverse impacts on the amenity of nearby residents and other town centre users).

Considering the above further and noting that the building has been in use more as a pub restaurant in recent years, it is considered that even if the proposals were considered to represent loss of a public house it is considered that the proposed use would comply with part b) of Policy RL6 which states that a loss of a leisure facility will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that ‘the function of the facility can be adequately fulfilled by an existing facility or a facility proposed as part of the development where that facility would be as accessible to the same catchment’. It is considered that the replacement bar restaurant of similar size in the same location of the existing facility would adequately fulfil this requirement considering also that there are a number of other pubs/bars close to the site, including The Back of Beyond at 104-108 Kings Road, Thirsty Bear at 110 Kings Road and The Outlook at 76 Kings Road which are all located within 80m.

In terms of the proposed hotel use, the principle of this would comply with Policy CR4 (Leisure, Culture and Tourism in Central Reading) which seeks to locate new leisure, tourism and culture uses within the town centre. In accordance with Policy CR6 (Living in Central Reading) occupation

of the hotel rooms on a short stay basis only in accordance with (Living in Central Reading) would be required to be secured by way of a section 106 legal agreement for the following terms:

- no hotel room shall be used for any use other than as a C1 use
- no hotel room shall be used or occupied as a residential dwelling or dwelling-house (C3 Use)
- not to let or licence for occupation or permit or suffer occupation of any of the hotel rooms for a continuous period of more than 3 months to the same occupier or occupiers
- other than those Customers staying in accordance with the above, not to let or licence for occupation or permit or suffer occupation of any hotel room for a continuous period for more than 3 months to the same Customer or Customers
- not to require Customers of any hotel room to agree to any minimum period of occupation (of whatever duration)
- to provide to the Council within 14 days of written request evidence regarding the use or occupation of the hotel rooms

However, the proposed loss of the existing residential uses to the upper floors of the building must also be considered which consists of one x 2 bedroom flat and one x 5 bedroom flat. Policy H7 (Protecting the Existing Housing Stock) states that planning permission will not be granted for any loss of residential accommodation or land unless there are exceptional circumstances and that planning permission will not be granted for a net loss in the number of residential units or gross floor area. The proposed development would result in a net loss of 2 residential units. The Agent advises that the flats are currently let to staff; one of the flats in particular also suffers from an irregular layout and room shape resulting in a sub optimum standard of accommodation. Nonetheless, these factors alone are not considered to demonstrate the exceptional circumstances stipulated under Policy H7 to justify a net loss of residential units. This is considered to be a significant shortfall of the proposed development in terms of the overall planning balance judgement.

The loss of the existing building itself must also be considered which whilst not statutory listed, locally listed or located within a conservation area, is considered to have some architectural merit which contributes positively to the character and appearance of the area. In particular the Kings Road façade displays a series of attractive timber windows, decorative cornices and roof detailing. In the context of Policies CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) and CR2 (Design in Central Reading) any replacement building would need to maintain or enhance the character of the surrounding area in order to justify removal of the existing building. The design merits of the proposed development will be assessed elsewhere in this report.

Character and Appearance

Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) requires that new development is of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of surrounding area including is layout, landscape, scale, height, massing and architectural detail and materials. Policy CR2 (Design in Central Reading) also states that new development in the town centre must respect existing relationships between buildings and consider incorporating green infrastructure to enhance an otherwise very urban environment.

As referred to above the existing building is considered to be of architectural merit and to contribute positively the character and appearance of the surrounding area. Any proposed replacement building would need to be of suitable design quality in order to maintain and enhance the character of the surrounding area in accordance with Policy CC7 and justify removal of the existing building.

At ground floor level the proposed plans indicate that the building would retain glazed active frontages to both Kings Road and Duncan Place. From street-level it is considered that the appearance of the proposals would present suitably active frontages to the street.

It is acknowledged that the area surrounding the application site is mixed in terms of scale of buildings and also architecture. The application site itself adjoins a three-storey red brick terrace of Victorian style shops with accommodation above whilst to the west and south of the site around the junction of Kings Road and Duncan Place are larger more modern (up to five and half storey) office and service apartment buildings in Abbey Wharf and House of Fisher. Abbey Wharf which fronts the Kennet to its rear is a pleasant wharf style red and grey patterned brick office building with varied window proportions, including projecting bay windows and with pitched roof with flat crown and dormer roof projections. The House of Fisher building is of similar scale but more utilitarian in appearance with single tone red brick and white render façade flat roof and uniform appearance to upper floors in terms of window rhythm and proportions.

The proposed plans indicate a building of predominantly five storeys but with four and three storey elements. . Adjacent to the rear (north) of the application site is a three-storey block of flats known as The Plummery accessed from Duncan Place which fronts on to the River Kennet. There is a change in levels as the road gradually slopes down from Kings Road along Duncan Place towards The Plummery and the river by around 0.5m. Whilst as a predominantly five-storey building the overall height of the proposed building would be reflective of those other buildings around the junction of Kings Road and Duncan Place it is important to note that the surrounding sites containing buildings of this scale are much larger in terms of building footprint and overall plot size. In terms of plot size and urban grain, the application site is considered to more closely relate to the terraced buildings to which it adjoins and the properties directly to the rear at Blakes Cottages and The Plummery which are smaller plots containing more modest buildings.

The existing application site incorporates a rear service yard containing a small single storey rear extension to the building. This service courtyard provides visual relief from the existing part three, part two and part single storey building to the adjacent three-storey building of flats to the rear (north) of the site at The Plummery, particularly given the land slopes down to the rear (north) where The Plummery which is set at a lower level ground level than the application site. The rear elevation The Plummery and facing windows are set 11m from the rear service yard boundary with the application site.

At its lowest point the scale of the proposed building would be three storeys which even with the proposed flat roof appearance of the building, would be only marginally below the pitched roof ridge height of the closest element of the three storey The Plummery building to the rear of the site which is located 11m from the shared boundary. The predominantly five storey scale of the proposed development would therefore significantly exceed the scale of The Plummery. Given the size of the application site and available footprint for development it is considered

that a predominantly five storey development would result in a dominant and oppressive scale of development when viewed from The Plummery and from Duncan Place. The dominant form of the development is also exacerbated by the change in levels between the two sites and the lower ground level of The Plummery.

It is considered that a building of up to five storeys within the modest footprint of the applications site would also result in an awkward and abrupt transition from the three storey Victorian style terrace to which the existing building adjoins on Kings Road. The overall mass of the proposed building is considered to appear overly dominant to the adjoined terrace. This dominance is exacerbated by way of the appearance of the building and in particular the proposed horizontal window alignment which indicates greater internal floor heights of the proposed building compared to the existing terrace results in greater storey heights and a difference in the horizontal window alignment of the proposed building. The midpoint of the third storey window line of the proposed building would sit at eaves height level of the existing terrace above the height of the third storey window line of the existing adjoined buildings.

In terms of materials the proposed use of red brick as the primary material is considered appropriate in this location where surrounding character is predominantly buildings of different tones of brick. There is also evidence of render/cladding to surrounding buildings and the proposed use of green tone zinc cladding as a secondary material is not considered out of keeping with surrounding character. However, the overall proliferation of windows to the development is also considered to result in a monolithic appearance to the upper floors of the development. This together with the overall lack of architectural detailing to the proposed building is not considered to present the high-quality design required to maintain and enhance the character of the area, particularly when considered in the context of the existing building.

It is acknowledged that the Outline application seeks that the Layout of the development is considered at a later stage as a Reserved Matter. Notwithstanding this, it is considered that the size of the application site and its relationship with existing surrounding buildings is such that a development of the quantum and scale proposed could not be accommodated on the site without resulting in adverse harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area as described above.

Amended plans were submitted during the course of the application and have been considered which introduced a step in the massing where the building adjoins the Kings Road terrace to show a four-storey element where the building adjoins the existing building then stepping up to five storeys. The proposals remain the same in terms of massing and design and this change alone is not considered to address the conditions regarding the overdevelopment and the proposals are still considered to result in an awkward transition between the adjoined terrace of buildings and overdevelopment of the site in general.

The buildings directly to the rear of the application site form a terrace of buildings known as Blakes Cottages which front on to the River Kennet. This short terrace of dwellings is specifically covered by Policy CR9a (Terraced Housing in Central Reading) which states that the character of these areas of traditional town centre terraced housing will be respected and that development should not result in a loss, or have a detrimental effect on the character of, these areas. The majority of the terrace consists of modest two storey dwellings and it is considered that the

proximity of the application site and the scale of development proposed, at up to five storeys and its unsympathetic appearance as discussed above, would be detrimental to the more modest terraced character of Blakes Cottages. Whilst it is acknowledged that either end of the designated terrace is bookended by larger more modern development (The Plummery to the west at part three storeys and St James's Wharf to the east at part four and part five storeys) these buildings are stepped in terms of their massing and are considered to demonstrate an overall more sympathetic design approach. For example, the buildings incorporate window placement and proportions which relate to the core part of the terrace, sloping pitched roofs to soften transition in height and also use of materials (red brick and white render) together with architectural detailing such as depth of window reveal and brick lintels detailing which are features and design quality that the application proposal fails to demonstrate.

Located around 90m to the north of the application site on the opposite side of the River Kennet is the Reading Abbey Ruins which is a Schedule Ancient Monument site and contains a number of grade I listed structures. The site is Reading's most significant heritage asset. Adjacent to the east of the Abbey is also the grounds of Reading GAOL which are grade II listed. Policy CR15 (The Reading Abbey Quarter) relates to development with the vicinity of the Abbey, stating that the area is to be a major location for heritage and culture with the Borough and that any development within the Abbey Quarter area will protect and enhance the historic setting of the area and frame the Abbey as Reading's most significant heritage asset. Whilst the application site is located outside of (but adjacent to) the designated Abbey Quarter area the proposed development, at the scale proposed, would be visible to a direct view from the Abbey across the river, where the upper floors of the building would likely be visible in the backdrop behind The Plummery which directly fronts the river.

Policy EN1 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment) states that all proposals will be expected to protect and where possible enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings. The application is not accompanied by a heritage assessment or views study to demonstrate any potential impact on the setting of the heritage assets on the opposite side of the river. However, based on the information submitted and given the distant nature of the view of the proposed development that would be obtained from the Abbey from across the river, the position of the application site set behind the existing riverside frontage buildings, together with the presence of a number of much larger modern buildings in closer proximity to the Abbey site it is not considered that the scale and appearance of the proposed development would result in any material harm to the setting of the Reading Abbey Schedule Ancient Monument of the grade II listed Reading gaol.

Policy EN11 (Waterspaces) states that waterspaces within the Borough will be protected and enhanced so that they can continue to contribute local character, heritage and visual amenity. The application site does not directly front on to the riverside and would be positioned behind the Blakes Cottages terrace of buildings. There would only be limited views of the application site from a narrow section of the riverside space when looking north along Duncan Place and given the development would be set behind the existing riverside frontage buildings it is considered that any impact on the waterside space would be negligible.

It is considered that the proposed building by way of its scale, massing and appearance would fail to maintain and enhance the character of the surrounding area contrary to Policies CC7, CR2

and CR9. In this respect it is not considered that the proposed development demonstrates a suitable design quality to justify removal of the existing building which is considered to contribute positively to the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

The Outline application also proposes that matters of Landscaping are reserved for consideration at a reserved matters stage and the submitted design and access statement states that details of curtilage planting can be secured by way of condition. The site is located within Abbey ward which the Reading Tree Strategy (2021) identifies as a low tree canopy coverage ward which lack existing vegetation and is also within an Air Quality Management Area which is considered to heighten the importance and further underpin the need for landscaping provision within new development. The application seeks approval for matters of access with vehicular access to be retained from Duncan Place towards the rear of the site and it is therefore logical to infer that servicing, parking and bin store would be located to this part of the site which would preclude the provision of any significance landscaping. This combined with the overdeveloped nature of the proposals, quantum of development and size of the application site is such that it is considered that the proposals would fail to provide adequate scope for provision of landscaping within the development. The proliferation of windows to the façade of the development would appear to preclude potential for introduction of green walls. The development includes flat roof areas which could potentially provide scope of green roof areas however the submitted sustainability statement states that green roofs have been considered but roof top photovoltaic panels are proposed instead to these areas, which have been targeted to assist in meeting the required BREEAM score for the development.

In this respect the lack of potential for landscaping within the development is considered to further exacerbate the unacceptable scale and appearance of the proposed development contrary to the requirements of Policy CC7 which states that landscaping and formation of visually attractive developments are key considerations in assessing the character and appearance of development.

Amenity of Surrounding Occupiers

Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) seeks that development proposals should safeguard the amenity of both existing and future occupiers and Policy EN16 (Pollution and Water Resources) seeks that development will only be permitted where it would not be damaging to the environment and sensitive receptors in terms of pollution. Policy EN15 (Air Quality) seeks to ensure development does not result or adverse air quality impacts of that future occupiers of development are not subject to adverse air quality.

The proposed development by way of its scale is considered to result in an overbearing form of development in relation to the adjacent block of flats at The Plummery to the north of the application site. This would be harmful to the residential amenity of the existing occupiers of the flats and in particular those with rear (south) facing windows which would directly face the proposed development. The overbearing nature of the proposals would be exacerbated by the difference in levels between the two sites with the application site set 0.5m higher than the ground level of The Plummery. It is also considered that the scale of the development proposed and the proximity of the application site to The Plummery is such that it would result in an unacceptable loss of daylight to occupiers of the lower floor flats with rear (south) facing windows within this existing adjacent building. Whilst noting that the application seeks layout of

the development as a reserved matter it is considered that the size of the application site and its proximity to existing flats at The Plummery (11m separation from the north boundary of the site to the rear facing windows of the adjacent flats) is such that a development of the quantum and scale proposed could not be accommodated on the site without resulting in adverse harm on the existing occupiers of The Plummery in terms of loss of daylight and overbearing impacts and the proposals would be contrary to Policy CC8.

Policy CC8 sets out that facing habitable room windows should have a minimum back to back separation distance of 20m to prevent undue loss of privacy and overlooking impacts. The proposals relate to the relationship between a hotel and flats however this recommended separation is still considered pertinent as a means by which to assess such relationships between facing windows, with occupancy of a hotel room not dissimilar to how a hotel room is used in terms of overlooking and privacy impacts. Whilst again noting that the application seeks for layout to be a reserved matter for consideration at a later date the indicative layout plans submitted with the application show a 15m separation distance at the closest point between the proposed rear hotel room windows and the existing rear facing windows of flats within The Plummery. Given the size of the application site and proximity to the existing flats at The Plummery (11m separation from the north boundary of the site to the rear facing windows of the adjacent flats) is such that a development of the quantum and scale proposed could not be accommodated on the site without resulting in adverse harm on the existing occupiers of The Plummery in terms of loss of overlooking and loss of privacy impacts and the proposals would be contrary to Policy CC8.

Amended plans were submitted during the course of the application which introduced angled windows to the rear elevation of the upper floors of the hotel in order to attempt to address the overlooking and loss of privacy concerns in relation to The Plummery to the rear of the site. It is not considered that this change has overcome the concerns given that despite the angled nature of the windows this would not prevent people from looking out directly to the rear whilst the separation distance to The Plummery building to the rear.

The nature of the uses proposed also have the potential to impact adversely upon surrounding occupiers in terms noise and other disturbances. Whilst the proposed ground floor use would be similar to the existing use the hotel use above would add an additional commercial use to the site. In respect of both the bar restaurant and hotel use of the site Environmental Protection Officers are satisfied that hours of deliveries and waste collection and hours of operation of the proposed bar and restaurant could satisfactorily be controlled by way of condition to ensure surrounding occupiers are not adversely impact by the proposed use. Such conditions would also ensure future occupiers of the hotel would not be subject to any undue disturbances from the proposed ground floor use. In this respect further conditions are also recommended to ensure submission and approval of detailed specific of a kitchen extraction prior to commencement of the proposed use to ensure odours are appropriately controlled whilst a similar condition is recommended to secure noise assessment details and specifications for any other additional plant equipment to ensure this does not adversely impact on surrounding occupiers and future occupiers of the proposed hotel.

In terms of air quality matters, Environmental Protection officers are satisfied that the submitted transport statement demonstrates that the proposed development would not result in a material

increase in vehicle movements to and from the site and therefore is unlikely to have an adverse impact upon existing air quality at the site. It is noted that the site is located within an air quality management area (AQMA) and within an identified pollution hotspot where existing air quality levels are poor. Therefore, a condition is recommended to secure submission and approval of an air quality mitigation scheme to ensure future occupiers of the hotel would not be subject to unacceptable air quality within the development.

The proposed plans indicate that bin storage for the proposed development could be satisfactorily accommodated within the development. A condition is recommended to secure detailed specification of the bin store to ensure this is secure and includes measures to prevent access by pests and vermin which can become a nuisance on site.

The site is also identified as one with potential to be at risk from contaminated land and conditions are recommended to secure submission and approval of contaminated land survey reports and remediation scheme (if required).

A construction method statement would also be secured by conditions to include noise and dust controls during potential construction of the proposed development.

In terms of noise and disturbance matters, it is considered that the proposals would, subject to the recommended conditions, comply with Policies EN15 and EN16.

Transport

Policies TR3 (Access, Traffic and Highway related matters), TR1 (Achieving the Transport Strategy) and TR5 (Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging) seek to address access, traffic, highway and parking related matters relating to development.

The site is located within 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. In accordance with the adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD, the development would be required to provide parking provision of 0.5 parking spaces per bedroom which would equate to 14.5 parking spaces for the hotel element of the application. Provision for the restaurant would be based on its size which in accordance with the standards would be 1 retail space per 7.5m². Whilst the application seeks that matters of layout are reserved for consideration at a later stage the submitted plans and transport statement show that the development would be provided with 5 off-site parking spaces within the proposed rear servicing yard which would be for staff use only (14 staff proposed). RBC Transport are satisfied that the 5 spaces can be adequately provided within the service yard and that the access point to the service yard from Duncan Place would provide an acceptable access for this number of vehicles. Whilst 5 spaces is an under provision compared to adopted standards, parking on street is heavily restricted in the area as Kings Road is a red route and the Council's Residential Parking Permit Scheme operates in the surrounding streets. The town centre location of the site also means it is well situated in terms of public transport including the train station and as such the level of parking provision proposed is considered to be acceptable.

A condition is recommended to secure provision of the access as proposed and submission and approval of a detailed specification of the proposed cycle store.

A secure internal refuse store area is proposed within the single storey rear extension within the service yard which would be readily accessible from Duncan Place for refuse collection purposes.

Subject to the recommended conditions the proposals are considered to accord with Policies TR1, TR3 and TR5.

Sustainability

Policy CC3 (Adaptation to Climate Change) requires that development proposal incorporate sustainable design practices to take account of climate change and more specifically Policy CC2 (Sustainable Design and Construction) states that new non-residential development of this scale should achieve a BREEAM Excellent standard. A sustainability report has been submitted with the application which sets out proposed renewable energy sources for the development including provision of air source heat pumps which is considered to comply with Policy CC3. The submitted report also sets out that the development is projected to achieve the required BREEAM Excellent standard. A pre-occupation condition is recommended to secure an as built certificate confirming that the development has achieved this standard.

Natural Environment

Policy EN12 (Biodiversity and the Green Network) seeks that development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity and should provide for a net gain of biodiversity wherever possible by protecting, enhancing and incorporating features of biodiversity on and adjacent to development sites and by providing new tree planting and wildlife friendly landscaping and ecological enhancements wherever practicable.

The application is supported by a bat survey where the RBC Ecology Consultant is satisfied demonstrates that the building is unlikely to support bats or adversely impact on protected species. A condition is recommended to secure submission and approval of a scheme of biodiversity enhancements to include bird boxes for Swifts which are known to populate the town centre.

Archaeology

Policy EN2 (Areas of Archaeological Significance) requires that the archaeological impacts of development are adequately assessed by the Applicant and that where identified remains cannot be preserved in situ they must be properly excavated and recorded in situ. The archaeological assessment submitted with the application identifies that there is moderate potential for archaeology of medieval and post medieval periods to be preserved beneath the ground at the site and that the depth of the foundations required for the proposed development would likely impact on such remains. As such the report concludes that a scheme of archaeological fieldwork would likely be required in order to assess the nature and extent of any archaeological remains. Berkshire Archaeology have reviewed the archaeological assessment submitted with the application and have advised that this has been carried out to an appropriate standard and that they agree with the conclusions of the report. Therefore, a condition is recommended to secure a scheme of archaeological fieldwork is carried out in accordance with a written scheme of investigation to be submitted and approved by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of development on site.

Employment Skills and Training

In accordance with the adopted Employment Skills and Training SPD (2013) and Policy CC9 (Securing Infrastructure) a development of this nature and scale is required to demonstrate how it is utilising local labour and contributing to skills and training for local labour in the form of both construction and end user phase employment and skills plan associated with the development. Provision of such plan, or equivalent financial contribution, would be secured by way of section 106 legal agreement should it be recommended that planning permission be granted. However, given that planning permission is recommended to be refused for other reasons preparation and signing of a section 106 agreement has not been progressed and therefore this would represent a further reason for refusal.

Community Infrastructure Levy

In accordance with the Council's adopted CIL charging schedule the proposed hotel accommodation would be liable for the levy which would be based upon the proposed floor space of 1252m². If the applicant can demonstrate that the existing parts of the building to be demolished have been within a lawful use for a minimum continuous period 6 months within the last 3 years, then the levy required could be reduced and off-set against the floor space of the existing building.

Matters Raised in Representations

Comments have been received that conversion of the existing building to flats to meet housing demand would be a better use of the site than a hotel. However, there is no planning policy reason to resist the principle of hotel accommodation within the town centre which is supported by Policy CR4 (Leisure, Culture and Tourism in Central Reading).

All other matters raised have been considered in the appraisal section of this report above.

RECOMMENDATION:

REFUSE Planning Permission for the following reasons:

1. The development as a result of its proposed scale would result in an overdevelopment of the site and a dominant form of development in relation to the existing adjacent buildings to the north and east of the site. . The overdevelopment is exacerbated by the appearance of the proposed development by way of the proliferation of windows to the upper floors, lack of detailed design and failure to provide scope for suitable landscaping. . This results in a visually discordant development which would fail to maintain or enhance the character and appearance of the surrounding area, including that of the adjacent terrace of dwellings at Blakes Cottages and furthermore, would not justify loss of the existing building which is considered to contribute positively to surrounding character. The proposals are contrary to Policies CC7, CCR2 and CR9 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.
2. The size of the application site and its proximity to the existing rear facing windows to the flats within The Plummery, adjacent to the site to the north, is such that a development of the quantum, scale and appearance proposed could not be accommodated on the site without resulting in unacceptable overbearing, loss of daylight, overlooking and loss of privacy to the existing occupiers of The Plummery,

which would be harmful to the residential amenity of these existing adjacent occupier's contrary to Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

3. The proposed development would result in a net loss of two residential units which would be detrimental to the housing supply needs of the Borough contrary to Policy H7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.
4. In the absence of a completed legal agreement to secure occupation of the proposed hotel accommodation on a short term basis only and provision of construction phase and end user phase employment skills and training plan or equivalent financial contribution, the proposal fails to adequately secure the development as short term hotel accommodation only and to adequately contribute to local labour and training needs, contrary to Policies CR6 and CC9 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and the adopted Employment Skills and Training Plan 2019.

Informatives:

1. This decision relates to the following plans:

Drawings ref:

- PL-08 - Proposed Plans REV B (06/10/2021)
- PL-09 - Proposed Elevations REV B (06/10/2021)
- PL-10 - Proposed Side Elevations REV B (06/10/2021)

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 6th October 2021

- PL-03 - Existing and Proposed Block Plan REV A (09/03/2021)

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 9th March 2021

- PL-05 - Existing Plans REV A (09/03/2021)
- PL-06 - Existing Elevations (06/06/202)
- PL-01 - Location Plan (05/06/2020)
- PL-07 - Existing Side Elevations (05/06/2020)
- PL-04 - Proposed Site Plan (05/06/2020)

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 18th December 2020

2. The local planning authority has worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive by advising of the concerns with proposal and providing for the opportunity for the application to be withdrawn. The applicant chose not to withdraw the application, hence the issuing this refusal notice
3. Without prejudice to any future application or appeal, the applicant is advised that reason for refusal 3 could be overcome by entering into a Section 106 Legal Agreement.
4. The applicant is advised that the refused scheme, had it been able to be approved, would have been a CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) liable development.
5. This planning application was submitted without the benefit of first seeking pre-application advice from the Local Planning Authority, which can often result in the

avoidance of refusal of planning permission. Please see the following link to the Council's pre-application service here: <https://images.reading.gov.uk/2019/12/Pre-app-November-2021-final-2.11.pdf>