

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT - Application No.s: 191336/FUL

Address: 22-24 Cross Street

Proposal: Conversion of loft to 1 x two-bedroom flat and rear dormer roof extensions

Case officer: Matt Burns

Site Description and Surrounding Area: The application site comprises a four storey mid-terrace building on the west side of Cross Street in the Town Centre. The upper floors of the building are in use as a 6 x one-bedroom flats with the ground floor units in A1 use. The site is surrounded by a mixture of other town centre uses with E class uses at street-level and a mixture of offices and residential accommodation to upper floors.

The site is located within the Reading Central Area, Central Core, Primary Shopping Area and Office Core Area of the town centre as defined by Policy CR1 (Definition of Central Reading) of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and is located within an existing designated Primary Frontage as defined by Policy CR7 (Primary Frontages in Central Reading).

Proposal: The application seeks planning permission for conversion of the roof space to 1 x two-bedroom flat and the addition of 3 rear dormer roof extensions.

Amended plans were submitted drawing the course of the application to amend the form of the proposed rear dormer roof extensions.

Plans and Documents Considered:

- A-1010 Rev B - Existing and Proposed Fourth Floor Plan
- A-1020 Rev B - Existing and Proposed Roof Plan
- A-1040 Rev B - Proposed Section B-B
- A-1055 Rev B - Proposed Elevations
- A-1060 Rev B - Proposed Context Rear Elevation

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 4th March 2020

- Paragon Acoustic Consultants Approval 171742, Condition 6 Assessment ref. 20191008_4523_C6_001.docx Rev A

- A-1015 Rev A - Existing Ground Floor Mezzanine (Bin Store)

- Bluebird Design & Surveying Design and Access Statement

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 8th October 2019

- SHA Environmental BREEAM Domestic Refurbishment 2014 Pre-Assessment Report ref. Projects_190904_22-24 Cross Street, Reading, BREEAM Domestic Refurbishment 2014 Pre-Assessment Report_Issued_30.09.2019

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 1st October 2019

Relevant Planning History:

81/TP/935 - Change of use of 1st, 2nd and 3rd floors from shop (storage) to offices - Granted.

89-01080/ADV - Externally illuminated wooden painted sign - Granted.

91/00238/CLP - Use as employment agency (Section 64 determination) (no. 22) - Refused.

03/00786/FUL - Change of use of an office suite to small electrolysis treatment centre (no. 24) - Granted.

170498/OPA - Change of use of first, second and third floor from Class B1(a) (offices) to C3 (dwelling houses) to comprise 3 x 1-bed flats and 6 x studios. Prior Notification under Class O, Part 3 of the Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended) - Prior Approval Refused.

171742/FUL - Change of use to residential (C3) on first, second and third floors to create 6 x one-bedroom flats with alterations to fenestration and gable roof alteration to existing rear four storey projection - Granted.

181827FUL - Rear dormer roof extensions to create two self-contained C3 flats - Withdrawn.

191091/APC - Discharge of conditions (Noise Assessment) and 7 (BREEAM Design Stage Report) of planning permission ref. 171742 - Conditions Discharged.

Public Notification:

Notification letters were sent to no.s 20, 26 and 26A - 26C Cross Street and no.s 24 - 30 Queen Victoria Street. A site notice was also displayed at the application site. No letters of representation have been received.

Consultation Responses:

Transport: No objection, subject to conditions to secure submission and approval of a construction method statement and details of cycle parking prior to commencement of development and a condition to inform future occupier of the flats that they would not be automatically entitled to a parking permit for the local area.

Environmental Protection: Object on the basis that the submitted noise assessment has not considered existing plant equipment at the premises and therefore fails to demonstrate that future occupier of the flat would not be subject to undue noise disturbance and harm to their amenity.

Equality Act 2010:

In determining this application, the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. However, there is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application. Therefore, in terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

Relevant Planning Policy and Guidance

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. 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 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

EN12: BIODIVERSITY AND THE GREEN NETWORK

EN14: TREES, HEDGES AND WOODLAND

EN15: AIR QUALITY

EN16: POLLUTION AND WATER RESOURCES

EM3: LOSS OF EMPLOYMENT LAND

H1: PROVISION OF HOUSING

H2: DENSITY AND MIX

H3: AFFORDABLE HOUSING

H5: STANDARDS FOR NEW HOUSING

H10: PRIVATE AND COMMUNAL OUTDOOR SPACE

CR1: DEFINITION OF CENTRAL READING

CR2: DESIGN IN CENTRAL READING

CR6: LIVING IN CENTRAL READING

CR7: PRIMARY FRONTAGES IN CENTRAL READING

TR1: ACHIEVING THE TRANSPORT STRATEGY

TR3: ACCESS, TRAFFIC AND HIGHWAY-RELATED MATTERS

TR4: CYCLE ROUTES AND FACILITIES

TR5: CAR AND CYCLE PARKING AND ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD's)

Supplementary Planning Document: Affordable Housing (2013)

Supplementary Planning Document: S106 Planning Obligations (2014)

Supplementary Planning Document: Parking Standards and Design (2011)

Supplementary Planning Document: Sustainable Design and Construction (2019)

Appraisal

Principle

The proposal is for a conversion and as such is entirely on previously developed land within the urban area and is therefore considered suitable for residential development in principle,

subject to any other relevant policies relating to the existing or proposed uses. The first, second and third floors of the building have been converted to 6 x one-bedroom flats under planning permission 171742 however the loft space of the building to be converted does not form part of the existing permitted accommodation nor did it form part of the former office use of the building.

The National Planning Policy Framework (2021) encourages the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land) and seeks that all housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The accessibility of the site, located within the Central Core Area of the Town Centre, is considered acceptable for the proposed development in accordance with Policy CC6 (Accessibility and Intensity of Development) whilst the provision of new housing would align with the broad objectives of Policy H1 (Provision of Housing) in assisting in meeting the annual housing targets.

Design and Character of the Area

Policy CC7 (Design and The Public Realm) seeks to preserve or enhance the character of the area in which a development is located whilst Policy CR2 (Design in Central Reading) seeks to secure appropriate relationships between buildings, spaces and frontages within the centre of Reading. Policy EN1 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment) states that all development proposals should protect and where possible enhance the significance of heritage assets, including their setting.

The only proposed alteration to the front of the building is the addition of three roof lights. These are modest in scale and as such are considered to satisfactorily preserve the character of the existing building and to not materially impact on the character of the surrounding area.

Roof level extensions and conversions are not characteristic of the terrace of properties to this side of Cross Street. The rear roof extensions proposed are considered to appear convoluted and contrived and to fail to integrate satisfactorily with and result in harm to the character and appearance of the host building, the adjoining terrace of buildings as well as that of the wider surrounding area.

Whilst roof forms to the rear of properties to this part of Cross Street are varied, the extent of rear dormer roof extensions proposed would completely fill and dominate all of the rear roof slopes of the building and are considered to be excessive and an overdevelopment of the roof space. A full width rear dormer would span the full width of the rear roof slope of the building whilst two side dormer would also completely fill the flank elevations of the proposed gable pitched roof extension to the rear central stair core of the building. Furthermore, the form of the roof extensions proposed would present a series of different angled pitches presenting a contrived and awkward juxtaposition with the main roof of the building.

The introduction of roof space accommodation and the large dormer roof extensions with large rear windows and Juliet balconies would also appear visually dominant and incongruous

with the more modest rear roof elements of the buildings within the adjoining terrace of buildings.

The proposals are considered to be contrary to Policies CC7 and CR2 and to form a reason for refusal of the application.

Opposite the rear of the buildings are the rear of the Grade II Listed terrace of buildings on the east side of Queen Victoria Street. The historic significance of the terrace is primarily related to the grand terracotta facades fronting Queen Victoria Street. The rear of the terrace is subject to more modern and utilitarian extensions, and it is not considered that the proposed roof extensions and conversion would have a material impact on the setting on the Queen Victoria Street terrace of buildings and as such there would be no conflict with Policy EN1.

Impact on Neighbours

Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) seeks to protect the amenity of surrounding occupiers from the impacts of new development. Policy EN16 (Pollution and Water Resources) seeks to protect surrounding occupiers from the impacts of pollution and other disturbances associated with new development.

The proposed is largely surrounding by commercial premises, albeit the upper floors of other buildings along Cross Street and Queen Victoria Street to the rear have been converted to residential flats, including the first, second and third floors of the host building.

The separation distance to the properties to the rear along Queen Victoria Street (12m) is considered to be low, but adequate in this specific instance for an urban town centre location and would not result in any significantly harmful overlooking or loss of privacy; it is also relevant to note there are similar existing relationships to Queen Victoria Street with other properties along this side of Cross Street and this is a function of the width of this urban block.

If otherwise acceptable, it would have been necessary to attach a condition to secure obscure glazing of the proposed fourth floor side facing bathroom window to the flat in order to prevent direct overlooking to rear of no. 26 Cross Street of which the upper floors are in residential use.

If planning permission were to be granted a condition would be attached to restrict construction activities to reasonable working hours in order to protect existing nearby occupiers from undue noise and disturbance.

Amenity of future occupiers

Policies CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) seek to protect the amenity of surrounding occupiers from the impacts of new development. Policy EN16 (Pollution and Water Resources) seek to protect surrounding occupiers from the impacts of pollution and other disturbances associated with new development. Policy CR6 (Living in Central Reading) requires that new development demonstrates how future occupiers would not be unduly impacted by noise and disturbance associated within town centre activities and uses.

Whilst the proposed large rear dormer roof extensions (albeit as discussed above these are unacceptable additions to the building in terms of scale and appearance) would provide additional ceiling height and floor space for the bathroom and bedrooms of the proposed flat, the kitchen/living/dining area, located to the front of the building, as a result of the roof slope to the front of the existing main roof of the building, would not be served by sufficient floor space at a suitable ceiling height to enable this part of the flat to practically function and provide a viable unit of accommodation. The majority of the floor space to the living/kitchen/dining area would be served by a ceiling height below 2m resulting in a cramped form of accommodation where residents would be unable to comfortably move about with limited usable space resulting in an unacceptable standard of amenity for future occupiers of the flat contrary to Policy CC8 and to form a reason for refusal of the application.

A noise assessment has been submitted with the application which recommends a glazing and mechanical ventilation specification to protect future occupiers of the flat from undue noise disturbance as a result of its town centre location. The noise assessment has been revised by RBC Environmental Protection Officers who consider the assessment to be inadequate on the basis that it has not considered the noise impact of existing mechanical plant equipment at the property on future occupiers of the flat and therefore fail to demonstrate that the proposed glazing and ventilation measures proposed would be sufficient protect future occupiers from noise disturbance from the plant equipment. The application is considered to fail to demonstrate that future occupiers of the flat would not be subject to undue noise disturbance and harm to their amenity contrary to Policies CC8 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 relates matters relating to development.

The site is located within the Reading Central Area and within Reading's primary shopping area. The site is located within Zone 1 of the adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD which is an area at the very heart of Reading Borough, consisting primarily of retail and commercial office developments. This area is well served by rail and bus links and also contains the largest proportion of public car parking spaces.

There is no parking currently associated with the site. The non-provision of parking is acceptable in this town centre location given the proximity of public transport services and public car parks. The Friar Street/Broad Street and surrounding areas do not fall within a Resident's Permit Zone and the residents will not be eligible to apply for a Residents Parking Permit. If planning permission were to be granted a condition would be attached to notify future occupiers of the flat that they would not be automatically entitled to parking permits.

No information regarding cycle storage has been submitted with this application. In schemes with similar constraints, alternatives options such as foldable bicycles have been provided for residential units and would likely be acceptable in this instance. If planning permission were to be granted full details would be secured by way of condition.

Details of bin storage have not been provided; however, it is assumed that it will be the same provision afforded to the existing flats on the lower floors where waste is collected from the street deposited in bags on a weekly basis. The existing residents place their bags on the appropriate collection day. There are no objections to the proposed development in terms of refuse storage or collection.

If planning permission were to be granted submission and approval of a construction management statement would be secured by way of condition to ensure associated construction work would not adversely impact on the highway network within the town centre.

Sustainability

Policy CC2 (Sustainable Design and Construction) states that development proposals for conversion to residential use should achieve a minimum BREEAM standard of 'Very Good'. A pre-estimator report has been submitted with the application which sets out that the proposed development is projected to achieve a BREEAM score of 60.01% which would meet the 'Very Good' standard required by Policy CC2. If planning permission were to be granted a condition would be attached to secure submission and approval of an as built BREEAM report prior to occupation of the flat confirming the development has achieved the projected score.

Affordable Housing

Policy H3 (Affordable Housing) requires that for schemes of 1-4 dwellings (C3 use) a financial contribution to enable the equivalent of 10% of the housing to be provided as affordable housing elsewhere within the Borough. In accordance with the adopted Affordable Housing SPD 2019 this equates to contribution equivalent to 5% of the GDV of the development unless it can be demonstrated that this would make the development unviable.

Following submission of the application the Applicant confirmed agreement to provide a policy compliant level of affordable housing contribution to be secured as part of a section 106 legal agreement. However, given the application is recommended for refusal a section 106 agreement to secure such a contribution has not been progressed and therefore would form a further reason for refusal of the application. An informative will be added to the refusal decision notice to advise the Applicant that this reason could be overcome by entering into a section 106 agreement with the Local Planning Authority.

Community Infrastructure Levy

The proposals are for new building housing and are therefore liable for CIL based upon a proposed new residential floor area of 62 square metres.

RECOMMENDATION:

REFUSE Planning Permission for the following reasons:

1. The scale and appearance of the proposed rear dormer roof extensions would dominate the rear roof slopes of the building which together with their convoluted roof forms would appear visually dominant, awkward and contrived in relation to the roof form and character of the host building and to that of the scale and character of roof forms to the

adjoined terrace of buildings and those found within the surrounding area. The proposals are contrary to Policies CC7 and CR2 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

2. As a result of the front roof slope of the main roof of the building the majority of the floor space to the kitchen/living/dining area of the proposed flat would be served by a ceiling height below 2m, resulting in a cramped form of accommodation where residents would be unable to comfortably move about with limited usable space, resulting in an unacceptable standard of accommodation and amenity for future occupiers of the flat contrary to Policy CC8 of the Reading Local Plan 2019.

3. The noise assessment submitted in support of the application fails to take into account the presence of existing mechanical plant at the site which could have an adverse noise impact on future occupiers of the flats. Therefore, the proposed development fails to demonstrate that future occupiers of the flat would not be subject to unacceptable noise disturbance and harm to their amenity contrary to Policies EN16 and CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

4. In the absence of a completed legal agreement to secure a policy compliant affordable housing contribution the proposals fail to adequately contribute to the housing needs of the Borough contrary to Policies CC9 and H3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019, the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document 2021 and Planning Obligations Under Section 106 Supplementary Planning Document 2015.

Informatives

1. This decision relates to the following plans and documents:

- A-1010 Rev B - Existing and Proposed Fourth Floor Plan
- A-1020 Rev B - Existing and Proposed Roof Plan
- A-1040 Rev B - Proposed Section B-B
- A-1055 Rev B - Proposed Elevations
- A-1060 Rev B - Proposed Context Rear Elevation

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 4th March 2020

- Paragon Acoustic Consultants Approval 171742, Condition 6 Assessment ref. 20191008_4523_C6_001.docx Rev A
- A-1015 Rev A - Existing Ground Floor Mezzanine (Bin Store)
- Bluebird Design & Surveying Design and Access Statement

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 8th October 2019

- SHA Environmental BREEAM Domestic Refurbishment 2014 Pre-Assessment Report ref. Projects_190904_22-24 Cross Street, Reading, BREEAM Domestic Refurbishment 2014 Pre-Assessment Report_Issued_30.09.2019

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 1st October 2019

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 no. 4 could be overcome by entering into a Section 106 Legal Agreement (unilateral undertaking).
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.