

DELEGATED REPORT

Application No. 201649/FUL

Site Address: 32 Carey Street, Reading

Proposal: Conversion and extension to basement to form a self-contained studio flat (C3 use)

Applicant: Mr Edmond Duraku

Target Date: 15/02/21

Case Officer: Connie Davis

Site Description

The application site is a mid-terrace three storey dwelling located on the western side of Carey Street. The surrounding area is residential and comprises of terrace dwellings although the design of these varies on the western and eastern side of the street. The site is just located outside of the defined central area of Reading as defined on the LPA's Proposals Map.

The site is not Listed but is located within the Castle Hill/ Russell Street/ Oxford Road Conservation Area.

Proposal

The proposal is for the conversion of the existing basement to a self-contained studio flat (C3 use). In addition, an extension to the basement is proposed.

The basement would be extended by 9.59 sqm resulting in an additional depth of 2.3m. The extension would not be visible within the street scene or from the rear of the site. This has not been confirmed by the submission of existing and rear elevational drawings, however from the proposed floor plan it can be seen the extension would not protrude past the rear elevation of the main house. The internal staircase joining the main house to the basement is proposed to be removed.

The studio flat would have one front facing window serving the living area. The total sqm of the flat would measure 23 sqm.

Plans/Documents Submitted

Location Plan

201101-2 - Block Plan

201101-3 - Existing & Proposed Drawings

Received 20th November 2020

201101-4 - Existing & Proposed Sections

Received 9th December 2020

Design Statement Revised December 2020

Received 21st December 2020

Relevant planning history

200631/HOU - Part single storey, part two-storey rear extension - Application Permitted

201622/FUL - Conversion of basement into studio flat - Application Closed

Discussions with applicant/agent

The agent was advised of the concerns relating to this proposal (in an email sent 05/02/21); namely that the proposal would represent a poor standard of new accommodation as it does not meet the minimum space standards for a new 1 bedroom dwelling (and bedroom size for a 1 bedroom dwelling), insufficient natural light and outlook being provided and no provision of amenity space.

As per the consultation response from the transport department below, clarification was also need on proposed cycle and bin storage. However, given the above outstanding matters, it was not considered necessary to try to address the transport matters.

The agent was advised that if not withdrawn, the application would be recommended for refusal. No response was received.

Consultations

Internal Consultees

Transport - The site is located in Zone 2, Primary Core Area, of the Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD. This zone directly surrounds the Central Core Area and extends to walking distances of 2 kilometres from the centre of Reading. In accordance with the adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD, the development is required to provide a parking provision of 1 space for the proposed 1 bedroom unit.

It would appear that there is no off-road parking provision associated with the property.

The development site is located in an area designated as a Residents Parking Permit Area; Zone 08R. Under the Borough's current parking standards, this proposal would generate additional pressure for parking in the area, therefore if this application is approved there should be an assumption that any future occupants of the proposed dwelling will not be issued with a resident parking permit which should be covered by condition and an informative applied.

No cycle storage provision has been provided. Provision should be provided in accordance with the Councils current Parking Standards and Design SPD. Cycle storage should be secure and covered. Details and illustration required.

Bin storage and collection point has not been illustrated on plans. Revised plans are required.

Environmental Health - Excavation of the land would be required to extend the basement. You are advised that the development lies adjacent to the site of a former engineering works, which has the potential to have caused contaminated land.

See recommended condition and informative below, these are required to ensure that future occupants are not put at undue risk from contamination.

Recommended condition and informative

➤ CO6 UNIDENTIFIED CONTAMINATION

In the event that contamination is found at any time when carrying out the approved development not previously identified, development shall be halted on that part of the site and the contamination reported in writing to the Local Planning Authority.

An assessment of the nature and extent of contamination shall be undertaken and where remediation is necessary a remediation scheme, together with a timetable for its implementation, shall be submitted in writing to the Local Planning Authority for its written approval.

The measures in the approved remediation scheme shall be implemented in accordance with the approved timetable. Halted works shall not be re-commenced until the measures identified in the approved remediation scheme have been completed and a validation report has been submitted to and been approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: To ensure the development is suitable for its end use and the wider environment and does not create undue risks to occupiers of the site or surrounding areas in accordance with Policy EN16 of the Reading local Plan 2019.

AND

Informative - contaminated land

You are advised that the development lies adjacent to a potentially contaminated site. Due to the nature of the historic land use there is the potential of contaminated land being present. The developers must be aware that any ground or enabling works may bring receptors into contact with the aforementioned contaminants. You may wish to satisfy yourself that the details of the construction proposals take the necessary account of the possibility of contaminants from that source.

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

Public Consultation

The following addresses were formally consulted via letter on 06/01/21:

30, 34-36 Carey Street
37 Jesse Terrace
12 Marshall Close
69 Baker Street

In addition, a site notice was sent to the agent for display at the site on 06/01/21.

No representations have been received.

Planning policies

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

National Planning Policy Guidance

Reading Borough Council Local Plan (2019)

CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction

CC3: Adaption to Climate Change

CC5: Waste Minimisation and Storage

CC7: Design and the Public Realm

CC8: Safeguarding Amenity

CC9: Securing Infrastructure

H1: Provision of Housing

H2: Density and Mix

H3: Affordable Housing

H5: Standards for New Housing

H8: Residential Conversions

H10: Private and Communal Outdoor Space

TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters

TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging

EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment

EN3: Enhancement of Conservation Areas

EN16: Pollution and Water Resources

Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents

Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)

Revised Sustainable Design and Construction (2011)

Planning Obligations Under S106, April (2015)

Adopted Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (2013)

Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document Draft October 2020

Residential Conversions Supplementary Planning Document (November 2013)

Appraisal

The main issues to be considered are:

- a) Principle of use
- b) Design and impact on character of the area/ conservation area
- c) Residential amenity of proposed and existing neighbouring residents
- d) Transport matters
- e) Environmental Protection Matters
- f) Sustainability
- g) Affordable Housing, S106 and CIL obligations

a) Principle of development and change of use

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.

Therefore, it is clear that the priority for development should be on previously developed land. The site is currently in use for residential purposes with the basement part of the main house and so supports Policy H2 of the Local Plan which states that *‘With the significant need for housing in Reading and surrounding areas, it is important that efficient use is made of the land that is available to boost the delivery of new homes’*. It is considered that the conversion of the basement to a dwelling would be an efficient use of space in pure land use terms as residential conversions have an important role to play in housing land supply in Reading. The creation of a new dwelling would contribute to housing provision within the Borough and so would accord with Policy H1 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

However, within the Residential Conversions Supplementary Planning Document it states that *“A large proportion of Reading’s existing housing stock, particularly within the town centre, is terraced. Those units that are, in principle, capable of being converted often contain a basement level. However, not all basements are suitable for conversion to a separate unit of living accommodation.”* Each application is assessed on a case by case basis and is strongly dependant on other material considerations such as access to light, outlook etc. As such, the principle of the conversion is largely dependant on other material factors that will be discussed below, but in pure land use terms would likely be acceptable for the reasons outlined in the paragraph above.

b) Design, impact on the street scene and conservation area

The design, impact on the street scene and impact on the conservation area needs to be considered.

Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) states: *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.*

Policy EN3 (Enhancement of Conservation Areas) states: *The special interest, character and architecture of Conservation Areas will be conserved and enhanced. Development proposals within Conservation Areas must make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. Positive consideration will be given to proposals which take opportunities to enhance the character of conservation areas.*

Full elevational drawings have not been provided as part of the submission (there are no existing and proposed rear elevations). However, from the submitted floor plan it would appear that no change would be made to the existing rear elevation as it would not extend beyond the foot print of the main house.

From the front elevation, the appearance of the property would remain largely unaltered. There does appear to be a discrepancy between the proposed street elevational drawing and the proposed floor plan. The positioning of the external staircase connecting the basement to street level is not shown on the street elevation as a new gate access in the railings would be required. Although not shown, this proposed change would likely be minimal and would not be resisted in design terms, nor would it be considered to cause detrimental harm to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

As such, although discrepancies on the plans, the nature of the proposal being at basement level would not be considered to be contrary to design and conservation policies due to its limited appearance within the street. As such, the proposal is considered acceptable in relation to Policy CC7 and EN3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

c) Residential Amenity of Proposed and Existing Neighbouring Residents

Policy CC8 requires developments to not “*cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties..*” including “...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;...”. At the same time, ensuring that new development creates a quality living environment for potential future occupiers is also required.

Policy H5 identifies standards for new housing including internal space requirements for all developments outside of the Central Area as defined on the Proposals Map. The site is located outside of the central area boundary and as such, for a new 1 bedroom dwelling (with a shower room instead of a bathroom which is the case in this proposal), the minimum size of the dwelling is required to be 37 sqm. The proposed dwelling would fall short of this and would measure 23 sqm. Furthermore, Policy H5 identifies (in paragraph 4.4.42(c) that in order to provide one bed space, a single bedroom has a floor area of at least 7.5 sqm and is at least 2.15m wide. Again, this proposal falls short of such requirements and measures a maximum width of 2m and measures just over 3sqm. Lastly, within the Residential Conversions SPD, it also states that residential accommodation should have a good proactive minimum floor to ceiling height of 2.15m. The proposed head height of the dwelling would be 1.92m, so once again below the minimum guidance which is considered substandard.

Only one window is proposed in the dwelling which is below ground level. As a result, outlook would be minimal and would face on to the external stairs leading down to the dwelling. Both the bedroom and kitchen are not served by a window despite these being considered habitable rooms that should have adequate provision of natural light in accordance with Policy CC8.

The dwelling would also not have access to amenity space. It is not considered that the proposed flat would benefit from the existing rear amenity space of the property due to no independent access being provided. As a separate dwelling, it is not considered likely that the occupants of the flat would walk through no. 32 to access the existing rear garden. Within Policy H10 states that that flats located outside of central Reading (which is the case with the application site) should have 25 sqm of amenity space per flat. Whilst the site is in close proximity to the town centre where there is areas of open space that can be enjoyed, the combination of no on site amenity space along with the with the low provision of light and outlook is considered to result in a new dwelling that would be highly substandard in terms of access (physical and visual) to the public realm. As a result, it is considered that the flat would become an oppressive and an unattractive place to spend time which may be of potential detriment of the health and wellbeing of future occupants.

In terms of existing dwellings, the properties that have to primarily considered are the host dwelling (no. 32) and both adjoining neighbours (nos. 30 and 34 Carey Street to the south and north respectively). Being situated at basement level, the proposed extension would not be considered to result in harm to neighbouring properties in terms of loss of light and privacy. The primary consideration is instead considered to be noise disturbance as a result of the change of use. However, again, due to being at basement level, it is not considered that that the use of the basement as a residential dwelling would result in substantial harm to the adjoining neighbours. Subject to sufficient sound proofing between the main house of no.32 and the basement (as advised by Environmental Health), there would also unlikely be a high level of noise disturbance due to the small scale of the flat meaning it would likely only house an individual (rather than a family).

d) Transport Matters

As per the consultation response, a number of matters were required to be addressed. More specifically these were the provision of cycle and bin storage. Due to having no amenity space, these would have to be accommodated in the frontage of the site. There are concerns that with the installation of the external staircase there may be insufficient room for cycle and bin storage however this was not formally discussed.

Due to the issues identified with the proposal, as discussed earlier, plans aiming to overcome transport matters were not requested.

However, at the time of writing, as these matters have not been overcome, the proposal is not considered in accordance with Policies H8 and TR5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

e) Environmental Protection Matters

As per the Environmental Health consultation response, the site is located adjacent to a potential contaminated land source. As the proposal would involve excavation of the land, it is recommended that a condition be included should contaminated land be found that the applicant would advise the Local Planning Authority through the submission of a contamination assessment.

Subject to this condition, the proposal would be considered acceptable in relation to Policy EN16 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

f) Sustainability

Policy and CC2 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) state that construction will be acceptable *‘where the design of buildings and site layouts use energy, water, minerals, materials and other natural resources appropriately, efficiently and with care and take account of the effects of climate change’*.

No demonstration has been made within the submission to accord with the requirements of Policy CC2. The development should incorporate water conservation measures so that the predicted per capita consumption does not exceed the appropriate levels set out in the applicable BREEAM standard.

No demonstration has also been made within the submission to show how the development has been designed to incorporate measures to adapt to climate change, in accordance with Policy CC3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

g) Affordable Housing, S106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

In accordance with Policy H3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) it states that *‘on sites of 1 - 4 dwellings, a financial contribution will be made that will enable the equivalent of 10% of the housing to be provided as affordable housing elsewhere in the Borough.’*

Development is exempt from an Affordable Housing contribution where the proposal is for the conversion of a dwelling to a self-contained flat where there is no new floor space. In this case, new floor space is proposed and so the development would require an Affordable Housing contribution.

The applicant stated in their Design Statement that they agreed in principle to enter into a legal agreement to secure a financial contribution. However, valuations have not been submitted. As the proposal is not considered acceptable in other planning terms, the Council has not pursued the S106 legal agreement to secure the financial affordable housing provision.

As such, the proposal is contrary to Policy H3 and CC9 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

The proposal would be CIL liable as the development is the creation of a new dwelling. This is charged at and is charged at a rate of £156.71 per sqm.

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.

Conclusion

The proposed conversion of the basement to a self-contained flat represents a poor quality of new accommodation within the borough. The proposal is considered substandard in terms of its overall size, access to natural light owing to only have one window, poor outlook from this window and no amenity space. The benefit of the new dwelling in terms of its contribution towards the provision of housing stock in Reading is not considered to outweigh the identified shortcomings of the proposal.

Recommendation: REFUSE for the following reasons:

1. The proposed development, by reason of its below minimum standard gross internal floor area, limited outlook, limited access to natural light and inadequate provision of outdoor amenity space, will adversely impact upon the level of amenity and provide an unacceptable quality of living accommodation for future occupants, contrary to Policies CC8, H5 and H10 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) and the Residential Conversions Supplementary Planning Document (November 2013)
2. The proposal has failed to demonstrate a policy compliant level of cycle and bin storage contrary to Policies H8 and TR5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)
3. In the absence of a completed legal agreement to secure an acceptable contribution towards the provision of Affordable Housing, the proposal fails to contribute adequately to the housing needs of Reading Borough, contrary to policies H3 and CC9 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) and the Council's Adopted Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document 2013

Informatives:

- 1) Refused plans
- 2) Pre-app advice
- 3) Positive and Proactive