

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Target Date: 01/12/21

Application No: 211658/FUL

Address: 40 Church Street

Proposal: Partial conversion of ground floor from flat (Class C3) to commercial use (Class E(a))

Case Officer: Tom Hughes

Site Description and Surrounding Area

The application site comprises a two storey mid-terraced building, located within Caversham District Centre close to the junction with Prospect Street. The building benefits from a large two storey rear extension. The front part of the ground floor comprises a retail unit, part of the District Centre Key Frontage. A two bed flat occupies the rearward part of the ground floor. Further residential accommodation is located at the first floor. A rear yard provides direct access to Chester Street Car Park. The surrounding area comprises a mix of commercial and residential uses.

Proposal

The proposal is for the conversion of the ground floor flat to a commercial use, to constitute an enlargement of the existing retail unit. Fenestration to the eastward elevation of the rear extension would be altered to facilitate the conversion.

Plans Considered

The agent supplied the following, received 11/11/21:

Design & Access Statement

Site Location

Drawing No: S500 - Block Plan

Drawing No: S501 - Existing Ground Floor Plan

Drawing No: S502 - Existing Elevations

Drawing No: S503 - Existing Sections

Drawing No: P501 - Proposed Ground Floor Plan

Drawing No: P502 - Proposed Elevations

Drawing No: P503 - Proposed Sections

Relevant Planning History

010808/FUL - Shop front alterations - Permitted 22/01/02

090790/FUL - Extension and conversion of ground floor workshop to office, and various other alterations - Withdrawn 04/12/09

101505/FUL - Extension and conversion of ground floor workshop to offices ancillary to retail unit, studio flat at first floor and single storey extension to rear - Refused 01/12/10
- APP/E0345/A/11/2143223/NW - Dismissed 10/06/11

111745/FUL - Conversion of ground floor workshop to office and erection of studio flat above, internal alterations and single storey extension - Permitted 28/10/11

152020/FUL - Two storey rear extension to create two flats - Refused 13/11/18

170185/CLP - Change of use of first floor to residential accommodation - Permitted 13/06/17

181091/FUL - Ground floor shop front extension, two storey rear extension and conversion of upper parts to form 3x2 bed flats - Permitted 19/10/20

201813/NMA - Minor amendment to planning permission 181091/FUL, omitting rear extension and altering internal layout - Agreed 12/02/21

210043/APC - Approval of details reserved by condition 9 (CMS) of planning permission 181091/FUL - Discharged 29/03/21

210123/APC - Approval of details reserved by conditions 14 (BREEAM) and 16 (SAP) of planning permission 181091/FUL - Discharged 29/03/21

211011/NMA - Non-material amendment to condition 15 (BREEAM) of planning permission 181091/FUL - Agreed 14/09/21

Consultation Responses

Neighbouring owners and occupiers at 38-42 (evens) Church Street were consulted by letter. A site notice was displayed. No letters of representation were received.

Reading Borough Transport Development Control

Raised no objections to the proposals.

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

The following local and national planning policy and guidance is relevant to this application:

National Planning Policy Framework

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

Policy CC1 - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

Policy CC7 - Design and the Public Realm

Policy CC8 - Safeguarding Amenity

Policy H1 - Provision of Housing

Policy H7 - Protecting the Existing Housing Stock

Policy TR3 - Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters

Policy TR5 - Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging

Policy RL1 - Network and Hierarchy of Centres

Policy RL3 - Vitality and Viability of Smaller Centres

Appraisal

There is a pressing need for additional housing in Reading and the surrounding area, as identified in the Berkshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2016). As per Policy H1, provision will be made for at least an additional 15,847 homes in Reading Borough for the period 2013 to 2036. Every effort should therefore be made to meet this housing need. The loss of existing housing would only serve to exacerbate the issue.

Policy H7 states that planning permission will not be granted for any loss of residential accommodation or land unless there are exceptional circumstances. The loss of a two bed flat, suitable for family occupation, to facilitate the enlargement of a retail unit is not an exceptional circumstance. The existing commercial unit to the Caversham District Centre Key Frontage is of a suitable size for modern use and occupation. The benefits afforded by the proposed development do not outweigh the loss of a flat, given the acute housing need in Reading Borough. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policy H7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

Conclusion

The proposal has been assessed and found to be unacceptable as it would exacerbate the existing need for housing in Reading Borough.

RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE