

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Target Date: 15/10/21

Application No: 211077/FUL

Address: Reading School Boat House, Cow Lane

Proposal: Erection of replacement boat house

Case Officer: Tom Hughes

Site Description and Surrounding Area

The application site is located approximately 50m south of the River Thames and the Thames Path at the end of Cow Lane, an unadopted track. The site is leased by Reading School from Reading Borough Council, and comprises a former boat house surrounded by chain link fence. The site was the subject of arson attack in December 2019, leaving only charred timber remains. Since the arson attack the site has become predominantly bare soil and tall ruderal vegetation. A line of three semi-mature horse chestnut and one silver birch is present immediately to the east of the site, with a hardstanding track to the south and west. Beyond are areas of well maintained grassland, part of Rivermead and Thameside Promenade (Policy EN7 - Local Green Space and Public Open Space) within the Thames Valley Major Landscape Feature (Policy EN13). The site lies partly within Flood Zones 2 and 3, and is also on an area of potentially contaminated land. Rivermead Leisure Complex is located approximately 275m to the southeast.

Proposal

The proposal is for the erection of a replacement boat house, following the final demolition and removal of the existing boat house remains. The proposed boat house would occupy the same footprint as the pre-existing, measuring 22m in depth and 7.3m in width with a shallow pitched roof. The boat house would be constructed on a steel portal frame, clad in green plastisol sheets. A roller shutter door would be located to the northward elevation, and four roof lights would be located to each roof slope. The existing chain link fence would be replaced by a 2.4m high green-coated weld mesh fence, with secure gates to the front and rear for vehicular and boat access.

Plans Considered

The agent supplied the following, received 29/06/21:

Design & Access Statement ref: 2113-600-A

Drawing No: 2113-101 - Site Location

Drawing No: 2113-100 - Block Plan

Drawing No: 2113-201 - Proposed Floor and Roof Plans

Drawing No: 2113-200 - Proposed Elevations

Subsequently the agent supplied the following, received on 20/08/21:

Flood Risk Assessment by Unda Consulting Limited, dated August 2021

Subsequently the agent supplied the following, received on 14/12/21:

Ecological Assessment ref: DFA21087 by Derek Finnie Associates Ltd, dated December 2021

Relevant Planning History

None.

Consultation Responses

A site notice was displayed. One letter of representation was received, with regard to the following:

- Raising objection to the appearance of the proposed boat house in terms of its external materials and fire retardant qualities

Reading Borough Transport Development Control

Noted that the site is accessed via an unadopted track, across a Public Right of Way (Footpath 17). Advised that Section 34(1) of the Road Traffic Act 1988 provides that anyone driving a mechanically propelled vehicle on a road that is a footpath, bridleway or restricted byway is guilty of an offence unless it can be shown that there is a private right in place for people to use the accessway to gain vehicular access. Sought confirmation that such rights exists to ensure that the boat house can be legally accessed across the public footpath. Sought further confirmation on the proposed operation and use of the facility and on parking provision.

Reading Borough Natural Environment

Advised that further arboricultural information was required.

Reading Borough Ecology

Advised that an ecological assessment, comprising an extended Phase 1 Habitat and Species Scoping Survey, would need to be provided to assess the potential impact the proposals might have on protected and priority species and habitats.

Following receipt of the Ecological Assessment by Derek Finnie Associates, noted that the site is mainly tall ruderal herb and bare ground, which are not priority habitats and are unlikely to be used by priority species. Raised no objections to the proposal, subject to a condition restricting the installation of exterior lighting.

Environment Agency

Raised no objections to the proposed development. Noted that the proposal would constitute 'water-compatible development' and would be appropriate for the location. Given there would be no increase in built footprint, there would be no increase in flood risk.

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 CC2 - Sustainable Design and Construction

Policy CC3 - Adaption to Climate Change

Policy CC5 - Waste Minimisation and Storage

Policy CC6 - Accessibility and the Intensity of Development

Policy CC7 - Design and the Public Realm

Policy CC8 - Safeguarding Amenity

Policy EN7 - Local Green Space and Public Open Space

Policy EN11 - Waterspaces

Policy EN12 - Biodiversity and the Green Network

Policy EN13 - Major Landscape Features and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Policy EN14 - Trees, Hedges and Woodland

Policy EN18 - Flooding and Drainage

Policy TR3 - Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters

Policy TR5 - Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging

Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011)

Appraisal

Principle of development

The proposal is for the replacement of a pre-existing boat house, the subject of substantial fire damage following arson attack. The proposal would replicate the footprint of the pre-existing boat house and would result in no change to the pre-existing use of the site by Reading School. Subject to other policy considerations set out below, the principle of the development is acceptable.

Design and impact on the character of the area

The site is located within the Thames Valley Major Landscape Feature, in an open grassland and riverside setting. Following arson attack, the site itself is predominantly bare or ruderal herb vegetation. Views of the site are available from users of the River Thames and the adjacent Thames Path. Built form on the site is established by the pre-existing boat house, which would be replicated by the proposal. The scale of the proposal is considered to be acceptable in this context. The proposed green coloured cladding is not considered to significantly detract from the character and appearance of the area. Full details of external materials would be secured by condition.

Impact on neighbouring amenity

The closest residential properties are located to the northern side of the River Thames. The proposed development is not considered to cause any harm to neighbouring residential amenity.

Transport

During the course of the application the agent supplied a copy of the lease between Reading School and Reading Borough Council, which confirms that a right exists for vehicular access to the site across a public footpath. The agent also confirmed that the proposed use of the site would be no different to the pre-existing use. On this basis, the proposal is not considered to cause any significantly greater degree of harm to the functioning of the surrounding transport network. Conditions are recommended to secure details of construction management and to formalise on-site vehicle parking.

Natural Environment and Ecology

Officers raised concerns with regard to the lack of information supplied with the application relating to trees and ecological constraints. The Ecological Assessment supplied confirms that the site is predominantly bare soil and ruderal herb vegetation. Given that the proposed development would replicate pre-existing built form, officers are satisfied that further arboricultural information including tree protection, landscaping and ecological enhancement can be secured by condition.

Conclusion

The proposal has been assessed and found to be acceptable as it accords with the identified policy and guidance.

RECOMMENDATION

GRANT