

DELEGATED REPORT

Application Number: 201580/FUL

Address: Warden's Flat, Asantewa House, Fobney Street, Reading

Proposal: Subdivision of an existing four bedroom Warden's flat to create two, one bedroom sheltered housing units. Change three doors to windows and removal of associated external steps

Target Date: 10/03/21

Case Officer: Connie Davis

Site and Surrounding Area:

The application site is the Warden's flat at Asantewa House, a unit which forms part of a sheltered housing flat block. The Warden's flat is located at the southern end of the building on the ground floor. Asantewa House was built as category II sheltered housing (which is defined as: purpose built schemes for older people usually with communal facilities and a scheme manager). It shelters elderly individuals.

There is a sheltered scheme manager onsite (Monday to Friday during office hours) who is responsible for the day-to-day management and supervision of Asantewa House and for monitoring the wellbeing of residents. Out of hours an alarm call service deals with any emergencies. The warden's flat is no longer required as an alternative and modernized way of delivering the service has been adopted since the scheme was originally approved. Nevertheless, the fundamentals of the original scheme are considered to remain the same.

The building itself is a large four storey building located along Fobney Street with the Kennet to the east of the site resulting in the site being located within Flood Zone 2. The surrounding area is largely residential in nature.

The site is not Listed, nor in a Conservation Area.

Proposal:

The application proposed the subdivision of an existing 4 bedroom warden's flat to two one bedroom sheltered housing units.

External alterations are also proposed on the front, side and rear elevation. More specifically, this involves replacing doors with windows. Windows would match those on the main building.

Consultation Responses:

External Consultation:

A site notice was displayed on 5th January 2021. No comments have been received.

Internal Consultation:

Transport - No objections

Environmental Health - No objections but informatives relating to contaminated land, noise disturbance and complaints about construction are recommended

Plans/ Documents Considered:

2021-101956-001 Rev P1 - Site Location Plan

2021-101956-002 Rev P1 - Site Block Plan
2021-101956-003 Rev P1 - Existing Ground Floor Plan
2021-101956-005 Rev P1 - Existing and Proposed Elevations of Doors and Windows Being Altered
2021-101956-004 Rev P1 - Proposed Ground Floor Plan
Flood Risk Assessment Ref: 2021-101956 prepared by ig9 LLP
Received 10th November 2020

Design and Access Statement Ref: 2021/101956
2021-101956-017 - Proposed Partial Rear Elevation
2021-101956-016 - Proposed Side Elevation
2021-101956-015 - Proposed Partial Front Elevation
2021-101956-014 - Existing Partial Rear Elevation
2021-101956-013 - Existing Side Elevation
2021-101956-012 - Existing Partial Front Elevation
Received 13th January 2021

Relevant Planning History:

91-00701-FUL - The construction of category II sheltered housing comprising 30 sheltered flats and a wardens flat with communal facilities in a four storey block of traditional materials. Permitted.

Relevant Planning Policy

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'.

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

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
H10: Private and Communal Outdoor Space
TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging

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 following matters will be considered:

- 1) Principle of Development
- 2) Impact on the character and appearance of the area
- 3) Residential amenity for future occupiers
- 4) Impact on neighbouring amenity
- 5) Transport
- 6) Flooding
- 7) Affordable Housing and CIL

1) Principle of Development:

Policy H6 of the Reading Borough Local Plan which states that *'Provision will be made for at least an additional 253 residential care bedspaces for elderly people between 2013 and 2036, in addition to the overall housing need. Other specialist accommodation for vulnerable people will address the identified needs, which are primarily for accommodation that enables occupants to live as independently as possible, particularly for older people and people with physical disabilities.'*

This proposal will create two new flats within an established sheltered accommodation block and therefore will contribute towards meeting the target number of bedspaces for elderly people. As such, the principle of development is accepted.

2) Impact on the character and appearance of the area:

Minimal changes to the building are proposed (replacing doors with windows) and the additional unit would not be noticeable from the street, particularly given the scale of the development compared to the building overall. As such, the proposal is considered acceptable in terms of Policy CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

3) Residential amenity for future occupiers:

Both of the proposed flats exceed the minimum space standards for new dwellings. Whilst these would not be flats for sale on the open market, sheltered accommodation units fall within the C3 use whereby minimum standards of accommodation are required to be met (although there are exemptions for properties within the town centre, which this site is). Nevertheless, despite being in a town centre location, the proposed 1 bedroom units would measure approximately 44 sqm (Flat 2a) and 50sqm (Flat 2). All habitable spaces would be facilitated with windows to ensure a sufficient level of natural light and outlook. It is assumed that the residents of these flats would also benefit from any outdoor amenity space enjoyed by existing

residents in the block. As such, the proposal is considered acceptable in terms of Policy H5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

4) Impact on neighbouring amenity:

The subdivision of the existing flat into two separate units would not be considered to result in a substantial intensification of the site that would detrimentally impact other residents within the block in terms of noise and disturbance. However, an informative will be included to remind the developer that residential accommodation must be designed and constructed or converted so as to achieve the insulation requirements set out in Building Regulations Approved Document E to also protect neighbouring residents from noise disturbance. As such, the proposal is considered acceptable in terms of Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

5) Transport:

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, with limited residential. This area is well served by rail and bus links and also contains the largest proportion of public car parking spaces.

The proposal includes no parking spaces. However, the site is located within a private parking area with parking enforcement in place on the surrounding roads. Therefore, the non-provision of parking is acceptable in this town centre location as any demand for visitor parking can be met by the town centre public car parks.

The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in relation to Policy TR3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

6) Flooding

The site sits in Flood Zone 2. A FRA has been submitted with the application. This, and the plans, demonstrate that the proposed floor levels are set no lower than existing. The building is protected by a 5ft wall. As the development subdivides an existing sheltered housing unit and does not amend floor levels, the development is considered acceptable on flooding grounds. The site is an existing sheltered housing unit, and it is not considered practical to locate a single sheltered housing unit in a site at less risk of flooding. There is no objection on the basis of flooding. The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in relation to Policy EN18 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) although a condition

7) Affordable Housing and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

Policy H3 states that an Affordable housing contribution will not be required for the conversion of a dwelling to self-contained flats where there is no new floorspace. This application seeks to sub-divide an existing single dwelling, and no new floorspace is proposed. As such, the proposal would not be liable to pay an affordable housing contribution.

Reg 6(1)(d) provides that a conversion from one into two or more dwellings is not 'development' for the purposes of CIL. CIL is not therefore payable and the 6 months of the last 3 years liability rule does not apply in this scenario.

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.

Recommendation: GRANT permission

Conditions

1. Time Limit
2. Approved Plans
3. Materials as Specified

Informatives

1. Terms
2. Building Control
3. Complaints about Construction
4. 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.
5. Encroachment
6. Positive and Proactive