

DELEGATED FULL APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Church

App Ref: 201335/FUL

Address: 5 Whitley Wood Road

Proposals: Change of use from commercial to residential house.

Case Officer: Mr James Overall

Date received (valid from): 30 September 2020

Target Decision Date: 25 November 2020

Extended Decision Date: 17 February 2021

PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The proposed development is for the conversion of an existing building, which was previously used as a doctor's surgery between 1986 & 1999. In more recent times, it is used by '21st Century Clinic' since 2012, who provide physiotherapy, chiropractic, acupuncture, sports massages and other health services.

Plan Type	Description	Drawing Number	Date Received
All other plans	Existing & Proposed	01 Rev B	30 Nov-20

PLANNING HISTORY

Reference No.	Description	Outcome
991253	Removal of condition 2 of consent 86/TP/1206 and condition 2 of condition 87/TP/692 so as to no longer make the authorised use of these premises personal to Dr S M Patel	Application Permitted on 19 Jun-00
071482	Change of use from D1 and extension to form 6 no. flats	Application Refused on 18 Jan-08 and Appeal Dismissed
080991	Change of use from doctor's surgery (D1) and rear extension to form 5 no. 1 bedroom flats (resubmission of 07/01534/FUL)	Application Refused on 18 Aug-08 and Appeal Dismissed

CONSULTATIONS

The following addresses were consulted by letter.

- 3 Whitley Wood Road
- 7 Whitley Wood Road
- 2 Lacewood Gardens

No letters of representation have been received.

Transport

Whitley Wood Road is a classified road (C303). The site is located within Zone 3, Secondary Core Area, of the Council's adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD. In accordance with

the adopted SPD, the development would require 2 off road parking spaces for the proposed 4 bedroom detached dwelling. Submitted block plan illustrates 3 parking spaces at the front of the property which exceeds the current standards, although not illustrated google images show the property is served via an existing dropped kerb from Whitley Wood road. Google images also show that the property has gated access, however this has not been illustrated on plans. To prevent vehicles waiting in the carriageway to enter the site, gates should be set back in to the site a minimum of 5m. Gates should also not open on to the public footway.

A revised block plan has been submitted which confirms that the gates are to be removed and also identifies a bin storage area in the front garden area adjacent to the parking areas. An assumption has been made that the bins will be presented at the property boundary on collection days.

An EV charging point has been illustrated on plans in line with The Councils Transport Plan and cycle storage has been identified in the rear garden area.

Following the submission of the revised block plan addressing previous comments raised, Transport do not have any objections to this application, subject to conditions and informatives.

Environmental Health

Construction and demolition phases - extensions / renovations

We commonly receive complaints about noise and dust caused by construction and demolition works, particularly working outside reasonable hours and about smoke from bonfires associated with the burning of waste on site of minor developments.

An informative regarding development construction hours has been suggested.

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 policies in 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'

Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019)

CC1: PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
CC2: SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION
CC7: DESIGN AND THE PUBLIC REALM
CC8: SAFEGUARDING AMENITY
EM3: LOSS OF EMPLOYMENT LAND
EM4: MAINTAINING A VARIETY OF PREMISES
H1: PROVISION OF HOUSING
H5: STANDARDS FOR NEW HOUSING
H8: RESIDENTIAL CONVERSIONS
H10: PRIVATE AND COMMUNAL OUTDOOR SPACE
TR1: ACHIEVING THE TRANSPORT STRATEGY
TR3: ACCESS, TRAFFIC AND HIGHWAY-RELATED MATTER

SPG/SPD

Revised Sustainable Design and Construction (2011)

The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015

Assessment

Principle of development

The application site does not fall within a core employment area, and therefore Policy EM3 is not relevant. However, Policy EM4 relates to maintaining a variety of premises, which states: *“A range of types and sizes of units should be present in the Borough, and proposals should maintain or enhance this range. In particular, the overall level of start-up and grow-on space should be maintained and, where possible, increased, and any loss of small units should be offset by new provision”*.

The submitted design and access statement mentions that since *“the Circle Hospital was opened in the same year [2012] it has been a struggle to keep the business viable and despite extensive marketing and finance injections the business has gone in to a sharp decline and the decision to close has had to be taken”*.

A letter from the proprietor of the clinic has also been received to justify this, which states: *“We opened the above business in 2012 and unfortunately we have no choice but to close at the end of the year. Financially we are no longer able to sustain it and I can no longer inject further capital into it, which at the moment is nearly £300,000. We have a bank loan of £160,000, which is becoming difficult to pay. Accumulated losses as at 30th April 2020 are £46,000. We have tried every avenue to try and make it a success, done lots of marketing, contacted doctors’ surgeries and specialists. We are registered for all insurance companies (BUPA Etc) but find most patients are sent to the Circle and other hospitals.*

We do own the building and have tried to sell the premises and business but unfortunately had no interest.

We therefore think we need to sell our asset and feel we should change it to a 4 bedroomed, 2-bathroom house. As it is situated between 2 residential detached properties and in the past been residential, we think this would be the ideal solution”.

Given the above and the historic use of the property, it is considered that the principle of reverting the property back to a dwelling is acceptable; if the scheme complies with the other relevant policies set out within the Local Plan (2019).

Design & Character

The only proposed exterior alterations are an additional ground floor window on the north-east side elevation and changing the two ground-floor rear windows to a 4-paned folding-sliding door.

It is therefore considered that the proposed scheme will have no impact upon the street scene or the design/character of the surrounding area. As such it is considered that the proposed scheme is in accordance with Policy CC7 of the Local Plan (2019).

Amenity

The additional side window, and folding sliding doors to the rear are all at ground level. There will be no greater additional overlooking caused as a result of these adjustments, and therefore from an overlooking perspective. As for overshadowing and outlook, these will not change from what currently exists, and therefore it is considered the application complies with Policy CC8 of the Local Plan (2019) in this respect.

As for the amenity of the future occupiers of the property, the dwelling will have a GIA of 129.25 square metres. The proposed dwelling will be a 4-bed house capable of hosting 6 persons. In accordance with the Nationally Described Space Standards, a two-storey dwelling,

with these needs, should have a minimum GIA of 106 square metres. It is therefore considered that there is sufficient internal space to provide quality of life to the future occupants of the dwelling.

Policy H10 states, *“Dwellings will be provided with functional private or communal open space, including green space wherever possible, that allows for suitable sitting-out areas, children’s play areas, home food production, green waste composting, refuse storage, general outdoor storage and drying space”*. Given that the proposed property will have a large rear garden, it is considered that this Policy is met.

Given the above, it is considered that the amenity of the future occupants of the dwellinghouse will be of high quality, and therefore the proposed scheme is considered to comply with Policies CC8 and H10 of the Local Plan (2019) in this respect.

Transport

Full comments relating to transport can be found above within the ‘consultations’ section of this report; but to summarise, there are no transport relating issues given the removal of the gate; and subject to a few conditions/informatives being attached.

Other Matters

CIL - guidance states that *“A change of use to one or more residential units will be liable for CIL if the floorspace involved has not been in lawful use for 6 months of the previous 3 years to the development being permitted”*.

Although the existing business has been struggling since it opened in 2012, it only closed at the end of 2020, and therefore the application is exempt from CIL.

Affordable Housing - Policy H3 requires the conversion of non-residential to residential to contribute towards affordable housing; however, given the surrounding viability and the fact that the building is being reverted to its previous use, it is considered that an exceptional circumstance can be made in this instance for the proposal to be exempt.

The development is not harmful to the character or appearance of the site or its surroundings and does not have a detrimental impact on the original building or neighbouring properties. As such the proposed development is considered to be in accordance with Policies CC7, CC8, H10, TR1 and TR3 of the Local Plan (2019).

RECOMMENDATION:

Grant Planning Permission subject to conditions