

COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

ITEM NO.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 12 February 2014

Ward: Abbey

App No.: 130842

Address: 125 Chatham Street, Reading

Proposal: Erection of two storey extension to accommodate 2x 2-bed flats, 3x 1-bed flats and 2x studio flats and changes to fenestration.

Applicant: Mr. Mohammed Arif

Date received: 4 July 2013

Minor Application: 8 week target decision date: 29 August 2013 (extension to 26 March 2014 agreed with applicant)

26 Planning Guarantee date: 2 January 2014.

RECOMMENDATION

Delegate to the Head of Planning, Development and Regulatory Services to GRANT planning permission, subject to the satisfactory conclusion of a S.106 legal agreement to secure the following contributions:

- **£14,700 leisure contribution towards infrastructure improvements at the Abbey Quarter Project or continued implementation of the Thames Parks Plan** in accordance with policies CS9 and CS29 of the Core Strategy and DM3 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document;
- **£18,900 integrated transport (RUAP) contribution** towards schemes identified in the Central Reading action plans area of this Authority's Local Transport Plan, in accordance with Policy CS20 of the Core Strategy;
- **£113,000 as a commuted sum towards the provision of off-site affordable housing in the Borough** in accordance with policies CS9 of the Core Strategy and DM6 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document; and
- **£5,589 contribution towards education infrastructure in the area**, towards Primary schools in the Oxford Road area and Secondary provision at Highdown School.

All contributions to be index-linked and payable on first occupation of the development.

If the S.106 agreement is not completed by 26 March 2014, delegate to the Head of Planning, Development and Regulatory Services to **refuse** planning permission, unless agreement is made for an extension of time.

Conditions to include

1. Std three years
2. Plans approved
3. Only to be implemented in tandem with prior approval scheme (in order to provide suitable internal access to the lower floors)
4. Samples of materials: render, roof, soffits, canopies, windows
5. Noise mitigation measures to be carried out in accordance with the submitted and approved noise assessment.
6. No occupation of the flats until the developer re-tests a sample of the flats to ensure they meet the stated mitigation, as approved in the condition above. Thereafter retention in accordance with the approved mitigation scheme.

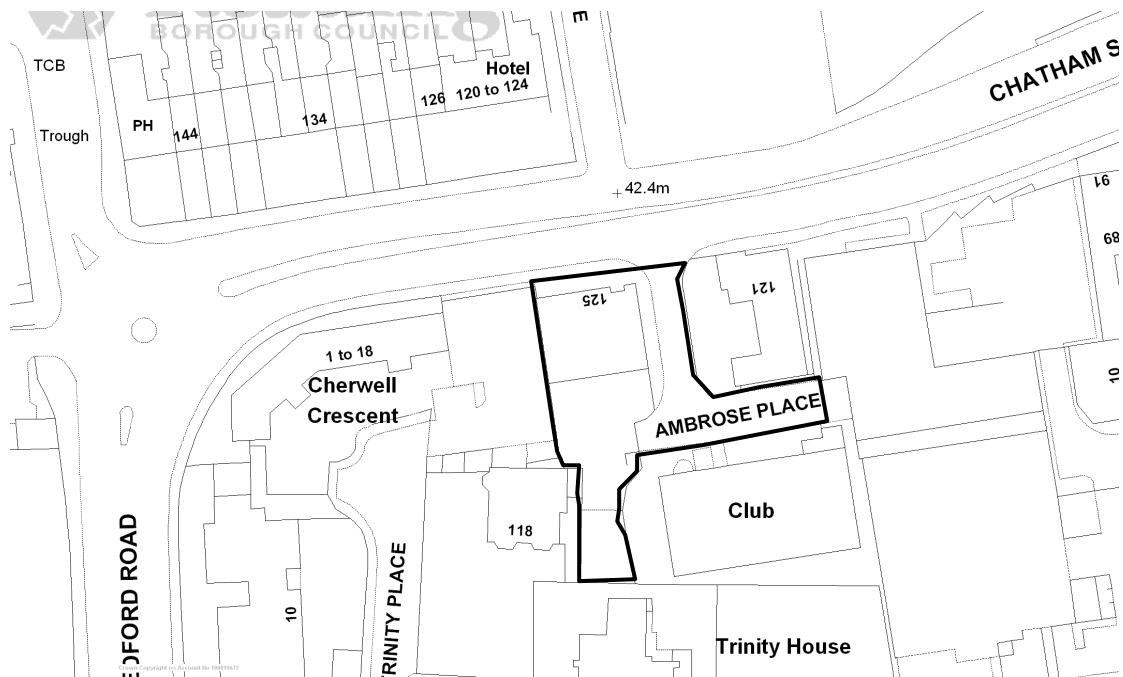
7. Air quality mitigation scheme to be submitted (to be in full compliance with the levels set out in the noise report), and carried out, before first occupation of the flats and retained in accordance with the approved mitigation scheme thereafter
8. Construction Method Statement
9. Hours of construction 0800-1800 (Mondays-Fridays); 0900-1300 Saturdays; no Sundays or bank/other holidays
10. Trees/landscaping scheme
11. Landscaping implementation
12. Landscaping replacement (five years), including existing trees on frontage
13. Gates/doors to open away from highway
14. Parking layout provided before occupation
15. Cycle parking details to be submitted
16. No parking permits: addresses
17. No parking permits: advertising
18. Bin storage details to be submitted
19. Side window restriction to communal balcony on third floor
20. Sustainability: CSH Level 3

Informatives

- Positive and proactive requirement
- Terms and conditions
- Conditions precedent
- Charging for conditions discharge
- Parking permits
- Thames Water informative

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The application site is a vacant two-storey office building on the south side of Chatham Street. The building is in a modern style, circa. 1980 with a flat, parapet roof and has a gated car park behind, accessed from Ambrose Place, which is a private road. Ambrose Place also provides access to the Face Bar (nightclub) and Chatham Street Surgery. The site is also close to the Cherwell Crescent flat development to the west and two listed buildings: Holy Trinity Church and 118 Oxford Road.



2. PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The proposal is twofold: the provision of a roof extension to accommodate seven flats and fenestration changes to update the building on all four elevations. This proposal should be considered in conjunction with the recent Office Prior Approval application (details below). The mix of the development has altered since the application was initially submitted. The original mix was 7x one bed flats; the mix now proposed is 2x 2-bed flats, 3x 1-bed flats and 2x studio flats.
- 2.2 The application has been submitted with the following supporting information:
- Design and Access Statement
 - Noise survey (received 26 September 2013)
 - Streetscene views
- 2.3 The application is being reported to your meeting at the request of Councillor Page, due to concerns received from local residents regarding overlooking, sound-proofing and security. Members of the Committee visited the site on 3 October 2013.

3. PLANNING HISTORY

130870: Change of use of building from Class B1(a) (offices) to C3 (dwellinghouses) to comprise 8 x 1 bed flats. Prior Notification under Class J, Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (as amended). PRIOR APPROVAL GIVEN 1 August 2013.

4. CONSULTATIONS

- 4.1 Non-statutory consultees

- **RBC Transport Strategy:** no objections, conditions recommended. Integrated transport contribution requested.
- **RBC Environmental Protection:** this is a noisy area with Chatham Street to the front and the nightclub and its courtyard to the rear. The latest noise assessment which has been conducted is acceptable in terms of demonstrating suitable amenity to the flats, so long as the recommended noise mitigation is in place and windows are closed. This is discussed in more detail below. Air quality mitigation measures should be a condition of any approval
- **RBC Licensing:** advises that the Face Bar club licence allows Various activities (including sale of alcohol and the playing of recorded and live music and is open to the public from 8am until 2:30am and 4:30am on Fridays and Saturdays. The club is not currently operating at full capacity at the moment, due to internal improvements which are required to be undertaken. Concerned that there may be complaints from residents of the new flats, particularly if this would result in more activity (shouting, taxis, etc.) on Ambrose Place.
- **RBC Education:** contribution towards Education infrastructure required
- **RBC Natural Environment:** considers that the indicative landscaping shown is suitable and that the trees on Chatham Street are capable of being retained in the development
- **RBC Housing Development:** Affordable housing contribution requested
- **RBC Parks and Leisure:** request a contribution towards parks and open spaces
- **Thames Water:** informative recommended.

4.2 Neighbours consulted

Consultation letters were sent to the following addresses:

Chatham Street: Chatham Street Surgery at 121 Chatham Street; 115.

Trinity Place: Cherwell Crescent: 1-12 and 14-16.

Oxford Road: 118: flats 1-4; Holy Trinity Church

Ambrose Place: the Face Bar.

Two letters of objection have been received, raising the following issues:

- Concern for a loss of privacy to flats at 118 Oxford Road. Occupants of the development will have a direct view into objector's bedroom
- The noise generated from increased traffic and people will create disturbance for existing residents at all times of day and night
- 118 Oxford Road is Grade II listed, therefore it is not possible to make structural changes to it (for example, installing double-glazing) which would lessen the impact of the development
- The site is not considered to be suitable for residential development in close proximity to the existing nightclub (not referred to in the application documents), where it is not possible to control late night noise, parking, taxis and other disturbance outside the building on Ambrose Place. No noise survey has been submitted and it is considered to be too late to report the results of one now, were it to be received. Would want to be consulted on any noise report. Planning permission was refused in 2009 for residential permission on an adjacent site, partly due to noise issue from the nightclub. To permit the development in this noise environment without suitable controls would be contrary to adopted planning policy, including RC9

- The building would be out of scale with its surroundings, being taller than everything in the vicinity apart from Holy Trinity Church and is not high design quality. The DAS makes no reference to the impact on the settings of listed buildings or conservation areas and considered to be detrimental to the setting of the Church
- Seven parking spaces for 15 flats is insufficient and will result in parking on Ambrose Place
- The amenity space equates to approximately only four sq.m. per flat
- Housing mix is not appropriate and would be contrary to policy
- Dwellings sizes are small and would fail to provide a reasonable standard of accommodation
- All units are single aspect and some will receive no direct sunlight
- RCAAP Policy RC4a requires between 100 and 150 dwellings per hectare (*Officer comment: this is a mis-reading: RC4a anticipates the whole of the RC4a site, which includes the application site, delivering a total of between 100 and 150 dwellings*)
- The development does not supply any affordable housing, contrary to policy. Considers that 50% of the 15 units should be affordable

One letter of support has also been received.

5. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

- 5.1 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'.

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

National

- 5.3 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2012)

- 5.4 Reading Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2008)

CS1 (Sustainable Construction & Design)
 CS4 (Accessibility and the Intensity of Development)
 CS5 (Inclusive Access)
 CS7 (Design & the Public Realm)
 CS9 (Infrastructure, Services, Resources and Amenities)
 CS11 (Use of Land for Alternative Uses)
 CS15 (Location, Accessibility, Density and Housing Mix)
 CS20 (Implementation of The Reading Transport Strategy (Local Transport Plan 2006-2011))
 CS24 (Car/Cycle Parking)
 CS29 (Provision of Open Space)
 CS33 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment)
 CS34 (Pollution and Water Resources)

- 5.5 Reading Borough Local Development Framework, Reading Central Area Action Plan (RCAAP) (2009)

RC4a (Other Opportunity Sites)
RC5 (Design in the Centre)
RC9 (Living in the Centre)

5.6 Reading Borough Local Development Framework Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012)

SD1 (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development)
DM1 (Adapting to Climate Change)
DM2 (Decentralised Energy)
DM3 (Infrastructure Planning)
DM4 (Safeguarding Amenity)
DM6 (Affordable Housing)
DM10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space)
DM12 (Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters)
DM19 (Air Quality)

The Council's adopted supplementary Planning Guidance and Supplementary Planning Documents are also material planning considerations.

5.7 Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents

- Sustainable Design and Construction (2011)
- Parking Standards and Design (2011)
- Affordable Housing (2013)
- S.106 Planning Obligations (2013)

6. APPRAISAL

Main Issues

6.1 The main issues are:

- (a) Policy and principle
- (b) Dwelling mix
- (c) Design
- (d) Noise
- (e) Parking
- (f) S.106 contributions

(a) Policy and principle

6.2 The present office building is vacant and has been for a number of years.

6.3 This application proposes a two storey extension and physical works to the building following the granting of prior approval application 130870 OPA (on 1 August 2013) for the change of use of the existing vacant office building to 8x 1-bed flats, four on the ground floor and four on the first floor. The conversion to residential flats on the ground and first floor can occur under Prior Approval Class J, Part 1 of Schedule 2 to the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995, as amended by The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Amendment)(England) Order 2013, but cannot include any physical changes to the building.

- 6.4 This appraisal is therefore concerned only with the proposal for residential two-storey roof extension to provide seven flats on top of the building (sometimes referred to as a 'top hat' scheme) and a re-design of the existing/overall building.
- 6.5 The application site is within the larger RC4a designation in the RCAAP, one of the series of smaller sites suitable for residential-led redevelopment in the RCAAP area, with RC4a being identified for between 100 and 150 dwellings (total) and associated community uses. The site is roughly square and extends from Chatham Street in the north to Oxford Road to the south, as far west as the application site at 125 Chatham Street and as far east as Eaton Place. Therefore, the application site is suitable for residential development. Given the overall scale of the application site, it would not be reasonable to seek community uses from this minor development. The application therefore complies with Policy RC4a.

(b) Dwelling mix

- 6.6 Policy RC9 (Living in the Centre) requires that residential development within the central area shall contribute towards a mix of different sized units within the development and ideally, a mix of one, two and three bedroom units. The policy makes no specific stipulation for minor developments but as a guide, states that for developments of 15 dwellings or more, no more than 40% of the units should be one-bed (which would include 'studio flats'), and a minimum of 5% should be at least three bed, the exception being where viability proves this unviable.
- 6.7 The current planning application was originally submitted as a combination of one bed and studio flats and following concerns from officers, the mix has been revised to include 2x two bed flats. These are on the second and third floors towards the south-west of the building. The prior approval scheme comprised only 8x 1-bed flats and therefore no mix, but the prior approval process does not allow planning policy to be considered. Accordingly, no comment can be made in respect of the ground and first floor layout in considering this planning application.
- 6.8 The application proposes that two of the seven flats proposed will be two-bed units (29% of the total). These are on the second and third floors and there would be access via stairs to the communal amenity area at the rear of the building. Therefore, use by families would be possible. There would also be two studio units and three one-bed flats. The overall vertical stacking of rooms, amenity provided by balconies and externally and general spacious layout is good, with the units ranging from approximately 37 sq.m. for the studio units to 70 sq.m. for the two bed units, which would allow a degree of adaptation, should this be required. For these reasons, officers recommend that the application provides a suitable mix in this minor development.

(c) Design

Appearance

- 6.9 This application seeks to re-clad the existing building and provide a new roof extension. This will transform the building from an existing dated two-storey office building to a contemporary building which is overtly residential in nature, featuring balconies front and rear and reminiscent of other

flatted blocks in the Caversham Road/Weldale Street area which have either been built or have planning permission. The present structure is very much of its time, having one-way 'mirror' glass divided into small squares by maroon-coloured glazing bars, separated into three bays by brick piers. These piers are curved at the bottom, forming a 'stallriser' and the glazing and piers continue to the top of the building. Visually, the overall effect is that there is no delineation between the floors, semblance of a top to the building or animation of the façade towards the street. At present, therefore, the building, although not dominant, is not very sympathetic towards its context and presents a rather austere presence with a lack of natural surveillance and connection to the street. This is mitigated, to a large extent, by the presence of two Silver Maple trees planted on the frontage, which are likely to have been planted when the building was constructed and have survived, notwithstanding the harsh environment next to the road and the proximity to the building itself.

- 6.10 The height of the proposed building on Chatham Street is considered to be acceptable, as demonstrated by the applicant's streetscene views. These show that the building is sufficiently separate from other buildings and that a taller and more dominant building can be accommodated in the streetscene, which features buildings of varying ages and qualities, most of which have limited frontages onto Chatham Street. The surgery, for instance, despite having its front door on the north, actually has its principal outlook and frontage to the west on Ambrose Place. There is therefore considered to be merit in a building which properly addresses the street and which provides an increase in dwellings, in this case, meaning an increase in height, as signalled by the RCAAP RC4a designation.
- 6.11 The proposal would produce a contemporary building in three bay sections with the plans indicatively showing a yellow coloured render to the sides and grey brick to the centre. The grey would then set back at third floor level, where there would be recessed balconies. The rear elevation would be similar, but with some flats having their own individual balconies. The building would be more 'logical' than present, appearing as a four storey building and having a discernible top floor and roof. The roof would be a low-pitch, double-monopitch, ie. sloping up towards the front and rear, with a central transverse valley, rather than a ridge. Both front and rear entrances would be signalled by glazed, barrel-roof canopies with metal fittings.
- 6.12 The quality of the finishing materials will be important to ensure that the redevelopment provides an overall satisfactory composition and the proposed condition lists the various components which will require specific officer approval. Providing that these materials are suitable, officers consider that the design will provide a significant improvement over the existing building in design terms and complies with design policies RC5 and CS7.

Layout of accommodation and amenity considerations

- 6.13 The general layout of the development is suitable, with good-sized flats and acceptable stacking of like rooms/areas. All flats would be single-aspect, accessed via a central lobby and stair, although flat depths have been designed so that no part of a habitable room is in excess of five metres from a window. On the north side, the windows to the living/dining areas are larger, to allow more daylight penetration. Although the ground and first

floors of the building are not part of this planning application, they are pertinent to it, as the planning application would rely on the building below for access and for this reason, there should be a linking condition that this scheme cannot be implemented without access via the prior approval scheme. No lift is proposed and RBC Building Control advise that there is no requirement for a lift under the Building Regulations. In general design and layout terms, the proposal is suitable in terms of policies CS5 and CS7.

- 6.14 The majority of the flats have no private amenity space (although some have a Juliette balcony), except for two flats on the second floor, which have large private balconies. However, all flats would have access to the ground floor amenity space and a large communal balcony on the third floor. In a dense urban area such as this, the provision of amenity space, particularly private amenity space, is always valued, but often very difficult to supply. The amenity spaces above are considered to be positive elements of the overall quality of the scheme and therefore the application complies with Policy DM10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space). There is a side window in Flat 13 which immediately looks out over the communal balcony on the third floor, however, this is a minor concern and a suitable adjustment to this privacy situation should be the subject of a condition, to ensure compliance with policies DM10 and DM4.

Overlooking/privacy and relationship to surrounding buildings

- 6.15 The application building itself is detached. Buildings on the north side of the dual carriageway are 34 metres away and three storeys, plus basement and are unaffected by the proposals. On the south side of Chatham Street, the building would be set within the context of four buildings, all at similar distances to the application building: Cherwell Crescent to the west (a three-storey residential development); Chatham Street Surgery to the East (two storeys, characteristic monopitch roof); The Face Bar nightclub to the South-East (a large, flat-roof two-storey building); and 118 Oxford Road (known as 'Carlisle House'), an attractive Grade II listed 2½ storey ashlar stone building with stone window surrounds, probably originally a house and now divided into four flats.
- 6.16 Of these buildings, only one would have its amenity in terms of overlooking/privacy affected to any notable extent and that is 118 Oxford Road and a resident of one of the flats in this building is concerned that there would be direct views into existing bedrooms. At the nearest point, this distance, from middle window to middle window, is 15 metres, but offset by some 20 degrees. It should be noted, however, that an overlooking situation technically 'exists' - during office hours, were the offices to be re-occupied - and this could have more overlooking to the rear than a residential development, due to the number of occupiers in an open-plan office. It should also be remembered that the floors below also can also be used as residential, due to the granting of prior approval 130870. The two-storey roof extension would provide an increase in the incidence of overlooking over the prior approval of the floor below, and principally this is as a result of the living room/dining area to the two two-bed units on the second and third floors, each unit having a rear window 1.4m wide and a set of French Doors to a Juliette balcony, 1.5m wide. The indicative landscaping arrangement shows trees to be planted in the rear amenity area, and although they may provide a level of privacy towards No. 118, they are unlikely to provide a full screen between the buildings.

- 6.17 Overall in terms of overlooking and privacy, however, officers are of the opinion that in this relatively dense urban environment, this additional overlooking from these flats at a minimum of approximately 15 metres is acceptable and what can be expected in central Reading. Whilst there are further windows on the rear of the development, the angles are more oblique and overlooking would not cause a significant detrimental impact to the living environment of the existing flats in 118 Oxford Road, and the proposal complies with Policy DM4.
- 6.18 Regarding privacy to the flats themselves, a concern would be the flats at ground floor level. Whilst the use of the inside of this part of the building is not controllable in this application, the outside areas are. Towards the road, it would be preferable for there to be boundary treatment or frontal landscaping to give the building a suitable lay-off from the back of the pavement. This can be covered in the landscaping condition. To the rear, the amenity space would continue to extend up to the habitable rooms of the flats, which is not ideal, but given the limited depth of this space, it is unlikely to be intensively used. Suitable privacy would be maintained to the flats, in accordance with Policy DM4.

Impact on the setting of Listed Buildings

- 6.19 Whilst the area is not within a conservation area (the northern extremity of the Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area stops on the southern side of Oxford Road), there are two listed buildings nearby: Holy Trinity Church and No. 118 Oxford Road and consideration needs to be given to the impact of the re-design and roof extension on the settings of these buildings.
- 6.20 Holy Trinity Church is a tall, dominant building which fronts Oxford Road and is sited on a north-south axis to the south of the application site, with the nearest part of the listed building approximately 38 metres from the rear façade of the development. It is not considered that either the re-cladding or the additional roof height would have a significant effect on the setting of this listed building, given this distance and the fact that the buildings are not seen at the same time in their principal street views.
- 6.21 118 Oxford Road is much closer and its setting will be affected by the proposed development. At the nearest point, the buildings are 14 metres apart. 118 is described in the listing description as an 'Ashlar [stone block] 2½ storey villa with slate roof and extruded chimneys'. It occupies an odd position on its plot, being set at the very rear of the site away from Oxford Road, up against the boundary of the application site and Cherwell Crescent, but its principal frontage appears to be to the south (Oxford Road). The majority of its curtilage is therefore towards Oxford Road and away from the application site. 118 has tall gables and chimneys and its overall height is some 12 metres. The main impact of the development on the setting of this listed building will be the additional height, in relatively close proximity, increasing from 8.2 metres (maximum height to top of the piers on the existing building) to 13.5 metres. To assist in visualising this effect, the applicant has supplied streetscene views of Chatham Street, showing 118 in the background and these are attached to this report. The application building is currently approximately equal to the eaves height of No. 118 and following the development would become approximately 1.5 metres taller than 118.

- 6.22 However, the buildings will not generally be seen in this context from Chatham Street, where 118 is sited some 30 metres away from the edge of the roadway, with the walled car park to Cherwell Crescent in between. To gauge the fullest impact on the listed building, you would need to view the relationship from either the west, at the entrance to the Cherwell Crescent car park, or the east from Ambrose Place. In both cases, the relationships are not concerning the main façades of either building. Therefore, given that the distance which is between the buildings is still greater than the height of either building; only the rear façade of 118 would be affected; there is presently a two storey building in a poor condition on site; and the buildings front different streets, officers advise that this increase in height, whilst significant and close (but not in immediate proximity), will have a relatively minor effect overall on the setting of the listed building and is therefore considered to be acceptable in terms of Policy CS33.

(d) Noise and air quality

Noise

- 6.23 RBC Environmental Protection advises that the building is located in close proximity to the 'Face Bar' nightclub. In accordance with its premises licence, the club can operate until 2am and until 4:30am on Friday and Saturday nights. Whilst noise from licensed premises is controlled via the Licensing Act 2003, where there is a late night bar/club there is inevitably likely to be noise disturbance from customers queuing for entry and noise in the immediate vicinity as they are leaving. This is exacerbated by the fact that in this location there is a courtyard area in front of the club, where people are likely to be present late at night. Sleep may be disturbed to residents of the development on the south side of the building. There are also likely to be high noise levels to the front of the building due to the road (the dual carriageway section of Chatham Street), in particular during the day.
- 6.24 The applicant has produced two noise reports, in response to the above concerns. The first report was based on noise monitoring which was undertaken in August/September 2013, however, the club operator advised that this was not considered to be A representative survey, as the premises were either closed or had very minor functions operating at that time. At the request of officers, supplementary noise surveys were conducted on 6 and 7 December 2013. These latter results recorded considerably higher readings on the Saturday night to the Friday night, due to increased activity and numbers of patrons of the club (a greater occurrence of raised voices, etc.) and also music 'break out' noise. As a consequence, the noise report recommends that noise mitigation measures will need to be more substantial than previously indicated. The report suggests that the club may have exceeded the noise limit in place as part of its premises licence on the Saturday night, however the Council's Licensing Team advises that the club has no such limitation, although the licence does allow the Council to investigate noise controls and recommend sound insulation, etc. if it considers it reasonable to do so. At the time of the surveys in August/September and December, it should be noted that the first floor of the club is not in use for live music events by order of the Council, due to certain improvements required by the Council having not taken place, including upgrading sound insulation/absorption. However, officers advise that there are no planning restrictions which would prevent the first floor of the club being returned to use.

- 6.25 The report recommends that with, “...very high performance secondary glazing to all living rooms and bedrooms at the rear of the development as well as mechanical background ventilation via apertures either at roof level or to the western side (side) elevation of the building”, the flats will be able to comply with the ‘good’ condition limits for external noise intrusion, with a comfortable margin (buffer). The assessment has further considered possible low frequency (bass) music break-out (which goes beyond RBC Environmental Protection’s requirements) and only very low/quiet noise levels for these low frequencies would be detected with the proposed mitigation in place. The report recommends a specification for the high-performance secondary glazing, and this would provide extremely high sound insulation, normally only specified for residential dwellings in close proximity to noise sources such as railway lines, busy dual carriageways/motorways or airport flight paths. This glazing appears to indicate a ‘triple glazing’ solution with an overall depth (outside window pane to inside window pane) of approximately 16.5 cm. All openings would also need acoustic seals. The report states that the development would have mechanical air circulation system, which would have intakes on the western elevation or the roof, ie. away from the club. Although the walls would be suitable via a normal cavity construction, further noise insulation would be required in the ceilings of the top floor flats.
- 6.26 RBC Environmental Protection’s comments to Planning are that the report is technically sound and that the applicant has adequately demonstrated that the proposed mitigation is suitable and that when combined with the air intake system and providing that windows and doors are closed, a suitable noise environment would be achieved.
- 6.27 The owner of the Face Bar continues to object to this application and their noise consultants have commented on the latest noise report. They have raised nine areas of concern with the latest report and it would be useful to discuss each of their concerns with it briefly below.
1. **Disagrees that the latest noise report has been based on a ‘worst case scenario’, given that it uses ground floor noise measurements only and takes no account of higher noise levels at upper floor levels.** *Officer response: RBC Environmental Protection agrees that the acoustic report has not considered noise levels at upper floors. It is not possible to confirm whether or not the noise levels at the upper floors would be higher than at ground floor without noise separate measurement or modelling. There is however no specific reason to assume the noise levels would be significantly higher at upper floors. The report states that noise levels may be higher at upper floors due to less ground absorption, however EP officers consider that it is unlikely that there is significant ground absorption occurring due to the short distance and hard ground surface.*
 2. **Parked cars shielded the monitoring equipment and the location of the equipment was further away than stated in the report.** *Officer response: The EP Team is unable to comment on the position of the noise measurement equipment, although if it was not in the position stated in the report then this may significantly affect the assessment. Advice from your planning officers is that without verifiable information on the location of the equipment and other factors, the information presented should be accepted in ‘good faith’. Additionally, it is likely that in this*

private road where parking is largely unregulated, the usual situation would be that there are cars parked.

3. **The calculation sheets show that noise readings would be in excess of the noise criteria set by Reading Borough Council.** *Officer response: the EP Team advises that the internal noise criterion of 20 dBA is not an RBC criterion, but was suggested as a design standard by Philips Acoustics (for the applicant). It was suggested as a more stringent alternative to the 'good' value of 30 dBA because the type of noise is likely to cause greater disturbance than a more continuous, anonymous noise such as traffic noise.*
4. **There could still be short periods of louder noise emanating from the club which could result in disturbance to future occupiers, even if the overall noise energy average over an 8 hour period is acceptable.** *Officer response: the EP Team confirms that noise levels have been assessed in terms of the highest one hour periods rather than over 8 hours, and maximum noise levels have also been assessed, therefore this should have taken into account short periods of louder noise.*
5. **Questions the sound reduction capabilities of the walls of the extension, as no details of this have been supplied.** *Officer response: although the EP Team agrees that this detail has not been verified, they are content that the sound reduction indices quoted by the applicant were acceptable.*
6. **Recommends that if planning permission is to be granted, it should be subject to a condition that the windows should be sealed units.** *Officer response: this is considered to be an unnecessary design solution for a development where most of the time, the club will not be causing noise. This would, in officers' opinion, provide a hostile living environment, where there should remain the option of natural ventilation. The EP Team's comment is that further information should be submitted to confirm that the ventilation proposed will provide sufficient cooling to make it unnecessary for windows to be opened, although there is no guarantee that residents won't open their windows anyway.*
7. **The report fails to take into account that the first floor of the club could become operational for live music events.** *Officer response: the Council's EP Team is aware that the upper floor of the building is not in use and agrees that the report has not considered the possible noise from the first floor of the club. Before the first floor is permitted to be used for music events, acoustic tests are required to demonstrate that the noise attenuation works carried out to the building are effective. The presence of residents in close proximity to the club would make it more difficult to achieve this.*
8. **125 Chatham Street, due to its proximity and location in front of the entrance to the club, will receive more noise than other residential properties in the locality.** *Officer comment: the EP Team agrees that the proposed residential properties at 125 Chatham Street are likely to be more affected by noise from the club than other existing nearby residents, particularly due to noise from people in the courtyard/Ambrose Place.*
9. **Recommend that if planning permission is to be granted, it should be subject to a condition requiring noise commissioning tests to demonstrate that the internal noise criterion can be achieved, prior to**

first operation. *Officer response: this is an unusual request, but given the potential for noise disturbance, not an unreasonable one and could operate in much the same way as a sustainability post-completion certificate. For example, if the window seals are poorly fitted, this may lead to a significant increase in sound levels received in an affected flat. The EP Team consider it to be prudent, in this case, to impose a planning condition requiring that noise commissioning tests be carried out prior to occupation.*

- 6.28 An objector is concerned for the noise generated from increased traffic and people will create disturbance at all times and is concerned that their property is not able to be fitted with noise suppression measures such as double glazing, as it is a listed building. In response, the application building (as existing) could already generate traffic movements were it to be used for its last use as B1 offices. Movements during the evening/night are likely to be minimal. In any event, changes to listed buildings to aid noise suppression, if required, are possible, and secondary glazing is often suitable.
- 6.29 Notwithstanding the EP Team's general satisfaction with the noise report, they comment that there remains a risk that the occupants of the building will be disturbed by noise from people outside the club, given the unpredictable nature of such noise (people shouting, for instance). If windows are left open in the new development, the EP Team state that disturbance would be 'very likely' and it would be advisable for more details of the ventilation to be received. This issue is discussed separately below, but officers consider that as with the noise condition, it would be possible to have a pre-occupation check of the system, to ensure it achieves the correct air changes/filtration.
- 6.30 In summary, whilst officers have some reservations regarding the heavy-duty nature of the noise suppression measures (the thickness of the windows may be better achieved by sliding secondary glazing, for instance), the applicant has demonstrated that the development can achieve a suitable internal noise environment in the flats in this area which can be subjected to high levels of ambient noise. Therefore, on balance, officers recommend that the application has suitably demonstrated compliance with policies CS34 and DM4.

Air quality

- 6.31 The proposed development is located within the Borough's air quality management area (AQMA) that RBC Environmental Protection has identified with monitoring as being a pollution hot-spot for nitrogen dioxide and it would introduce new sensitive receptors (dwellings). An assessment and/or mitigation measures should be provided to demonstrate that sufficient mitigation measures are implemented to protect the residents from the effects of poor air quality and such mitigation must be in place before the occupation of the development. As these are all single-aspect flats, no cross-ventilation between rooms front and rear will be possible, hence mechanical ventilation systems are likely to be required. Inlets for mechanical ventilation should be from the 'clean' side of the development, however this should also take into account the potential noise ingress from the rear. The noise report advises that these would need to be on the western elevation or the roof. In this instance, Environmental Protection is content for this information to be provided prior to occupation, therefore

this can be controlled by condition and with this, the application would be suitable in terms of policies CS34 and DM19.

(e) Parking

- 6.32 The parking area available consists of a roughly square area of land adjacent to the building and a narrower strip of land which continues to the south between the side of No. 118 Oxford Road and the Face Bar building. The prior approval given was considered on the basis of the eight flats having six car parking spaces and this was acceptable to RBC Transport Strategy. The layout plan for this planning application shows a slightly different arrangement, with seven parking spaces. The club owner considers that the Borough's parking standards are not met and is concerned that having only seven parking spaces would mean parking overspill onto Ambrose Place, obstructing emergency vehicles.
- 6.33 The site is within the Zone 2 'Primary Core Area', where the usual requirement is one space per dwelling, therefore a total of seven spaces would be required. However, the final requirement has taken into account local car ownership rates, which are 0.46 vehicles per dwelling, therefore a minimum of three spaces should be required.
- 6.34 The site was to have been provided with six parking spaces (to be allocated to the 8x 1-bed flats that were assessed as part of the Prior Approval application. A revised drawing has now been submitted that illustrates one additional parking space, therefore increasing the overall provision on site to seven spaces for the 15 flats. RBC Transport Strategy considers that given that this provision is in line with the car ownership figures for the area as well as the provision for Zone 1, 'Central Core Area' - which is only 350 metres to the east of the site, overall, this provision of car parking is considered to be acceptable.
- 6.35 The Highway Authority has therefore taken the parking provision for the site as a whole (the planning application and the prior approval) and officers consider that on balance, it is reasonable to consider the parking provision in totality and officers have agreed that this is a reasonable approach. No specific condition linked to the Prior Approval is considered to be required and it will be the developer to decide which individual flat receives a parking space, although usually these are reserved for the larger units.
- 6.36 Regarding the objector's concern about parking on Ambrose Place, this is a private road, therefore such obstructions would need to be dealt with as a Civil Matter. Cycle parking and bin storage details are shown but both require slight revisions to meet the Council's standards and both can be the subject of conditions.
- 6.37 Subject to conditions, therefore, the development is considered to be suitable in terms of parking and servicing and therefore complies with policies CS20, CS24 and DM12.

(f) S.106 contributions

Leisure

- 6.38 A contribution of £14,700 is requested. The Council's Parks and Open Spaces department have identified that improvements are needed for the

Council's project at the Abbey Quarter, the Abbey Ruins or associated works in the Forbury Gardens area or the on-going requirements as set out in the Thames Parks Plan. This contribution is sought on the basis of the revised S.106 SPD and is considered to be necessary, given the additional pressure on these central reading leisure facilities as a result of this development.

Transport

- 6.39 A contribution of £18,900 has been requested. The contribution would go towards the Highway Authority's local transport plan, and this is considered to be reasonable, given that the occupiers of the site are likely to use integrated transport facilities in the area. The calculation is in accordance with the S.106 SPD.

Affordable housing

- 6.40 Adopted Policy DM6 (Affordable Housing) requires that on application sites of between 5 and 9 dwellings, a 20% provision of affordable housing shall apply and in this instance, the Council is content for this to be by way of a commuted sum. The Council's Valuer has agreed to the applicant's estimates of the Gross Development Value (GDV) of the development, which has resulted in the calculation of the contribution of £113,000. This has been agreed by the developer.

Education

- 6.41 There would be two, 2-bedroom flats within the development and a contribution of £5,589 is requested. This would go towards capacity improvements in the primary schools in the Oxford Road area and also capacity improvements at Highdown Academy (secondary level). These two bedroom properties may contain school age children at the primary or secondary level, therefore it is reasonable that the development should contribute towards these educational facilities.
- 6.42 The above contributions would be sought to provide the necessary infrastructure to meet the needs of the development. This would be secured via a Section 106 agreement as part of the application process in accordance with the S.106 SPD and the policies set out above in the Recommendation, subject to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations, were the application to be approved. The contributions are necessary to make the development suitable, directly related to the development and fair and reasonable, given the additional pressure which would be put on existing facilities and are in accordance with policies Cs9, CS20, CS29, DM3, DM6 and the revised S.106 SPD.

Other matters

Construction impacts

- 6.43 Conditions will be required for a construction management statement (CMS) and hours of working condition (standard hours) to maintain neighbour amenity, in accordance with policies CS34 and DM4.

Sustainability

- 6.44 The DAS indicates that the dwellings shall meet the Code for sustainable homes (CSH) Level 3, but does not provide a pre-estimator, however, this

can be a condition of any approval. This would meet Policy CS1 and the revised SPD on Sustainable Design and Construction. Officers advised that this is not a situation where Policy DM2 should apply as the site is considered to be too constrained for the consideration of decentralised renewable energy.

Equalities impact

- 6.45 In determining this application the Committee is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation. The building includes units which would be accessible for disabled users. Otherwise, there is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application.

Discussions with the applicant

- 6.46 The following is a summary of those issues dealt with at pre-application stage and those during the consideration of the planning application:

Planning Issue requiring resolution	Issue resolved at pre-application stage ?	Issue resolved at application stage ?	Comments
Dwelling mix	No. Highlighted as potential issue.	Yes	Two 2-bed flats included in the mix
Noise and air quality	No. Highlighted as potential issue.	Yes	Two noise surveys provided.
Parking	No. Highlighted as potential issue.	Yes	Overall parking level for the site would be suitable
S.106	No. Highlighted as potential issue.	Yes	Contribution levels have increased (via the SPD) given the considerable time required to prepare this application for committee.
Application timescale	-	YES	Applicant agreed an extension of time (PPA) to 26 March 2014 to enable completion of the S.106 agreement.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The change of use of the current building to residential via the prior approval without controls on noise, air quality, dwelling mix, S.106 contributions etc., will mean that those dwellings will not be subject to the same level of control as the flats being proposed for the new second and

third floors. Whilst this is not an ideal situation, these are not matters which the Council can seek to control via this planning application.

7.2 In summary in relation to this application:

- The application is considered to accord with adopted planning policy which seeks further residential development and redevelopment in this area of central Reading
- The mix of dwellings proposed, when considering factors such as the layout of the accommodation and amenity space proposed, is considered, on balance, to be acceptable
- The design is contemporary and appropriate and is suitable in terms of surrounding amenity considerations, including maintaining privacy and the setting of the nearby listed buildings
- Whilst this is a poor environment in terms of noise, providing that the noise mitigation measures are undertaken as indicated, on balance, it is considered that a satisfactory internal living environment can be achieved; and
- A suitable contributions package is being offered

7.3 On the basis of the above, the officer recommendation is to GRANT planning permission.

Plans:

8415-PL-06 Rev. A: Proposed block plan
8415-PL-07 Rev. A: Amenities & cycle and bin storage
8415-PL-08: Existing and proposed street scene
8415-PL-11 Rev. B: Proposed second floor layout
8415-PL-12 Rev. B: Third floor layout
8415-PL-13: Roof plan
8366-PL-14: Proposed elevations front
8366-PL-15: Proposed side elevations E
8415-PL-16 Rev. A: Proposed rear elevation S
8415-PL-17: Side elevation W

Case Officer: Richard Eatough

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All dimensions to be checked on site and are approximate to be reported before work commences.

Notes:

1:250

0 2.5 5 7.5 10 12.5 m

10 JUN 2013
13 08 42
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING

Rev Comment By Date

THE
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Zain Reading Ltd.

Job Title:
125 Chatham Street, Reading
RG1 7HT

Drawing Title:
Existing & Proposed Street
Scene

Status:
PLANNING

Date Drawn:
06-06-13

Drawn By:
LL

Scale:
1:250 @ A3

Job No:
8415-13

Proj No:
8415-PL-08

Rev:



EXISTING STREET SCENE 1:100



PROPOSED STREET SCENE 1:100

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All dimensions to be checked on site and any discrepancies to be reported before work commences.

Notes:

A. Revised updated window size and location rear elevation new 2 bed flats

11. 11.03.13

Rev	Comment	By	Date
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Drawing Title:
Proposed Rear Elevation S

Status:
PLANNING

Date Drawn:
06-06-13

Drawn By:
LL

Scale:
1:100@A3

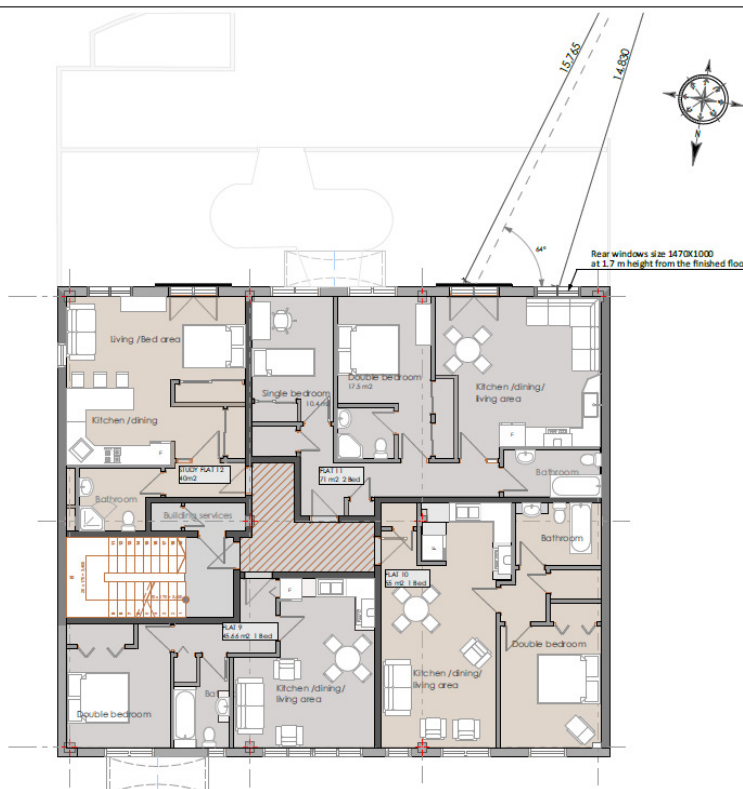
Job No:
8415-13

Draw No:
8415-PL-16

Rev:
A



PROPOSED REAR ELEVATION SOUTH



PROPOSED SECOND FLOOR LAYOUT flats 8-9-10-11

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All dimensions to be checked on site and any discrepancies to be reported before work commences.

Notes

1:100

0 1 2 3 4 5 m

Proposed Areas

Second Floor
9- Flat 1 bed : 45.66 m²
10- Flat 2 bed : 58 m²
11- Flat 2 bed : 71 m²
12- Study flat : 40 m²

B-changed type of flats :
2x1bed flat / 1x2bed flat / 1 Study flat LL 02.09.13
A-Updated flats numbering LL 10.07.13

Rev	Comment	By	Date

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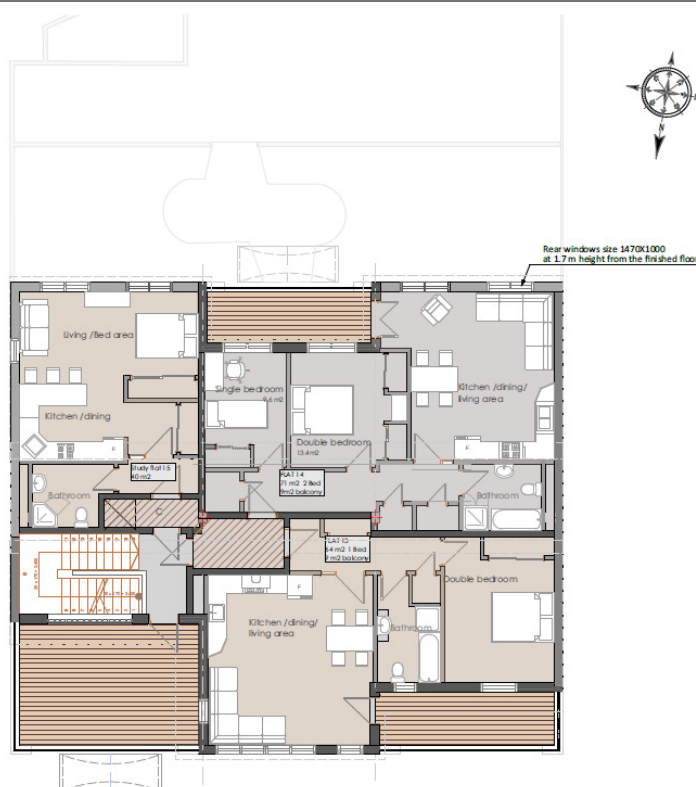
Job Title:
125 Chatham Street, Reading
RG1 7HT

Drawing Title:
Proposed Second Floor layout

Status:
PLANNING

Date Drawn:	Drawn By:	Scale:
06-06-13	LL	1:100@A3

Job No	Dwg No	Rev
8415-13	8415-PL-11	B



PROPOSED THIRD FLOOR LAYOUT -flats 12-13-14

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All dimensions to be checked on site and any discrepancies to be reported before work commences.

Notes

1:100

0 1 2 3 4 5 m

Proposed Areas

Third Floor
12- Flat 1 bed : 40 m²
13- Flat 2 bed : 58 m²
14- Flat 2 bed : 71 m²
15- Study flat : 40 m²

B-changed type of flats :
1x1bed flat / 1x2bed flat / 1 Study flat LL 02.09.13
A-Updated flats numbering LL 10.07.13

Rev	Comment	By	Date

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Job Title:
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Drawing Title:
Third Floor layout

Status:
PLANNING

Date Drawn:	Drawn By:	Scale:
06-06-13	LL	1:100@A3

Job No	Dwg No	Rev
8415-13	8415-PL-12	B

