

PLANNING DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

BLOCKS 1 AND 2, AVELEY
WALK, READING, RG2 0AP

PLANNING APPLICATION FOR CONVERSION OF EXISTING GROUND FLOOR REDUNDANT STORES TO 2 X ONE BEDROOM DWELLINGS

PLANNING DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

**BLOCKS 1 AND 2, AVELEY WALK, READING, RG2
0AP**

ON BEHALF OF YORK ASSOCIATES/READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

**TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (AS AMENDED)
PLANNING AND COMPULSORY PURCHASE ACT 2004**

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Planning, Design and Access Statement has been prepared by Pegasus Group to support an application for the conversion of 2 ground floor redundant and fire damaged stores in Blocks 1 and 2 Aveley Walk, Reading, to form 2no. 1-bedroom dwellings. The description of the development is for:

"Conversion of existing ground floor redundant stores to 2 x 1-bedroom dwellings."

- 1.2 This statement sets out the justification for the proposed development, firstly by reviewing the site and its surroundings in terms of the relevant physical, social and economic and planning context as well as the relevant planning history and local and national planning policies.
- 1.3 The main justification section then explores whether the proposal is compliant with the policies of the adopted local plan and considers the proposals against other material considerations including the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), to which appropriate weight is given.
- 1.4 This statement should be read in conjunction with the associated drawing produced by York Associates Ltd.

2. SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1 The site comprises 2 blocks of flats, known as Aveley Court, with block 1 consisting of 12 dwellings and block 2 consisting of 10 dwellings. On the ground floor of each block, adjacent to the entrance doors are 2 storage areas, 1 for each block. The 2 blocks of flats are owned by Reading Borough Council, who also own a third block to the west.
- 2.2 The storage areas in blocks 1 and 2 have been redundant for some time and have sustained fire damage in the past. Reading Borough Council Housing Property Services is seeking to increase the efficiency of the site by utilising underused, or disused areas through the conversion to dwellings, increasing the overall housing support offer across the city.
- 2.3 As stated, these dwellings are located on the ground floor of blocks 1 and 2 Aveley Court, Aveley Walk. The only external changes required to the building will be the creation of kitchen windows where the current store doors are located and dining room and bedroom windows to the west (rear) elevations. Each flat will have a ground floor internal area of 45m².
- 2.4 The site is located in a residential area within the settlement boundary of Reading. The city centre and associated facilities are located within easy access of the site, approximately 1 km, accessible either by walking via a number of residential roads and streets or by bus. The site lies in a highly sustainable location and is only a short distance from a number of local services, many of which can be found in Whitley Street and slightly further along in London Road.
- 2.5 Residential uses/properties make up the majority of the surrounding area, although an industrial estate is located to the west of the flats. None of the blocks comprise listed buildings and do not lie within or adjacent to any conservation area.
- 2.6 The site lies in Flood Zone 1, this being the area least at risk from flood events.

3. PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 There is limited planning history to the site, with nothing relevant to Blocks 1 and 2, although in 2002 Block 3 was subject of the following application:

In 2002 application ref. 021232 was permitted on the 06 March 2002 for the following development: 'Change of use of existing pram stores into community office.'

The only other application relating to all 3 blocks submitted in 1992 was application reference 920157 that was permitted on 11 February 1993 for the following development: "Flat to pitched roof conversion to 3 blocks of flats."

4. THE PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The proposal is to convert each of the storerooms into a 1-bedroom dwelling. The new dwellings will be used by Reading Borough Council to increase and improve the housing stock for those in need of housing.
- 4.2 The dwellings will be easily configured providing a kitchen, bathroom, living and dining room and a bedroom with storage within. The gross internal floor area for each flat will be 45m². The General Arrangement Drawing that accompanies this submission provides an accurate proposed floor plan for each of the dwellings.
- 4.3 The entrance to the flats will be provided via the existing secure entry doors that open into the lobby, with a front entrance door being cut into the brickwork for the flats.
- 4.4 External alterations to the building comprise the replacement of the storage doors with a kitchen window and on the west (rear elevation) a bedroom and dining room window will be inserted into an otherwise blank wall.
- 4.5 As identified on the key, there is an existing bin store in location D, where there is sufficient capacity to handle the waste generated by these 2 new flats.
- 4.6 There is a small area of private amenity shown as C and a wider amenity area to the west, visible from the dining room windows. Casual parking is located around the blocks.

5. PLANNING POLICY

5.1 In this section, the national and local planning policy and guidance pertinent to the application site and development proposals are summarised. The plan-led approach to development, as enshrined by Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, requires development proposals to accord with the adopted development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

i) Local Planning Policy

5.2 This section will consider the important policies contained within the relevant documents of the development plan. The relevant document of Reading Borough Council's Development Plan is as follows:

- Reading Borough Local Plan – adopted November 2019

5.3 This plan replaces all previous plans and documents, Core Strategy, Reading Central Area Action Plan and Sites and Detailed Policies Document that no longer apply.

Reading Borough Local Plan

5.4 This document sets out the Council's adopted planning strategy for new development in Reading up to 2036. It will be the main point of reference for anyone wishing to undertake new buildings, changes or developments within Reading over that period.

5.5 **Policy CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development.** This policy states that a positive approach will be taken to development that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the national Policy Framework.

Policy CC2: Sustainable Construction and Design. This policy outlines the Council's commitment to ensuring that new development and the redevelopment of sites make efficient use of energy, water, minerals, materials and other natural resources during the construction process.

5.6 **Policy CC6: Accessibility and the Intensity of Development.** This policy

relates to the relationship between the intensity of development and existing/required levels of accessibility and how this affects the decision-making process.

5.6 **Policy H1: Provision of Housing.** This policy outlines the number of houses that will be required in Reading Borough for the period 2013 to 2036, averaging approximately 689 homes per annum.

5.7 **Policy H8: Residential Conversions.** This policy sets out the criteria against which developments for residential conversion will be assessed. In particular it seeks to ensure there are no detrimental impacts to amenity character of area, general mix of development and provides adequate internal floorspace and headroom for residents.

ii) **National Guidance**

National Planning Policy Framework (June 2019)

5.8 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was revised on the 19th June 2019. Paragraph 2 is clear that the NPPF must be taken into account in the preparation of development plans, *"and is a material consideration in planning decisions"*.

5.9 Paragraph 8 states that to achieve sustainable development the planning system has three overarching objectives: Economic, Social and Environmental. They are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways, each objective is described (inter alia):

- **An Economic Role** – contributing to building a strong responsive and competitive economy;
- **A Social Role** – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible local services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and
- **An Environmental Role** – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of

land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

5.10 Paragraph 10 advises “So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development”.

5.11 **Paragraph 11** sets out how to apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development. It goes on to outline that for decision making this means ‘*approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay*’.

Section 4 Decision-making

5.12 **Paragraph 38** sets out that local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way.

Section 5 Delivering a sufficient supply of homes

5.13 **Paragraph 59** requires local planning authorities to support the Government’s objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes. **Paragraph 61** goes on to clarify that the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies.

Section 9 Promoting sustainable transport

5.14 **Paragraph 109** confirms that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

Section 11 Making effective use of land

5.15 **Paragraph 117** confirms that planning decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions.

5.16 **Paragraph 118** goes on and sets out how this can be achieved. Planning decisions should (inter alia):

- give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes; and,
- promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings, especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing where land supply is constrained.

5.17 **Paragraph 122** advises on achieving appropriate densities and states that decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land taking into account the identified need for different types of housing.

Section 12 Achieving well-designed places

5.18 **Paragraph 124** confirms that the creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to planning, and that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development.

5.19 **Paragraph 127** describes various aspects of good design. Development should ensure that (inter alia):

- it functions well and add to the overall quality of the area;
- is visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- is sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
- establishes or maintains a strong sense of place; and,
- creates places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

5.20 Overall, the NPPF confirms that the primary objective of development management is to foster the delivery of sustainable development, not to hinder or prevent it. The Government's overarching vision throughout the NPPF is that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development in doing so there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development to be approved without delay.

6. PLANNING ASSESSMENT

6.1 This section contains a detailed analysis of the application proposal against the relevant material planning considerations. These considerations have been derived from an understanding of the site and its surrounds and the policy analysis of the previous section. The following detailed matters are considered:

- Principle of Development;
- Impact on Residential Amenity, Overlooking and Privacy; and
- Transport and Highways.

6.2 Matters in relation to design and access will be covered in the following section.

Principle of Development

6.3 The application site lies within the settlement boundary of Reading where the principle of sustainable development/re-development is acceptable, subject to compliance with other relevant policies of the development plan. The character of the area surrounding the application site is firmly residential with an emphasis on housing.

6.4 Policy H1 of the development plan outlines the boroughs requirement to deliver on average 689 dwellings per year between 2013 and 2036. This proposal will result in an introduction of two additional dwellings within Reading and contribute to the Council's annual delivery requirement. The lower-case text and other housing policies underline the importance of providing a range of housing types and mixtures of dwellings, for which there is a demand for 1-bedroom dwellings.

6.5 Policy H8 makes reference to conversions to residential dwellings, not only form existing dwellings but other buildings that would lend themselves well to such a conversion. The policy makes it clear that proposals for residential conversions will be considered acceptable assuming that the proposed conversion would not have an adverse impact on a variety of factors. This conversion is within an existing residential block, requiring no external extension. These issues are discussed further below.

6.6 This conversion does not result in the loss of a family home and would see what is effectively redundant floorspaces brought into beneficial residential uses, with no

loss of facilities for existing residents. The small but significant increase in the housing stock available to Reading Borough Council's Housing Property Service is a major benefit of the proposal that should weigh heavily in granting planning permission.

Impact on Residential Amenity, Overlooking and Privacy

- 6.7 Regarding future occupants, the proposed dwellings provide the requisite facilities to ensure a good standard of accommodation is achieved. The proposed dwellings are well proportioned and include standard amenity features.
- 6.8 A new kitchen window will be added to the front of each of the dwellings, replacing the existing store room doors. New windows will also be added to the rear elevation of blocks 1 and 2 to serve the dining room and bedroom for each dwelling. The west facing nature of the dining room windows will ensure that appropriate levels of natural light and an acceptable outlook is achieved. The layout of the dwellings with open plan living/dining room areas will allow sufficient daylight/sunlight into each dwelling.
- 6.9 In terms of privacy, the main accommodation will look onto an area of amenity for use by all residents. It is a similar arrangement to the existing dwellings in the blocks and will add to the natural surveillance of that area. The kitchen windows facing east will offer surveillance of those entering the blocks and again is a normal layout for residential dwellings and will not give rise to unacceptable levels of loss of privacy. The footpaths around the site are for pedestrian traffic accessing the blocks and for no other purpose.
- 6.10 In terms of noise and disturbance, the proposed dwellings in Aveley Court would not be affected, except for occasional pedestrian entry and exit activity into the main building itself. The location of the living and bedroom accommodation away from these entry points will also diffuse any noise thus ensuring that any level will not significantly prejudice the living conditions of future occupiers.

Transport

- 6.11 The site is in a highly sustainable location with strong public transport links. A number of regular bus services operates along Southampton Street and Reading Town Centre is within accessible walking distance.

- 6.12 In terms of parking provision there are a number of parking laybys around the blocks. Added to the sustainable location of the site the proposed intensification of the site can be accommodated in transport terms.
- 6.13 Bin storage is provided with the development and it is considered there is sufficient capacity to accommodate the increase of 2 x 1 bedroom dwellings.

7. DESIGN AND ACCESS

Design

- 7.1 The proposal requires only minor alterations to the physical, external appearance of the buildings. These include the creation of 2 new window openings on the west elevation of blocks 1 and 2 and the replacement of the storeroom doors on the front elevations with kitchen windows. These alterations will reflect the pattern of window development on the existing blocks and thus not appear out of character.
- 7.2 As indicated above the proposed conversions will increase natural levels of surveillance over parts of the amenity space and entrances to the apartment buildings. Thus, the proposal will contribute to reducing the potential for criminal activity in those locations.

Access

- 7.3 The proposed access to each dwelling will be from the common area/hallway of the apartment blocks. These provide level access.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 This Planning, Design and Access Statement has been prepared by Pegasus Group in support of an application for the conversion of 2 redundant and fire damaged storerooms to form 2 no. 1 bedroom dwellings. The new dwellings would be used by Reading Borough Council to assist in the homing of people in the Borough in need of accommodation.
- 8.2 This statement has demonstrated that the principle of development is entirely acceptable in this residential location and will have no unacceptable impacts on the amenities of nearby properties.
- 8.3 Furthermore, the statement has demonstrated that the site is highly sustainable, and the existing parking provision will be able to accommodate the minor intensification of the site.
- 8.4 This statement has demonstrated that the proposed development is compliant with both the NPPF and local planning policy and it is therefore considered that planning permission should be granted for the application.

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