

Ward: Kentwood

App No.: 200598/FUL

Address: "1 Bennet Court" Bennet Road, Reading

Proposal: Recladding of existing commercial buildings, erection of two storey building to contain an ancillary 'amenity pod', re-arrangement of carparking layout and landscaping

Determination Date (agreed extension of time): 18/09/2020

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The application site comprises two blocks of office accommodation on the Southern side of Bennet Road known as 'Bennet Court'.
- 1.2 The site is located within the identified 'Core Employment area as identified in the proposals map.

2. PROPOSAL

- 2.1 Full planning permission is sought for re-cladding of the existing buildings, construction of a amenity pod ancillary to the main use of the site (i.e. exercise, seating, café). The proposal also necessitates the re-arrangement of the on-site parking to provide additional on-site shared outdoor seating.

2.2 Drawings submitted:

- Drawing No: 18676-SBR-ZZ-XX-DR-A-01008 - Proposed bin stores
- Drawing No: 18676-SBR-ZZ-XX-DR-A-01007 - Site plan proposed refuse collection
- Drawing No: 18676-SBR-ZZ-XX-DR-A-01006 - Proposed amenity pod
- Drawing No: 18676-SBR-ZZ-XX-DR-A-01005 - Proposed elevations
- Drawing No: 18676-A-ZZ-XX-DR-A-01004 - Existing elevations
- Drawing No: 18676-SBR-ZZ-XX-DR-A-01003 - Site plan proposed
- Drawing No: 18676-A-ZZ-XX-DR-A-01002 - Existing site plan
- Drawing No: 18676-A-ZZ-XX-DR-A-01001 - Site location plan
As received 24 April 2020
- Drawing No: 18676-SBR-ZZ-XX-DR-A-01008 Rev 2 - Proposed bin stores
- Drawing No: 18676-SBR-ZZ-XX-DR-A-01007 Rev 2 - Site plan proposed refuse collection
- Drawing No: 18676-SBR-ZZ-XX-DR-A-01006 Rev 2 - Proposed amenity pod
- Drawing No: 18676-SBR-ZZ-XX-DR-A-01005 Rev 2 - Proposed elevations
- Drawing No: 18676-A-ZZ-XX-DR-A-01004 - Existing elevations
- Drawing No: 18676-SBR-ZZ-XX-DR-A-01003 Rev 2 - Site plan proposed
- Drawing No: 18676-A-ZZ-XX-DR-A-01002 - Existing site plan
- Drawing No: 18676-A-ZZ-XX-DR-A-01001 - Site location plan
As received 28 April 2020
- Drawing No: 18676-01009 - Proposed amenity pod plans
- Drawing No: 18676-A-ZZ-XX-DR-A-01004 - Plot 2 existing first floor
- Drawing No: 18676-A-ZZ-XX-DR-A-01002 - Plot 1 existing first floor
- Drawing No: 18676-A-ZZ-XX-DR-A-01003 - Plot 2 existing ground floor
Received 26 May 2020
- Drawing No: 18676-SBR-ZZ-XX-DR-A-01003 Rev 3 - Site plan proposed refuse collection
Received 1 September 2020

2.3 Supporting information submitted:

- Application forms
- CIL form
- Design and access statement

3. PLANNING HISTORY

170236/FUL - Replacement of roller shutter and access door with windows
APPROVED 7/4/2017

141804/FUL - Change of Use of ground floor from B1 and A1 to D1A for offices consulting and treatment rooms to provide services entailing counselling to clients in relation to reproductive health matters, ultra sound scanning, medical assessment including blood and urine testing sexual health screening and procedures to regulate fertility both medical and under local anaesthetic. This use is to be personal tb .p.a.s. and for the period of the lease. WITHDRAWN 17/12/2014

99-01098-FUL (992335) - Erection of front boundary fence with access gates
APPROVED 13/1/2000

00-00465-ADV (991283) - Installation of one illuminated sign and one non-illuminated sign on either side of the entrance gates APPROVED 29/8/2000

94-00929-ADV (940534) - Provision of free-standing triangular GRP sign incorporating estate and tenants name. APPROVED 16/11/1994

89-00471-ADV (890916) - Illuminated sign box with the word norland in red vinyl on a white perspex background APPROVED 12/5/1989

89-000885-FUL (890477) - Use of buildings for business purposes (class b1)
APPROVED 20/3/1989

4. CONSULTATIONS

Internal

- 4.1 RBC Natural Environment Officer - No objection subject to conditions to ensure works in proximity to trees do not damage trees, and details of proposed tree planting.
- 4.2 RBC Environmental Protection Officer - No objections.
- 4.3 RBC Transport Officer - No objections.

Public consultation

- 4.4 Due to the coronavirus pandemic a site notice was not erected by the LPA and a notice was sent to the applicant. All neighbours have been consulted by letter and as such the duty to consult under the Development Management Procedure Order (DMPO) has been complied with.

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) which states at Paragraph 11 “Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development”. However, the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making. In this case the development plan consists of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.
- 5.2 Accordingly, the following local and national planning policy and guidance is relevant to this application:

National Planning Policy Framework (2019)
National Planning Policy Guidance (2014 onwards)

Reading Borough Local Plan 2019:

CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction
CC3: Adaptation to Climate Change
CC4: Decentralised Energy
CC5: Waste Minimisation and Storage
CC7: Design and the Public Realm
CC8: Safeguarding Amenity
EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodland
TR1: Achieving the Transport Strategy
TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging

Relevant Reading Borough Council Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD):

Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)
Employment, Skills and Training (April 2013)
Tree Strategy (2010)
Draft Tree Strategy (currently out for consultation)
Draft Climate Change Strategy (currently out for consultation)

6. APPRAISAL

The main issues to be considered are:

- Principle of Development
- Design Considerations
- Natural Environment
- Amenity for Nearby Occupiers
- Transport Matters
- Sustainability
- Other Matters
- Equalities impact

Principle of Development

- 6.1 The application is for the re-cladding of an existing commercial premise, and improvement of the on-site amenity areas, including erection of an ‘amenity hub’. The works are, in principle acceptable subject to design consideration considered below.

Design Considerations

- 6.2 Policy CC7 of the Local Plan (2019) states that: *“All development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located.”*
- 6.3 The proposed development re-clad/re-paint with black glossy painted, Aluminium frames windows, and new ‘charred timber’ cladding. The proposal would also include the construction of a new ‘amenity hub’, re-allocation of car-parking spaces to provide a on-site outdoor amenity area for use of all offices/units.
- 6.4 The proposed works to re-clad the building to update the external appearance are generally considered an improvement on the weathered office buildings. The construction of a small ‘amenity hub’ and changes to the parking layout, including additional on-site tree planting are both considered functional positives to the overly hard surfaced site. There is no specific prevailing character of the area, and in line with the commercial nature of the site, unique and identifiable built form will add visual interest. As such, the scheme would be of a high design quality which would enhance the character of the area.

Natural Environment

- 6.5 The site is located within an area identified as having 12% tree cover (as per the emerging tree strategy). As such, retention of all vegetation, and provision of additional on-site are of high importance. All planting shall be required to be protected from damage by way of a condition requiring an arboricultural method statement. In addition, a landscaping plan with details of all trees will be required to ensure longevity of appropriate landscaping. As such, the development would comply with policy EN14 of the Local Plan.

Amenity of nearby occupants

- 6.6 The site is located within a wholly commercial area. As such, there would be limited potential for nuisance to nearby occupants from construction. The scheme would be therefore acceptable in terms of policy CC7.

Transport Matters

- 6.7 The proposal seeks to remove some on-site parking and increase provision of cycle storage. It would also amend the waste collection location. The scheme would not result in a shortfall of carparking in line with the Council’s adopted parking standards. It would also provide cycle parking for the site above the existing non-provision. The proposal would not result in any impacts upon highways safety and is considered acceptable in accordance with policy TR1, TR3, and TR5. Conditions are recommended to require a construction method statement, and provision of parking, bin storage, and cycle parking as proposed.

Other matters

Sustainability

- 6.8 The proposal is limited to external changes to the building only, and construction of a small ancillary ‘amenity hub’. As such, the refurbishment of an existing building to improve its appearance is considered to address policy CC2 and the Council’s climate change objectives. The minor nature of the new building (the ‘amenity hub’) would not warrant a BREEAM assessment and would be overly onerous and would not meet the relevant and reasonability tests of conditions.

CIL

- 6.9 CIL would apply to the proposals, subject to the usual reliefs or exemptions set out in the CIL Regulations. In this respect, although the proposed scheme would be CIL liable development, because industrial premises attract a zero CIL charge in the

Borough there would be no CIL payable for this scheme.

Equalities Impact

- 6.10 When determining this application, the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. 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. 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.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The recommendation is to grant subject to conditions.

Case Officer: Anthony Scholes