

Application No: 190125/FUL

Address: 8-9 Union Street

Proposal: Erection of part first and second floor rear extension to provide stair case access to provide two bedroom self contained flat at second floor.

Case Officer: Anthony Scholes

Site Description and Surrounding Area

The application site comprises a two storey building on Union Street, within an established commercial area. The site is within the defined Reading Central Area, the Central Core, the Office Core and the Primary Shopping Area. The space has been vacant since 05/05/15. The building currently benefits from approval for the change of use of the first floor from commercial to a 2-bed unit.

Proposal

The proposal is for a part first floor rear extension (to facilitate access), and erection of a new second storey floor to provide a 2-bed dwelling. The new second storey extension would be set back from the front elevation by approximately 1m behind a raised brick parapet.

Relevant Planning History

021216/FUL - Change of use to A2 - Permitted 30/07/02

151584/FUL - Change of use of first floor from office to residential, part first floor rear extension and erection of second floor to provide 3x1 bedroom flats - Refused 28/09/16

162171/FUL - Erection of additional storey to provide 2 bedroom flat. Erection of part first floor rear extension and change of use of first floor to 2 bedroom flat - Withdrawn 19/12/18

180573/CLP - Change of use of first floor from A2 to C3 - Withdrawn 11/06/18

181158/FUL - Change of use of first floor from office (Class B1) to 2 bedroom flat (Class C3) Approved 26/9/18

191304/APC - Discharge of condition 6 (CMS) of planning permission 181158/FUL Approved 8/10/19

Consultation Responses

Transport Development Control - No objection subject to conditions

Environmental Protection - No objection subject to conditions

Public Consultation - No comments have been received to date

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 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”.

For this Local Planning Authority the development plan is now in one document - the Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019), which fully replaces the Core Strategy, the Sites and Detailed Policies Document and the Reading Central Area Action Plan. The relevant policies are:

Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019)

- CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction
- CC3: Adaptation to Climate Change
- CC5: Waste Minimisation and Storage
- CC6: Accessibility and the Intensity of Development
- CC7: Design and the Public Realm
- CC8: Safeguarding Amenity
- CC9: Securing Infrastructure
- EN1: Protection and enhancement of the Historic Environment
- EN3: Enhancement of Conservation Areas
- EN6: New Development in a Historic Context
- EN15: Air Quality
- EN16: Pollution and Water Resources
- H1: Provision of Housing
- H2: Density and Mix
- H3: Affordable Housing
- H5: Standards for New Housing
- H10: Private and Communal Outdoor Space
- TR1: Achieving the Transport Strategy
- TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
- TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging
- CR2: Design in Central Reading
- CR6: Living in Central Reading

Relevant Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)

- Affordable Housing (2013)
- Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)
- Planning Obligations Under Section 106 (2015)
- Sustainable Design and Construction (2019)

Appraisal

The main issues to be considered are:

- a) Principle of development
- b) Design considerations

- c) Impact on residential amenity
- d) Sustainability
- e) Transport
- f) Affordable housing and CIL

a) Principle of development

The use of upper floors for residential purposes within the central area is supported by Policy CR6 (Living in Central Reading) of the Local Plan. It is recognised at both national and local level that the introduction of residential accommodation within centres serves to enhance the vitality and viability of those areas as well as being an important source of delivering affordable housing in sustainable locations. Section 118(e) of the NPPF (2019) states that *“planning policies and decision should ... support opportunities to use the airspace above existing residential and commercial premises for new homes. In particular, they should allow upward extensions where the development would be consistent with the prevailing height and form of neighbouring buildings”*. Additionally, Section 122 of the NPPF (2019) states that *“policies and decision should support development that makes efficient use of land ...”*. Finally, the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 sets a target of 15,847 homes in the period from 2013-2026.

In this instance, the proposed site is located within a row of buildings along Union Street which are distinctly 2-storey, although there is some variation in height. In the wider area (outside of Union Street), there is significant variations in height along Friar Street, Broad street, Queen Victoria Street and Cross Street. The addition of dwelling units within the Reading Town Centre would assist in meeting the Councils identified housing need.

Therefore, an upward extension to the airspace above the existing building to provide an additional dwelling is considered acceptable in principle, subject to detailed design considerations as outlined below.

b) Design Considerations

The Local Plan (2019) requires that a high quality of design be delivered that maintain and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. Policies CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) and CR2 (Design in Central Reading) are applicable.

The building is located within the historic centre of Reading and is located on a narrow street lined with small shops. The subject dwelling at current is slightly lower at the top of the parapet than the adjoining building (no.10 and no.6). The proposed works to extend upwardly would result in the subject building being taller than most buildings along Union Street. The narrowness of the street would mean that the views from ground level of the proposed upward extension would be limited. In addition, the proposed parapet wall, and the inclusion of a ~1m setback to the proposed front elevation at second floor will assist further in limiting the views of the proposed works. Therefore, the views of the development would be limited and the additional height would not materially affect the character and appearance of the area.

The façade, as proposed would include UPVC windows and hung slate tiles. Given the limited views from the public realm. It is considered that the materials are acceptable in this instance and full details are to be secured by condition.

c) Impact on residential amenity

Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) states that: *“Development will not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or unacceptable living*

conditions for new residential properties". Policy CR6 (Living in Central Reading) states that: "Proposals for new residential development within the central area will be required to demonstrate how the issue of potential noise disturbance from neighbouring land uses and other sources, and air quality implications of residential development, have been considered and if necessary, mitigated". In addition, Policy EN16 seeks to ensure development is not harmful in terms of pollution, and policy H5 (Standards for new housing) sets internal space standards, and requirements for sustainability improvements.

In this instance, the proposal includes a two-bed dwelling with a gross internal floor area of 48m². Policy H5 requires that a 2-bed 3-person unit meet the Nationally described space standards requirements of 61m². However, Policy H5 states that: *"it is considered that there is a distinction between what counts as adequate internal space within the centre of Reading and elsewhere. The expectations of those choosing to live in the centre of Reading, in terms of both internal and external space, as well as issues such as noise, tend to be different to those in other parts of the Borough. In addition, in central Reading, applying the space standard could have the effect of reducing the ability of the area to make its expected portion of the housing need" and "even where it does not apply, the nationally prescribed space standard offers a useful point of reference and a good basis for design of new developments".*

As such, a degree of flexibility in this regard can be exercised. The floor space proposed would be ~12m² short of the nationally described space standards in this instance. The proposed two-bedroom flat would however provide for a sufficient level of internal space commensurate of the town centre location. This includes two large bedrooms, and a reasonably sized kitchen/dining area. The square shape of the unit assists in this by making the proposed floor area useable in shape and does not result in awkward hallways etc.

A noise assessment has been submitted and appropriate mitigation be adhered to can be secured by conditions.

Each of the rooms in the proposed flat would benefit from an adequately sized window, with an appropriate level of daylighting and outlook achieved.

The proposal includes the provision of a first and second floor rear extension to provide for the internal staircase access the proposed second floor flat. The proposed extensions to the rear would be of a similar scale to that of the adjoining commercial premises. Additionally, due to the non-residential nature of the area, there are no windows on adjoining premises. The first floor dwelling (approved under ref: 181158) includes a rear facing bedroom window. The window is located a sufficient distance from the proposed extension to retain a sufficient level of outlook, and is located to maximise the distance at a 45° from the midpoint of the window. In terms of light levels, the existing window serves a west facing bedroom. As such, the light into the bedroom is limited by orientation and the existence of two storey buildings to the side. The proposed extension is not likely to significantly restrict light further in this instance, nor is it considered to significantly restrict the outlook from the bedroom.

The proposal would not have a harmful impact in terms of loss of privacy or overlooking, and there are no concerns with regard to other visual impacts.

The proposal is therefore in accordance with the identified policies.

d) Sustainability

Policy H5 of the Local Plan (2019) requires that all new build housing meet improved water efficiency and energy efficiency standards. Conditions will be attached to secure

these improvements over building regulations and will be administered through the building regulation process.

The Council's climate emergency declaration (2019) is linked with a number of policies within the Local Plan (2019). Specifically, policies CC2 and CC3 outline how new development should respond positively toward climate change. Policies EN12 requires biodiversity enhancements within a dense urban area, however reading has minimal opportunities for additional biodiversity gain (especially in the centre). These policies are supported by the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2019) which outlines how new development in this context could achieve where it includes the provision of a green/brown roof. The Council has worked with the developer in this instance, who has included a green roof within the proposal to meet the objectives of the above mentioned policies. As such, details of this will be secured by condition.

e) Transport

The previous planning approval for the change of use of the first floor (181148/FUL) required a specified waste pickup service. Being that waste from the dwelling would be presented to Friar Street on pickup days as there is no access for waste operators to Union Street. This is similar to other properties in Cross Street and Queen Victoria Street. Bicycle storage is provided in the lobby which is deemed acceptable by transport officers.

f) Affordable Housing and CIL

Policy H3 (Affordable Housing) requires all development, excluding replacement of a single dwelling or conversion of a dwelling into self-contained flats where there is no new floorspace, to contribute appropriately toward affordable housing provision elsewhere in the Borough. The additional 1-dwelling is required to contribute at a rate of 10% of the GDV, the applicant has submitted valuations by local estate agents and has agreed to a financial contribution of £11,250 which equates to 10% of the GDV (5% based on the amount a registered provider would pay for a dwelling). Subject to the completion of the legal agreement the development is considered to comply with the policy requirements in this regard.

The additional floor space, within the first and second floor rear extension, and the second storey is liable for CIL. A charge of £10,609 is applicable in this instance.

Conclusion

The proposed development has been assessed and been found to be acceptable as it complies with the identified policies and guidelines.

RECOMMENDATION

GRANT