

PLANNING, DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

**Change of use from 8 bed HMO to 4no.
2bed C3 flats, insertion of 3no.
rooflights**

**North House, 1 Brownlow Rd
Reading RG1 6NP**

On Behalf of: Rhombus Properties

Report Prepared By: Tiana Phillips-Maynard BPlan (Hons)

Emily Temple, BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

Contents

1. Introduction	2
2. Site Location and Description	2
3. Planning History	3
4. Development Proposals	3
5. Policy Assessment	4
6. Conclusion	11

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement is produced to support a planning application for change of use from an 8 bed HMO at North House to four flats.
- 1.2 This planning statement will cover the background to the application and provide the necessary information to enable its determination by officers at the Council. It will consider the proposal in light of relevant planning policies and other material considerations. The conclusion reached is that key material considerations and the wider objectives of National and Local planning policy support the grant of permission.
- 1.3 In addition to this planning statement, the application is accompanied by the appropriate planning application forms and ownership certificate, and the following documents prepared by CreateSpace Design:
- 8005a Site Location and Block Plans
 - 8001a Existing Floor Plans
 - 8002c Proposed Floor Plans
 - 8003 Existing elevation
 - 8004 Proposed elevation
- 1.4 The relevant application fee will be submitted by the applicant separately.

2. Site Location and Description

- 2.1 The site is located within the built up settlement of Reading, approximately 1.5km from the centre of Reading town, and falls within the Downshire Square Conservation Area. The site comprises North House, in current use as an 8 bedroom House in Multiple Occupation (HMO). A shared parking area with the adjacent building is located to the rear, accessed via a drive through archway.
- 2.2 North House is currently utilised as a large 8 bedroom HMO, as permitted under permission 141214. Prior to this, it was a C2 residential institution.

- 2.3 North House comprises four floors of accommodation including a lower ground floor and roof space. There is a rear terrace area. The building's appearance consists of traditional red facing brick with contrast stone cills and quoin detailing, part cream render, slate tiled roof and white uVPC windows.

3. Planning History

- 3.1 141214 - Change of use from residential institution (C2) to large House in Multiple Occupation (Sui Generis). Permitted 2015.
- 3.2 131455 – Change of use from residential institution (C2) to large House in Multiple Occupation (Sui Generis). Refused 2014.
- 3.3 920170 - Intensification of operation as residential institution by conversion of part of property to ancillary offices. Permitted 1992.

4. Development Proposals

- 4.1 Regarding the requirements of Circular 01/2006 in respect of Design and Access Statements, the proposal is described as follows:

Use and Amount

- 4.2 The proposed use is for 4 x C3 flats. This comprises 4 x 2 bed flats over four floors: being Lower ground, ground, first and second floor.
- 4.3 Internally, the accommodation has been laid out to maximise the internal space and light afforded.

Landscaping

- 4.4 Existing trees and landscaping are to be retained and protected. The change of use will not have an impact on existing landscaping.

Appearance

- 4.5 The external appearance remain largely the same. The proposal includes the insertion of three rooflights (to match existing rooflights), there are also minor fenestration alterations such as replacing a door with a window. The front storm porch is increased in size from existing slight, however the external wall remains.

Access and Parking

- 4.6 The proposal includes the use of 5 parking spaces which are already on site. 3 spaces are to the front and 2 spaces are to the rear. Access remains the same arrangement as existing. One space is allocated as a visitor space.
- 4.7 Internally, disabled access and circulation requirements are designed to achieve Building Regulations Part M standards, including entrance doors to be a minimum of 800mm, electrical fittings and service controls at suitable heights for disabled persons use, and all bathrooms and WC facilities designed for disabled access.

5. Policy Assessment

National Guidance

- 5.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is relevant to the consideration of the application. Some weight also needs to be given to the content of the Ministerial Statement, 'Planning for Growth', issued in March 2011.
- 5.2 The 'Golden Thread' running through the centre of guidance within the NPPF is the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 38 of the NPPF states that "*Local planning authorities should approach decision on proposed development in a positive and creative way*" and "*at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible*". Paragraph 117 of the NPPF comments that planning should "*make effective use of land*" in "*meeting the need for homes and other uses, whilst*

safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions”.

- 5.3 Paragraph 59 confirms the Government’s objective to boost the supply of housing, and paragraph 8 identifies the three objective of sustainable development, as economic, environmental and social.
- 5.4 Finally, paragraph 124 identifies that *“Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities”*, whilst paragraph 131 states that *“In determining applications, great weight should be given to outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings”*

Principle of Development

- 5.5 The site is located within a defined settlement where residential development is acceptable in principle subject to not impacting on the Conservation Area and complying with Local Plan Policy H8. The existing building is old and requires regular upgrades to maintain liveable standards. Unfortunately, the existing HMO use has not provided enough financial return to facilitate ongoing investment. The proposed change of use will therefore provide this benefit.
- 5.6 Local Policy H8 sets out the requirements for residential conversions which are assessed on impact on the amenity and character of the area, particularly in terms of intensification of activity, privacy, amenity space, parking and bins. Consideration is also given the Residential Conversions SPD (2013).
- 5.7 The criteria of Policy H8 is below:

- *The proposal respects the physical character of the area in terms of scale, location, materials and design, the arrangement of doors, windows and other principal architectural features;*
 - The change of use respects the physical character of the area as there is little external alteration to the building, save for rooflights.
- *The proposal would not, either individually or cumulatively, unduly dilute or harm an existing mixed and sustainable community through the significant loss of single family housing;*
 - The building to be changed is not a single family house.
- *There are no unacceptable adverse impacts to residents of the scheme or surrounding properties arising from noise and disturbance in terms of the number and layout of units proposed and the proximity to other properties;*
 - There is no adverse impacts to residents. Covered by 'Residential Amenity' section of this statement.
- *There is no inappropriate stacking and location of rooms between units;*
 - As far as is practicable, the bathrooms and kitchens are located above/below one another and the same for bedroom/living spaces.
- *Bin and cycle storage is of an appropriate size and standard for the units proposed and should be located at ground floor level with easy access; and,*
 - Provided. Covered in below section of this statement

- *The resulting property or properties would provide adequate internal floorspace and headroom for residents.*
 - Adequate internal floorspace provided. Covered in below section of this statement
- The proposal therefore complies with Policy H8 and is acceptable in principle.

Size and Mix of Dwellings

- 5.8 The proposal includes 4 x 2bed flats. Whilst the provision lacks a high mix, it is due to the conversion nature of the building and the existing internal floorspace and configurations which limit the options. For example, the floors are not big enough to accommodate 2 x 1 bed flats or 1 x 3 bed flats in accordance with national space standards. Therefore, the mix is considered acceptable in this regard.
- 5.9 The ground floor flat measures 71sqm internally; the lower ground flat measures 75sqm internally; the first floor flat measures 67sqm and the second floor flat measures 72sqm internally. These all meet the national minimum space standards for 2 bed flats, and thereby comply with National and Reading's space standards.

Character and Appearance of the Conservation Area

- 5.10 The site is located within the Downshire Square Conservation Area. The proposed conversion, by its nature, protects the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The external alterations include three new rooflights, which are designed to reflect the existing rooflights. The proposed rooflights would not have an adverse impact on the Conservation Area, resulting in less than substantial harm. In addition, the removal of the lower ground floor rear store rooms offers a gain to the appearance of the Conservation Area. The proposal therefore complies with Local Plan policies EN1 and EN3.

Listed Buildings

- 5.11 The site is not Listed. To the south are two Grade II Listed Buildings: All Saints Infant School and Playground, and Church of All Saints.
- 5.12 The proposed development is a change of use. The external alterations are negligible and largely comprise insertion of rooflights which would not affect the setting of the Listed Buildings. It is therefore considered the proposal conserves the setting of the Listed Buildings in accordance with Local Plan Policy EN1.

Residential Amenity

- 5.13 Whilst the specific use of the rooms will be altered from their current use, they will all still remain habitable rooms in a residential building. Therefore, the change of use from an HMO to independent C3 units will not cause any detrimental change to privacy or overlooking concerns for neighbouring properties, satisfying Policy CC7.
- 5.14 There is no additional communal space proposed, by way of the nature of the conversion. Policy H10 allows for flexibility in the provision of communal space for central Reading locations, which is applicable in this instance, and was accepted at Helena House adjacent. The building benefits from a rear terrace, which has steps access as well as access to the basement flat. This can be allocated to the lower ground floor unit.
- 5.15 Each flat benefits from at least dual-aspect, whilst the basement flat benefits from triple aspect, satisfying the Residential Conversion SPD checklist 11.
- 5.16 All of the bedrooms exceed minimum standards and the internal spaces also achieve the minimum national space standards.

Trees and Landscaping

- 5.17 There is no alteration to the existing landscaping scheme. The nature of the change of use ensures there will not impact be an impact on trees in the vicinity.

Transport and Parking

- 5.18 The access and parking arrangement remain as existing. 5 parking spaces are allocated to North House, with one as a visitor space. The site is located close to Reading town centre. The site is located on Brownlow Road which is identified as a cycle route to encourage alternative methods of transport. The Council's parking standards requires 1 space per 2 bed apartment in zone 2 areas, requiring four spaces. The development provides 4 spaces plus a visitor space. The proposal therefore accords with the council's parking standards.

Cycle provision

- 5.19 Cycle storage is provided as shown on submitted plan 8005a. The highway is a dedicated cycle route, providing opportunity to utilise this asset in accordance with Local Policy TR4.

Refuse Provision

- 5.20 The existing HMO refuse collection area will be utilised for the proposed flats, according with Local Plan Policy CC5 and H10. The provision is shown on the submitted 8005a plan.

Drainage

- 5.21 There is no change to the existing drainage arrangement.

Sustainability/Energy

5.22 The site is a sustainable location, being close to Reading Town centre and close to various public transport options. In addition, the adjacent highway is a Cycle Route which will encourage alternative methods of transport.

5.23 Paragraph 8 of the NPPF supports the transition of development to a low carbon future. Local Plan Policy CC2 supports sustainable design and construction. The national Code for Sustainable Homes has now been abolished, however it is proposed that the development would conform to Part L of the Building Regulations which as of 2010 requires a 25% reduction in carbon emissions over the 2006 standards. This is equivalent to Code Level 3 of the Code for Sustainable Homes. By way of contributing to the reduction in carbon, the proposal would also achieve current building construction standards with added sustainability measures through;

a) The limitation of the amount of inherent material, structure and embodied energy through the employment of good building standards to create an excellent SAP rating;

b) Use of locally sourced, recycled materials and labour where practicable

d) Reduced internal water consumption of 110 litres per person per day through the incorporation of water efficient sanitary fittings, including low flow toilets and water efficient taps for wash basins.

e) Refuse, recycling and composting facilities to be provided to work with the Council's existing waste and recycling collection service

f) Secure cycle provision to encourage sustainable modes of transport

g) 'A' rated electrical appliances and energy saving light fittings

h) 'A' rated double glazed windows with natural cross ventilation provision

j) Recycling of waste construction materials where practicable

The proposal is therefore considered to comply with sustainability objectives in this respect.

Affordable Housing

5.24 Policy H3 requires proposals of 1-4 dwellings to make a financial contribution equivalent to 10%. The Policy goes on to read in the last

paragraph that there are two exemptions, one which is the 'conversion of a dwelling to self-contained flats where there is no new floorspace'. The subject site accommodates a single planning unit dwelling, and converts the existing floorspace to flats with no new floorspace created. The glossary of the Local Plan defines dwelling as a 'single housing unit' which applies in this instance. This is supported by council tax applying it to the whole building as a single planning unit. The dwelling is therefore a single planning unit that is to be converted. Therefore, this exemption applies to this proposal and affordable housing provision is not required.

Community Infrastructure Levy

- 5.25 The proposal is liable for CIL. However, as there is no new floorspace, the liability is not chargeable for the proposal. The appropriate forms have been prepared and submitted.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 This statement has demonstrated that the proposed development is acceptable in principle and makes an efficient use of land.
- 6.2 Material planning considerations have been carefully considered and analysed, as evidenced in section 5 of this statement and the supporting plans and documents. It is considered the proposed development would contribute an appropriate windfall site to the Borough's housing supply, without adverse effect on the character of the conservation area or the amenity of neighbouring residents.
- 6.3 It is considered that the proposed scheme complies with relevant Development Plan Policies and is further supported by National Guidance. Therefore, it is respectfully requested that planning permission is granted.