

TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

FORMER WOODLEY ARMS PH, WALDECK STREET, READING

APPLICATION FOR PLANNING PERMISSION:

PROPOSED RE-DEVELOPMENT OF SITE WITH 38 UNITS OF CO-LIVING ACCOMMODATION

PLANNING STATEMENT

AUGUST 2019



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Planning Statement supports an outline application for planning permission by Lainston Woodley Arms LLP for the demolition of the former Woodley Arms Public House at Waldeck Street, Reading, and re-development of the site with 38 units of Co-Living accommodation. The submission of the application follows the receipt of a planning appeal decision, dated 10th October 2018 (Ref: APP/E0345/W/18/3199152) that allowed the development of two buildings to accommodate 38 units of student accommodation. This new application is very similar in terms of its physical appearance, but the Co-Living form of development will not limit the occupation to students. A more detailed description of Co-Living is given later in this statement.

1.2 In addition to this Planning Statement, the application submission includes the following drawings and documents:

- Application Form and Legal Notice.
- Drawing 379/01 Location Plan.
- Drawing 379/02 Site Plan.
- Drawing 379/03 Block 1 Ground Floor Plan.
- Drawing 379/04 Block 1 First Floor & Roof Accommodation Plan.
- Drawing 379/05 Block 2 Ground Floor Plan.
- Drawing 379/06 Block 2 First Floor & Roof Accommodation Plan.
- Drawing 379/07a Block 1 North & West Elevations.
- Drawing 379/08a Block 1 South & East Elevations.
- Drawing 379/09a Block 2 North & West Elevations.
- Drawing 379/10a Block 2 South & East Elevations.
- Drawing 379/11 Roof Plans.
- Drawing 379/12 Existing Street Scenes
- Drawing 379/13 Proposed Street Scenes
- Drawing 379/14 Sections

- Air Quality Statement.
- Ecological Statement.
- Environmental Check.
- Sustainability & Energy Statement.
- Transport Statement.

1.3 SITE LOCATION & DESCRIPTION

1.4 The site extends to 0.09 hectares (ha) in size and currently accommodates a former public house, associated upper floor manager's accommodation, and car parking. The public house use ceased approximately six years ago. In the main the building is two storeys high, with a pitched, tiled roof. There are a number of single storey flat roofed extensions to the front of the property, to the side, and to the rear. The elevations are brick, with tile hung gable ends below the roof. The elevations are brick, with tile hung gable ends below the roof.

1.5 The application site is located on the corner of Waldeck Street (to the north) and Charndon Close (to the west). To the east and south is a vehicular access way and garage courtyards. Waldeck Street is largely made up of older style two storey properties. The surrounding residential development to the rear mainly consists of four storey flats and 1970's style housing. The following photographs show the site and surrounding area.



1. The site viewed from the corner of Waldeck Street and Charndon Close.



2. Vehicular access way with the former public house to the right.



3 & 4. The car park to the rear. This also shows the back view of some of the houses in Waldeck Street, including the closest property with the large dormer windows in the roof.



5. Waldeck Street, to the west of the site.

- 1.6 Waldeck Street is a cul-de-sac. To the east it connects with the A33 Southampton Street. Central Reading is approximately 1.5 kilometres (km) to the north.

2.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 2.1 The application proposes the development of 38 units of co-living accommodation in two separate buildings, each containing self-contained studio apartments. Block 1, fronting Waldeck Street, has 18 units. A further 20 are contained within Block 2; to the rear. Each block also contains a separate ground floor communal lounge.

- 2.2 Externally the two blocks are separated by a parking area designed to accommodate 10 cars. This level of parking is provided to meet the standards required by the Highway Authority, with Co-Living being comparable to a house in multiple occupation. The site will also accommodate a secure cycle store, refuse store, and communal amenity space. Landscaping will enhance the setting of the buildings, as shown on the detailed landscaping plan.

- 2.3 The elevations show both buildings to be two storeys high, with accommodation within traditional pitched roofs. The materials comprise a combination of brick and render for the walls, each with a tiled roof. Design details include the use of gabled ends, dormer windows, header course brickwork, lintels above windows, and boundary walls with railings above. The overall appearance is of domestic scale buildings, and constructed of traditional materials.

3.0 CO-LIVING

- 3.1 In its modern form, Co-Living is a relatively new concept. Schemes have been developed in major cities - principally London - where housing shortages, inflated prices, and substantial earning to property price ratios mean that owning a house or flat is not possible for very many people. For individuals that need good quality housing, but cannot afford purchase or even rent conventional flats or shared houses,

Co-Living offers the opportunity to live more densely and sustainably. Shared living also has the potential to improve social well-being through avoiding individual isolation.

- 3.2 Co-Living can take a number of forms, such as supported living/extra care, co-operatives/community land trusts, or live/work. A variety of different Co-Living developments across England can be viewed using the following web-links:

<https://www.thecollective.com/locations/old-oak>

<https://www.lilac.coop/>

<http://www.therightplace.net/coco/public/>

<http://www.thresholdcentre.org.uk/>

<https://copperlanecohousing.wordpress.com/>

<https://www.thecollective.com/locations/canary-wharf>

- 3.3 It can be seen that there are a variety of models for Co-Living. Whilst most schemes are urban, some are also in rural environments. Periods of tenure can vary, as can the range of facilities.
- 3.4 The success of Co-Living is that it provides good quality accommodation in areas where the average property price to earnings ratio is so high that purchasing or renting 'conventional' accommodation is not achievable. In Reading the affordability ratio is 8.54; i.e. an individual or a couple require a multiple of over eight and a half times their earnings to purchase an average property. Historically, three times earnings was the accepted norm.
- 3.5 It is for this reason that Reading is considered appropriate for the development of Co-Living accommodation. Taking into account its central and very sustainable

location, the application site offers the potential for the city's first purpose built scheme.

4.0 PLANNING POLICY ASSESSMENT

4.1 In accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, applications for planning permission are required to be determined in accordance with the provisions of the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this instance the relevant Development Plan documents comprise the Reading Borough Core Strategy, 2008 and the Reading Sites and Detailed Policies Document, 2012.

4.2 CORE STRATEGY

4.3 It is considered that the following policies apply:

CS1	Sustainable Construction & Design
CS2	Waste Minimisation
CS3	Social Inclusion and Diversity
CS4	Accessibility and the Intensity of Development
CS7	Design and the Public Realm
CS9	Infrastructure, Services, Resources and Amenities
CS14	Provision of Housing
CS15	Location, Accessibility, Density and Housing Mix
CS24	Car / Cycle Parking
CS34	Pollution and Water Resources
CS36	Biodiversity and Geology

4.4 The following commentary sets out how the proposed development responds to the key policy issues.

- 4.5 *CS1 & CS2* - the separate Sustainability and Energy Statement responds in detail to these policies. In particular it highlights the achievement of reducing CO2 emission levels to 51.7% over the Building Regulations Part L 2013 requirements.
- 4.6 *CS3* - amongst its criteria, this policy seeks to enhance social inclusion in terms of access to housing, which should be appropriately planned and located close to a range of accessible facilities. In this respect it has been noted earlier in this statement that central Reading is only 1.5 km to the north. It is easily accessible by foot or bicycle.
- 4.7 In addition, the provision of purpose built Co - Living accommodation helps to fulfil an identified need that exists in the town. The 2016 Strategic Housing Market Assessment identified a need to construct 2,855 homes in the West Berkshire Housing Market Area to 2036. Reading's share of this need is 699 per annum. Meeting this target involves a heavy reliance on previously developed land - such as the application site.
- 4.8 *CS4* - this policy requires the scale and density of development to be related to its level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport. The Transport Statement that accompanies the application highlights the suitability of the site in terms of its proximity to local facilities, together with the availability of pedestrian and cycle networks. Reading Town Centre offers a range of services primarily located along Broad Street and the adjacent side streets. The Transport Statement also assesses the time taken, in terms of walking and cycling, to access local amenities. It is therefore considered that the development is acceptable from a sustainable transport perspective.
- 4.9 *CS7* - this is a detailed design policy. It has five key components to ensure that the character and appearance of a proposed development is of a high quality; these being:
- Layout
 - Landscape

- Density & Mix
- Scale, Height & Massing
- Architectural Detail and Materials

4.10 The submitted plans and elevations all positively address each of these components. The layout has evolved through the historic application process, and shows two buildings that are modest in terms of not only the layout, but also the scale, height and massing. The street scene drawings demonstrate that the development fits in well with the neighbouring properties. The architectural details, described in Paragraph 2.3 of this statement, add interest and variety in the townscape.

4.11 CS9 - this policy seeks to minimise the impact of development on infrastructure and services. In this respect the submitted Transport Statement confirms that the development will have a minimal impact on the operation of the local road network, and that safe and suitable access can be achieved.

4.12 CS14 - this policy sets out the overall growth target for housing. In the period 2016 - 2026 this is set at 521 per annum, of which the proposed development will make a small contribution.

4.13 CS15 - Policy CS15 is aimed at obtaining an appropriate density and mix of residential accommodation, including housing types, sizes and tenures - in accordance with the findings of a housing market assessment. In this respect the Berkshire (Including South Bucks) Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) of February 2016 identifies a need for 1,066 one bedroom open market dwellings and 1,490 one bedroom affordable dwellings to be developed in Reading by 2036. These respectively represent 10.3% and 43.4% of the total dwelling needs. The proposed development will contribute to these targets.

4.14 CS24 - car and cycle parking, as required through this policy and the accompanying Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), is provided on site to the appropriate standards.

4.15 CS34 - pollution and water resources are the issues covered by this policy. On these issues the Environmental Report and Sustainability & Energy Statement that accompany the application demonstrate that the site can be re-developed without causing pollution, as well as minimising impact on water and other natural resources.

4.16 CS36 - this is the final key Core Strategy policy that is considered to be of relevance. However, historic surveys have confirmed that the development will not have an adverse impact on matters of geological interest, including protected species and their habitats.

4.17 Overall it is considered that the proposed development can be carried out in accordance with the policies of the adopted Core Strategy.

4.18 SITES & DETAILED POLICIES DOCUMENT

4.19 It is considered that the following policies apply:

DM1	Adaption to Climate Change
DM3	Infrastructure
DM4	Safeguarding Amenity
DM5	Housing Mix
DM10	Private & Communal Outdoor Space
DM12	Access, Traffic & Highway Related Matters
DM15	Protection of Leisure Facilities & Public Houses

4.20 The following commentary provides a response to these further key policy issues.

4.21 DM1 - in addition to the Sustainability and Energy Statement, the application plans include detailed matters that address future climate change, including the sustainable urban drainage system and detailed landscaping proposals.

- 4.22 *DM3* - on the issue of infrastructure planning, the comments here replicate those set out earlier in respect of Policy CS9 - with particular regard to sustainable travel
- 4.23 *DM4* - this policy safeguards the amenity and living environment of existing residents. By virtue of being surrounded by roads, vehicular access ways and garages, the impacts in terms of privacy, overlooking, sunlight, daylight etc. are considered entirely acceptable. All of the stated policy criteria can be met.
- 4.24 *DM10* - the proposed development contains sufficient outdoor amenity space for the functional needs of the proposed occupiers.
- 4.25 *DM12* - as with Policy CS24, car and cycle parking has been designed to meet the required standard as set out in the appropriate SPD.
- 4.26 *DM15* - this is a policy that seeks to resist the loss of leisure facilities and public houses. In this respect the Local Planning Authority has already confirmed that the loss of the former public house has been regarded as acceptable. This opinion takes into account the historic planning permissions for the conversion of the building into flatted accommodation and the student accommodation development, as well as previous refusals of consent that have not been based on this policy.
- 4.27 The application is considered to comply with the adopted Sites and Detailed Policies Document.

5.0 OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 EMERGING PLANNING POLICY

- 5.2 In May 2017 Reading Borough Council commenced public consultation on a new Draft Local Plan. Although it holds less weight in the decision making process when compared to the adopted local plans, the emerging policies set out a clear

intention of how the Council wishes to see the borough develop in the longer term; in this case to 2036. Following an Examination in Public into the Submitted Local Plan, consultation is taking place on Main Modifications. When adopted it will replace all of the existing development plans, including the Core Strategy and the Sites and Detailed Policies Document. Adoption of the new local Plan is anticipated later this year.

- 5.3 It is considered important to note that the application site is now the subject of a specific policy - ER1a. This forms one of a number of sites allocated for development in East Reading, and states as follows:

“ER1: SITES FOR DEVELOPMENT IN EAST READING

The following sites will be developed according to the principles set out in this policy:

ER1a THE WOODLEY ARMS PH, WALDECK STREET

Development for residential, with potential for student accommodation.

Development should:

- *Take account of the prevailing two-storey height of surrounding buildings;*
- *Address air quality impacts on residential use; and*
- *Address any contamination on site.*

Site size: 0.09ha 26-38 student studio bedspaces, or equivalent amount of residential”

- 5.4 The supporting text that follows this policy confirms that the intention is to identify sites to contribute to meeting identified needs and help to provide the physical regeneration of sites that in some cases are vacant or underused. It is considered that this emerging policy is very supportive of the application proposals, being residential at the equivalent number to student accommodation.

5.5 THE NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK (NPPF) FEBRUARY 2019

5.6 The NPPF sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development, including the need to approve proposals that accord with the Development Plan without delay. One of the main objectives is to significantly boost the supply of housing. This includes meeting the full, objectively assessed need for market and affordable housing. As set out earlier through reference to the SHMA, this includes the need for additional small scale accommodation.

5.7 Paragraph 61 of the NPPF sets out more detail, advising of the need to deliver a wide choice of homes, create inclusive and mixed communities, and plan for a mix of housing based on future demographic trends - and the needs of different groups in the community. The development of the application site will help to deliver low cost, open market accommodation, for which there is an identified future need.

5.8 SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENTS (SPD)

5.9 There are considered to be three SPD's of relevance to this planning application:

- Parking Standards & Design, 2011
- Sustainable Design & Construction, 2011
- Affordable Housing, 2013

5.10 In respect of car parking, it is considered that standard for co-living accommodation is akin to that for houses in multiple occupation (HMO). As such, 10 spaces are provided for 38 rooms; approximately 0.25 spaces per room.

5.11 The Sustainability and Energy Statement specifically deals with the matters set out in the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD.

5.12 In respect of affordable housing, the application is submitted on the basis that the Co-Living provides low cost open market housing to local people in need of

this type of accommodation. It is acknowledged that this is a differing definition from conventional affordable housing. It does however reflect this emerging form of dwelling type.

5.13 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LAVY (CIL)

5.14 CIL will be applicable in accordance with the Charging Schedule of January 2015.

5.15 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

5.16 *Appearance and impact on the character of the area:* as with the 2018 permission, the building remains at 2.5 storeys, with the third level of accommodation being set wholly within the roof spaces. The overall height therefore remains as it was. When viewed from Waldeck Street, the height is slightly below that of the nearby building to the right, and slightly above that to the west. It is the topography of Waldeck Street at this point that results in the small variation to the roof line.

5.17 In terms of its relationship to the street, Block 1 is slightly set back when compared to the properties to the west. This allows for the introduction of landscaping behind a low level wall with railings.

5.18 As previously described, as the development is in two separate buildings its overall visual impact, when viewed diagonally from Waldeck Street, is modest. The overall appearance is of a development that is domestic in scale.

5.19 *Amenity of future occupiers* - the windows to the bedrooms and communal areas all have an aspect on to grassed areas, with some also having a view of the central courtyard area. All rooms will benefit from good natural daylight, whilst retaining privacy. Each block has its own communal lounge to encourage social interaction between future residents.

- 5.20 *Neighbouring amenity* - the proposed buildings have sufficient separation distances between themselves, and all other dwellings in the locality, so as to avoid any over-looking or loss of privacy to neighbouring properties.
- 5.21 *Landscaping* - Drawing 2031/2B contains detailed landscaping proposals, including a schedule of species for the soft landscaping, as well as details for the paved areas.
- 5.22 *Contaminated land* - although the site is situated on an area of historic brick manufacture, the Sitecheck Contamination Report confirms that it is not designated as contaminated under the definition of Part IIA of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.
- 5.23 *Air quality* - an Air Quality Assessment Report confirms that appropriate mitigation would be sufficient to maintain air quality at the construction stage; controlled through site planning activities.
- 5.24 *Drainage* - the use of SUDS is a positive benefit by increasing the permeable area of the site and thereby reducing the potential for surface water run-off.
- 5.25 It is therefore considered that there are no adverse material considerations to prohibit planning permission being forthcoming.

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The submission of this planning application follows a 2018 consent for the development of 38 units of student accommodation; albeit a form of development that was opposed by local residents. In most respects this new application is very similar, with the accommodation will now comprise co-living accommodation. This is a form of development that is becoming increasingly common in major towns and cities.

- 6.2 In submitting a revised proposal it is necessary to test the application against planning policies and other material considerations. It is submitted that all key policy tests are met, and that there are no adverse material planning considerations to prohibit planning permission being granted. Indeed, the new emerging local plan now contains a site specific policy that supports the proposed development.
- 6.3 The application can therefore be commended for approval, subject to appropriate conditions of planning permission.