
Planning Statement

54-58 Queens Road, Reading



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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This planning statement has been prepared by Savills and is submitted on behalf of Pinemace Ltd in support of a planning application for an extension to the existing building at 54-58 Queens Road, Reading (hereon in referred to as 'the site'). The proposed development incorporates an extension to the existing building and alterations to the roof to provide 9 flats, alterations to existing parking and access arrangements and minor alterations to existing building.
- 1.2. The site is currently occupied by office buildings with associated parking. The existing office buildings were the subject of a prior approval application for a change of use to 4 x 2 bedroom and 16 x 1 bedroom flats under application reference 180982. Reading Borough Council ('the Council') gave prior approval for the change of use on the 31st July 2018. For the avoidance of doubt internal alterations associated with the conversion of the existing building to residential accommodation approved under application 180982 are shown hatched on the proposed floor plans.
- 1.3. This planning statement should be read in conjunction with the submitted plans and following reports:
- The following plans prepared by the Harris Partnership:
 - 15261-100 – Site Location Plan
 - 15261-101 – Existing Block Plan
 - 15261-102 – Existing Site Plan
 - 15261-103 – Existing Ground Floor and First Floor Plan
 - 15261-104 – Existing Second Floor and Attic Plan
 - 15261-105 – Existing Roof Plan
 - 15261-106 – Existing Elevations
 - 15261-110A – Proposed Block Plan
 - 15261-111A – Proposed Site Plan
 - 15261-112 – Proposed Ground Floor Plan
 - 15261-113 – Proposed First Floor Plan
 - 15261-114 – Proposed Second Floor Plan
 - 15261-115 – Proposed Third Floor Plan
 - 15261-116 – Proposed Roof Plan
 - 15261-117 – Proposed Elevations 1 of 2
 - 15261-118A – Proposed Elevations 2 of 2
 - 15261-119 – Sidmouth St Wall
 - Air Quality Assessment prepared by Redmore Environmental
 - Contamination Report prepared by Geosmart
 - Design and Access Statement prepared by the Harris Partnership
 - Ecological Assessment prepared by Professor Mark Whittingham
 - Landscape Proposals prepared by Vector Design Concepts
 - Noise Assessment prepared by Spectrum Acoustic Consultants
 - Transport Note prepared by Systra
 - Tree Survey prepared by Barrell Tree Consultancy

2. Background to the proposals

- 2.1. Following the granting of prior approval for the change of use of the existing building to residential flats, proposals have been developed to extend the existing building to provide additional residential accommodation. The proposals make effective use of the existing car parking area to the south of the existing buildings and the roofspace of the existing building and proposed extension to provide additional residential accommodation with amenity space for residents.
- 2.2. Initial proposals for a rear extension together with a two storey extension above the existing building were submitted to 'the Council' for pre-application advice. Following feedback from the Council revised proposals were subsequently submitted for pre-application advice reducing the extent of the additional residential development. The reduced proposals incorporated 9 flats across a rear extension and within the built envelope of the roofspace of the existing building and proposed extension. A pre-application meeting was held with the Council on the 19th June 2019 to discuss the revised proposals. The detailed scheme has been finalised following the receipt of pre-application advice on 5th August 2019 and is now being formally submitted for approval.

3. The Site and Surrounding Area

- 3.1. The site measures just under 0.2 hectares in area and is located in central Reading on the junction of Queens Road and Sidmouth Street. The site is bounded to the south by Trinity Hall, South Street, a three storey brick building containing 24 bedspaces of student accommodation. Trinity Hall was the subject of an application (ref. 151356) for redevelopment to provide a part 3 and part 4 storey building providing 42 student bedspaces. The application was approved on the 3rd December 2015, although it has not been implemented and consent has since expired.
- 3.2. To the west of the site lies 52 Queens Road. This is part of a stone clad Georgian crescent of terraced properties known as Queens Crescent which are Grade II listed. The listed terrace contains a mixture of office and residential uses with a number of the properties, including 52 Queens Road, having recently been converted back into residential use. To the west of the car park serving the site lies Livery Close off which there are a number of areas for parking serving properties on Queens Road and South Street. 43-49 South Street to the southwest of the site is a terrace of properties which are Grade II listed.
- 3.3. To the north the site is bounded by Queens Road with residential development lying beyond in the form of four storey flats at Kings Oak Court. To the east of the site on the opposite side of Sidmouth Street lies a three storey brick built building occupied by the University College of Estate Management (the UCEM) with the Deenway Montessori School, a Grade II listed building, located immediately to the south of the UCEM.

4. Proposed Development

4.1. The proposed development can be described as:

“Extension to existing building and alterations to the roof to provide 9 flats, alterations to existing parking and access arrangements and minor alterations to existing building.”

4.2. In addition to seeking consent for the extension and alterations to the roofspace to provide nine residential units, the application also includes minor alterations to the existing building including:

- Replacement of two doors on the northern elevation with windows;
- Replacement of an existing door with a window and provision of a new door in the western elevation;
- Infill of existing opening, removal of gate and provision of new window and door in the south elevation of number 56 and the west elevation of number 58.

4.3. Given the location and appearance of the proposed changes to the existing building it is not considered that they would materially affect the external appearance of the building and as such would not constitute development as defined under Section 55 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. However, for completeness they have been included in the application.

5. Planning Policy Framework

5.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that planning applications should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

5.2. In this instance, the Development Plan for the Site comprises:

- Reading Borough Core Strategy (Adopted 2008 and Altered January 2015);
- Reading Central Area Action Plan (Adopted 2009); and
- Reading Borough Sites and Detailed Policies Document (Adopted 2012 and Altered January 2015).

Reading Borough Core Strategy (Adopted 2008 and Altered January 2015)

5.3. Policy CS1 'Sustainable Construction and Design' states that proposals for new development, including the construction of new buildings and the redevelopment and refurbishment of existing building stock, will be acceptable where the design of buildings and site layouts use energy, water, minerals, materials and other natural resources appropriately, efficiently and with care and take account of the effects of climate change. The policy also states that proposals should reduce mains water use and demonstrate that water conservation measures as well as sustainable urban drainage facilities and techniques are incorporated.

5.4. Policy CS2 'Waste Minimisation' seeks the minimisation of waste generated in construction, use and lifespan of buildings, whilst promoting more sustainable approaches to waste management.

5.5. Policy CS4 'Accessibility and the Intensity of Development' states that the scale and density of development should be related to its level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport modes to a range of services and facilities.

5.6. Policy CS5 'Inclusive Access' aims to ensure that all buildings are located, sited and designed to provide suitable access for all potential users, including disabled people.

5.7. Policy CS6 'Settlement Boundary' supports development that falls within the limits of the defined Settlement Boundaries.

5.8. Policy CS7 'Design and the Public Realm' states that development must be of a high design quality, maintain and enhance the local character as well as having regard to a number of urban design principles and objectives. The policy continues that all major and minor developments should be accompanied by a Design and Access Statement.

- 5.9. Policy CS9 'Infrastructure, Services, Resources and Amenities' states that proposals for development will not be permitted unless the local planning authority is satisfied that infrastructure, services, resources, amenities or other assets lost or impacted upon as a result of the development or made necessary by the development will be provided or re-provided at the appropriate time.
- 5.10. Policy CS14 'Provision of Housing' sets out that provision will be made for the completion of an average of at least 521 dwellings per annum in the period 2016-2026. It is noted that the latest 5yr housing land supply figures indicate an annual requirement for 677 dwellings per annum. The policy sets out that the need will be met through site allocations and development coming forward on large and small previously developed windfall sites.
- 5.11. Policy CS15 'Location, Accessibility, Density and Housing Mix' states that the appropriate density and mix of residential development within the Borough will be informed by the mix of uses in the area, the site's current and future levels of accessibility, the need to achieve high quality design and the need to minimise environmental impacts. The policy continues that developments should provide an appropriate mix of housing types, sizes and tenures, in accordance with the findings of a housing market assessment. The mix of dwellings should include an appropriate proportion of units designed to the Lifetime Homes Standards.
- 5.12. Policy CS16 'Affordable Housing' states that "all developments of 15 dwellings and above will provide 30% of the total number of dwellings in the form of affordable housing to meet the needs of the area, as defined in a housing needs assessment". The policy goes on to add that the Council will seek an appropriate tenure mix of affordable housing to include social rented, affordable rent, intermediate rent and shared ownership affordable units. Furthermore, the affordable units provided should be integrated into the development.
- 5.13. Policy CS22 'Transport Assessments' states that applications should be accompanied by a Transport Assessment, to demonstrate an adequate level of accessibility and safety by all modes of transport from all parts of a development, particularly by public transport, walking and cycling.
- 5.14. Policy CS24 'Car / Cycle Parking' states that applications should be consistent with the standards set out within the Revised Car Parking Standards and Design Supplementary Planning Document.
- 5.15. Policy CS29 'Provision of Open Space' seeks to ensure all new developments should "make provision for the open space needs of the development through appropriate on or off-site provision, or through contributions towards the provision or improvement of leisure or recreational facilities, including open space. New provision will be sought on residential sites of 50 or more units."
- 5.16. Policy CS30 'Access to Open Space' states that in areas with relatively poor access to open space facilities, new development should contribute towards improving access to green space and facilities.
- 5.17. Policy CS33 'Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment' states that planning permission will only be granted "where development has no adverse impact on historic assets and their settings."

- 5.18. Policy CS34 'Pollution and Water Resources' seeks to permit development only where "it would not be damaging to the environment through air, land, noise or light pollution; where it would preserve or ideally enhance ground and surface water quality; and where existing water resources, sewerage and wastewater treatment infrastructure are adequate to support the proposed development."
- 5.19. Policy CS36 'Biodiversity and Geology' serves to ensure development retains, protects and incorporates any features of biodiversity or geological interest found within the application site.
- 5.20. Policy CS38 'Trees, Hedges and Woodlands' states that individual trees, groups of trees and woodlands should be protected from damage and removal.

Reading Central Area Action Plan (Adopted 2009)

- 5.21. The Site lies within the Reading Central Area Action Plan (RCAAP) boundary. The following policies within the RCAAP are considered to be of relevance to the proposed development.
- 5.22. Policy RC5 'Design in the Centre' details attributes that should be demonstrated in the design of development proposals within the Reading central area.
- 5.23. Policy RC9 'Living in the Centre' sets out criteria that proposals for residential development will be assessed against. These include contributing to a mix of different sized units, how potential noise and air quality issues have been considered and if necessary mitigated and how adverse impacts on community facilities will be mitigated.

Sites and Detailed Policies Document (Adopted 2012 and Altered January 2015)

- 5.24. Policy SD1 'Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development' confirms that a positive approach to considering development proposals will be taken that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. Where appropriate, the Council will work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area.
- 5.25. Policy DM1 'Adaptation to Climate Change' requires proposals to demonstrate how they have been designed to maximise resistance and resilience to climate change, use trees and other planting to provide shading and minimise the impact of surface water runoff in the design of the drainage system.
- 5.26. Policy DM3 'Infrastructure Planning' states that development proposals will make appropriate provision for infrastructure, services, resources and amenities through planning obligations and/or the Community Infrastructure Levy.
- 5.27. Policy DM4 'Safeguarding Amenity' seeks to prevent developments from causing significant detrimental impacts to the living environment and amenity of existing or new residential properties.

- 5.28. Policy DM10 'Private and Communal Outdoor Space' states that outdoor space for flats may be provided by communal outdoor space, balconies and/or roof gardens. The supporting text to the policy highlights that flats in central Reading will not require the same amount of open space as houses in other parts of Reading and that flats in central Reading are less likely to attract families and the ability to walk to public open space nearby reduces the need for private open space.
- 5.29. Policy DM12 'Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters' considers the impact of new or altered accesses, improvement works to the transport network, the creation of new transport infrastructure or the generation of additional trips on the transport network.
- 5.30. Policy DM18 'Tree Planting' requires new development to make provision for tree planting within the application site, or off-site in appropriate situations.
- 5.31. Policy DM19 'Air Quality' requires development to have regard to the need to improve air quality. Where a development would introduce residential development within an Air Quality Management Area, any detrimental effects on that use should be mitigated.

6. Material Considerations

6.1. This Section identifies material considerations of relevance to this planning application, these being:

- National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF') published in February 2019 and National Planning Policy Guidance ('PPG');
- The Emerging Reading Borough Local Plan;
- Reading Borough Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule (January 2015);
- A number of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), namely the Revised Car Parking Standards and Design SPD, Sustainable Design and Construction SPD, Affordable Housing SPD and Planning Obligations under Section 106 SPD; and
- Draft Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document

National Planning Policy Framework (2019) and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

6.2. The Government's objective to boost significantly housing growth has come forward within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in February 2019. The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. The NPPF is a material consideration in planning decisions.

6.3. The PPG is a web-based resource which provides a consolidated and accessible version of up to date guidance which adds further context to the Framework. It is intended that the two documents should be read together.

6.4. Key sections of the NPPF and PPG relevant to this proposal are identified below.

Sustainable Development

6.5. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development with Paragraph 11 stating that for decision-taking the application of a presumption in favour of sustainable development means:

- Approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or
- Where there are no relevant development plan policies or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:
 - The application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or
 - Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework as a whole.

Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes

- 6.6. Paragraph 59 of the NPPF goes on to state that to support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay.
- 6.7. Paragraph 63 of the NPPF states that the provision of affordable housing should not be sought for residential developments that are not major developments, other than in designated rural areas. Such developments are defined as development where 10 or more homes will be provided or the site has an area of 0.5 hectares or more.

Promote sustainable transport

- 6.8. Section 9 of the NPPF relates to promoting sustainable transport with Paragraph 103 stating that significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. This can help to reduce congestion and emissions, and improve air quality and public health.
- 6.9. Paragraph 108 states that in assessing specific applications for development, it should be ensured that:
- Appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes can be, or have been taken up, given the type of development and its location;
 - Safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users; and
 - Any significant impacts from the development on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion), or on highway safety, can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree.

Effective Use of Land

- 6.10. Paragraph 117 of the NPPF states that planning policies and 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. Strategic policies should set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously developed or 'brownfield' land.
- 6.11. Paragraph 121 of the NPPF states that local planning authorities should also take a positive approach to applications for alternative uses of land which is currently developed but not allocated for a specific purpose in plans, where this would help to meet identified development needs. In particular, they should support proposals to use retail and employment land for homes in areas of high housing demand, provided this would not undermine key economic sectors or sites or the vitality and viability of town centres, and would be compatible with other policies in this Framework.

Emerging Reading Borough Local Plan

- 6.12. The submission version of the new Reading Borough Local Plan (the new Local Plan) was submitted to the Secretary of State in March 2018 and has recently gone through examination with a further consultation held on proposed 'Main Modifications' in June/July 2019. The new Local Plan is expected to be adopted in November 2019 and upon adoption the policies within the new Local Plan will replace the policies of the Reading Development Plan set out above.
- 6.13. Policy H1 of the new Local Plan relates to the provision of housing stating that provision will be made for at least an additional 15,433 homes (averaging 671 per year) for the period from 2013 to 2036. The policy also sets out that the Council will continue to work with neighbouring authorities within the Western Berkshire Housing Market Area to ensure that the shortfall of 644 dwellings that cannot be provided within Reading will be met over the plan period.
- 6.14. Policy H2 of the new Local Plan relates to the density and mix of housing and provides indicative density ranges of over 100 dwellings per hectare in the Town Centre and 60-120 dwellings per hectare in the urban area. Policy CR6 as set out in the submission version of the new Local Plan replicates the requirements of policy RC9 of the RCAAP in relation to residential development within the Reading central area.
- 6.15. Within the Main Modifications consultation in June/July 2019 it was proposed that Policy H3 in relation to affordable housing should be revised to state that residential development will make appropriate contribution towards affordable housing to meet the needs of Reading. The proposed policy states that on sites of 5 to 9 dwellings, a financial contribution will be made that will enable the equivalent of 20% of the housing to be provided as affordable housing elsewhere in the Borough.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule (January 2015)

- 6.16. The CIL Charging Schedule was approved in January 2015 and took effect from 1st April 2015. This introduced a Borough wide charge of £120 per square metre for residential development subject to indexation.

Planning Obligations under Section 106 SPD

- 6.17. The Planning Obligations under Section 106 SPD sets out the Council's approach towards seeking planning obligations, alongside the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule. The SPD, at paragraph 4.2, confirms that the Section 106 will continue to operate alongside CIL and will be collected for affordable housing provision, which is outside the remit of CIL, and for site related infrastructure requirements. The SPD explains that "*each Section 106 obligation must meet the relevant CIL regulation legal tests...*"

Revised Car Parking Standards and Design SPD (Adopted October 2011)

- 6.18. For proposals within 'Zone 2 – Primary Core Area' the SPD requires 1 space to be provided per 1 & 2 bedroom flat and 1.5 spaces for 3 bedroom flats. The standards also state that 1 visitor space should be provided per 10 flats. For proposals within 'Zone 1 – Central Core Area' the SPD requires 0.5 spaces to be provided per 1 & 2 bedroom flat and 1 space for 3 bedroom flats with no requirement for visitor parking. Cycling parking provision standards are 0.5 spaces for 1 & 2 bedroom flats and 1 space for 3 bed flats.
- 6.19. The standards state that subject to the size of a development, some level of parking should be provided to meet the needs of disabled motorists. This need is to be determined through discussions with the Council.

Revised Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (Adopted July 2011)

- 6.20. This SPD provides further guidance to the Core Strategy policies CS1 and CS2. The Sustainable Design and Construction SPD confirms that new development is expected to incorporate sustainable design and construction techniques in order to mitigate and minimise their impact upon the environment and reduce their negative contribution to climate change. A consultation has recently been held on a new SPD on Sustainable Design and Construction. The consultation has ended and it is expected that the new SPD will be adopted in November 2019.

7. Planning Assessment

- 7.1. Planning law requires that any planning application must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material consideration indicate otherwise. The key issue is therefore whether the proposed scheme accords with the provisions of the Development Plan and whether there are any other material considerations which indicate why planning permission should or should not be granted.

Principle of Development

- 7.2. The principle of the proposed development has been agreed in pre-application discussions with the Council and accords with national and local level planning policies.
- 7.3. The development is supported by Paragraphs 117 and 121 of the NPPF which promote the effective use of land and a positive approach to applications for alternative uses of land which is not allocated for a specific purpose where this would help to meet development needs. In addition, the site lies within the settlement boundary of Reading where new development is acceptable and will provide additional housing contributing to meeting the housing demands of the borough. The proposed development therefore complies with Policies CS6 and CS14 of the Core Strategy.

Design and Layout

- 7.4. The design of the proposed development has been the subject of pre-application discussions with the Council. The original proposals for the site and been reduced in extent in order to address the views expressed by the Council and ensure the delivery of a high quality development which is in keeping with the surrounding area in accordance with Policy CS7 of the Core Strategy.
- 7.5. Further information regarding the design and layout of the proposed development is set out in the Design and Access Statement (DAS) accompanying the application. The DAS shows that the proposed development has taken account of its surroundings to produce an extension which will be in keeping with the existing building and the surrounding area while also respecting the setting of the surrounding listed buildings.
- 7.6. The positioning of the proposed extension allows for the existing building line along Sidmouth Street to be maintained while also providing an additional area for planting alongside the pavement helping to provide greening of the surrounding environment. The positioning of the extension also avoids any potential for adverse impacts on the surrounding residential properties as set out further below.

Technical Considerations

- 7.7. Through the pre-application discussions with the Council a proposed development has been produced which is acceptable in principle and in terms of the design and relationship with the surrounding area. As part of the pre-application discussions it was agreed that a number of supporting documents would be required to support the application and address specific technical matters. This section sets out how the proposed development complies with the technical considerations associated with the policies of the adopted Development Plan, where necessary making reference to supporting reports which accompany the application.

Affordable Housing

- 7.8. Within the NPPF it is stated that affordable housing should only be required for major developments. The development is not a major development and as such under the NPPF there would be no requirement for affordable housing. Notwithstanding this, the new Local Plan is at an advanced stage with draft Policy H3 proposed to be amended through the Main Modifications which have been recently consulted on. The changes to the proposed policy result in a requirement on proposals for 5-9 dwellings for a financial contribution the equivalent of 20% of the housing to be provided towards affordable housing elsewhere in the Borough.
- 7.9. In order to ensure compliance with Policy H3 of the new Local Plan a S106 agreement is proposed to be entered in to in order to secure a financial contribution equivalent to the provision of 20% of the proposed housing as affordable housing. Details of the valuation of the proposed development will be provided together with a calculation of the anticipated financial contribution based on the approach set out in Appendix 4 of the Affordable Housing SPD (2013).

Air Quality

- 7.10. The site lies within an Air Quality Management Area and as such an Air Quality Assessment has been prepared by Redmore Environmental Limited and has been submitted in support of the application. The assessment concludes that assuming good practice dust control measures are implemented during construction, the residual significance of potential air quality impacts from dust generated by earthworks, construction and trackout activities was predicted to be not significant. Such impacts would also be temporary in nature.
- 7.11. With regard to the impact arising from the development the assessment concludes that due to the limited number of anticipated vehicle trips associated with the proposals, road traffic exhaust impacts were predicted to be negligible. This negligible impact is based on the increase in traffic from the extension alone. As stated above in relation to the highway impacts of the development, the combined effect of the implementation of the prior approval application and the construction of the extension would be a net reduction in vehicle movements to and from the site over the position with the existing office use of the site.
- 7.12. In addition dispersion modelling assessment results indicated that predicted annual mean NO₂ and PM₁₀ concentrations were below the relevant Air Quality Objectives at all locations across the site and as such no mitigation is required to ensure compliance with Policy RC9 of the RCAAP.

Amenity and Open Space

- 7.13. The proposed extension to the existing building will be located on the southern elevation and as such the development will have no appreciable impacts on the amenity of residents of Kings Oak Court. While some new dormer windows are proposed within the existing roofspace the windows will be provided in the northern elevation where there are already numerous existing windows and the proposals will not result in any overlooking.
- 7.14. With regard to the impact on the amenities of residents on South Street and at 52 Queens Road, the proposals will not result in any loss of privacy to accommodation in Trinity Hall with a window and door in the wall of Trinity Hall facing the proposed development serving non-habitable rooms.
- 7.15. In accordance with Policy DM10 of the Sites and Detailed Policies DPD a communal roof terrace is proposed within the roofspace of the existing property. This will be available for use by residents of the proposed development together with residents of the approved conversion of the existing office building. In addition to the roof terrace a private balcony will be provided for the flat within the roofspace of the new extension. The amount of amenity space to be provided was supported through the pre-application discussions on the proposals given the town centre location.
- 7.16. The provision of roof terraces can result in noise from an elevated position which has the potential to impact on adjacent occupiers. The location of the communal roof terrace is separated from the surrounding occupiers by the existing car park with the terrace positioned over 25m from the southern boundary of the site and over 40m from the rear elevation 49 South Street. Furthermore, the existing external areas serving the residential properties backing onto Livery Close are predominantly areas of parking with no amenity areas directly overlooked by the proposed roof terrace. It is therefore considered that the roof terrace will not result in any appreciable impact on the amenity of adjacent occupiers and overall the proposed extension complies with Policy DM4 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document in relation to the impact on residential amenity.

Contamination

- 7.17. A report on contamination was previously prepared in relation to the prior approval application for the conversion of the existing building to flats. The EnviroSmart report (ref. 70530.01R1) has been submitted in support of this application. The report concludes that:
- the probability/likelihood of contamination being present at the site is unlikely;
 - the potential severity/consequence of any impacts is medium; and
 - the overall land quality risks posed by the site is low.
- 7.18. The report recommends that no immediate action is required but a watching brief during all proposed redevelopment activities and associated ground works would be likely to be sufficient. Any such watching brief if required could be secured through an appropriate condition.

Ecology

- 7.19. An Ecological Report has been prepared in support of the proposed development by Professor Mark Whittingham and accompanies the planning application. The report demonstrates that there are no ecological constraints associated with the proposed development. The existing buildings were examined internally and externally for the potential presence of bats with no evidence found. An existing false acacia tree will be removed from within the car park. There is no evidence of any nesting birds within the tree, however, a check for any nesting birds will be undertaken prior to any development commencing.
- 7.20. The existing areas of vegetation to be removed will be replaced with an increased area of landscaping through the provision of a landscaped strip between the extension and Sidmouth Street and an area of planting to the rear of 54 and 56 Queens Road. In addition to the increased area of landscaping at ground floor level there will be planters on the roof terrace providing a further increase in the level of vegetation on the site helping to ensure a net gain in biodiversity. Further information on the proposed landscaping scheme is provided below and within the accompanying Landscape Plans.

Flood Risk

- 7.21. At the time of the previous prior approval application for conversion of the existing building to residential use part of the site lay within Flood Zone 2 albeit that this did not include the area subject to the proposed extension. The flood maps for planning produced by the Environment Agency have since been updated and the whole site now falls within Flood Zone 1. As such no flood risk assessment is required to support the development proposals.

Heritage

- 7.22. While the building is not listed it is located close to a number of listed buildings with Queens Crescent (Grade II) located immediately to the west of the site, 3-5 Sidmouth Street (Grade II) located to the east and 43-49 South Street (Grade II) located to the southwest. Given the proximity of the site to existing listed buildings a Heritage Statement has been incorporated within the accompanying Design and Access Statement.
- 7.23. As set out in the Design and Access Statement the proximity of the site to listed buildings has been taken into consideration as a constraint to the development and the design of the extension replicates the design of the existing building with matching materials including a similar feature band, cill and lintel detailing. This approach ensures that the appearance of the development is in keeping with the existing building and the surrounding area and that there would be no adverse impact on the setting of the listed buildings thereby ensuring compliance with Policy CS33 of the Core Strategy. The design approach has been also been supported by the Councils Conservation Officer through the pre-application discussions.

Highways

- 7.24. Prior approval has been granted for the conversion of the existing office building to 20 residential flats. As part of the prior approval application 10 parking spaces within the existing car park were allocated to the proposed flats providing 0.5 spaces per flat. The proposed development will provide a further 9 residential flats with 1 x 1 bed, 7 x 2 bed and 1 x 3 bed property. 15 parking spaces will be provided for residents of both the converted offices and the new extension with 5 of these parking spaces provided for residents of the extension. A further two visitor parking spaces will also be provided within the parking area.
- 7.25. The site lies on the edge of Zones 1 and 2 as shown in the Car Parking Standards SPD. The site is close to the Town Centre and within a sustainable location being within walking distance of shops, schools, services, town centre employment and sustainable modes of transport including bus stops and Reading Train Station as such it is considered that the maximum parking standards for Zone 1 should be applicable.
- 7.26. A Transport Note has been prepared by Systra in support of the application. This concludes that the level of parking proposed is in accordance with the Councils standards. It is further concluded that combined with the approved conversion of the existing building from offices to residential use there will be a net reduction in vehicle movements to and from the site. Consequently the combined effect of the conversion of the existing building and the proposed extension will be a positive impact on the road network.
- 7.27. During pre-application discussions the principle of repositioning the existing vehicular access further south was discussed. The principle of this change was agreed although it was advised that plans would need to be provided to demonstrate that the necessary visibility splays could be achieved. The plans within Appendix C demonstrate that the necessary visibility splays can be achieved and as such the repositioned access will have no adverse impact on highway safety.
- 7.28. Overall, given the location of the site on the fringe of Parking Zone 1 in an area with good accessibility and to town centre services and public transport networks the development and associated levels of parking and cycle parking provision are considered to comply with Policies CS22 and CS24 of the Core Strategy.

Housing Mix

- 7.29. The proposed development includes 1 x 1 bed, 7 x 2 bed and 1 x 3 bed flats. This mix meets with the requirements of Policy RC9 of the Reading Central Area Action Plan and Policy CR6 of the new Local Plan. As set out in the Design and Access Statement, all of the proposed flats exceed the minimum space standards set out in 'Technical Housing Standards: Nationally Described Space Standard'.

Landscaping and Trees

- 7.30. A Tree Survey has been prepared by Barrell Tree Consultancy. The proposed development will result in the loss of three trees including two Category C trees and one marginal Category B tree. The Category B tree (T2) is noted to have a poor canopy reduction, is twin stemmed in nature with decay wood noted within the upper canopy and it is considered that the trees vitality is unlikely to improve. It is also noted that the tree was considered in relation to the redevelopment of Trinity Hall under application 151356 where the Council concluded that the tree is not a significant tree.
- 7.31. A landscaping scheme has been produced and submitted in support of the application and the landscape proposals mitigate the tree loss on the site. At present there is a brick wall enclosing the parking area from the street. This wall will be reduced to provide a low wall and railings enclosing a planted border which will be provided between the extension and the pavement. This will have the effect of extending the existing green border located on the east side of 58 Queens Road providing a green buffer along Sidmouth Street. The low wall and railings will match the existing wall and railings located to the east of 58 Queens Road. Additional areas of planting will also be provided adjacent to the southern elevations of 54 and 56 Queens Road with further shrub planting and the provision of a small tree (*Acer*) within planters on the roof terraces.
- 7.32. In addition to the *Acer* tree proposed on the roof terrace it is proposed to provide a Silver Birch tree (*Betula pendula*) in the south west corner of the site and two Oak trees (*Quercus robur*) ensuring that there is suitable replacement of the trees to be removed to facilitate the development.
- 7.33. The existing areas of landscaping to the north and east of the existing buildings will be retained with a small area close to the boundary with 52 Queens Road being replaced with new shrub planting. The provision of replacement tree planting together with the provision of additional planting adjacent to the pavement on Sidmouth Street which will provide greening of the streetscene and ensure compliance with Policy RC5 of the RCAAP and Policy DM18 of the Site and Detailed Policies Document.

Noise

- 7.34. Given the location of the proposed development within the Town Centre a noise assessment has been prepared by Spectrum Acoustic Consultants. The assessment has been submitted in support of the application. The development itself will not result in any adverse noise impacts on neighbouring residents. In addition, the noise assessment demonstrates that subject to suitable acoustic performance specifications for glazing and ventilation acceptable internal noise levels will be achieved. In addition, it is expected that acceptable noise levels are expected to be achieved in the external amenity areas. The development therefore complies with Policy RC9 of the RCAAP in relation to noise.
- 7.35. As part of the assessment dispersion modelling was also undertaken due to the potential for future residents to be exposed to elevated pollution levels. Results of the dispersion modelling assessment indicated that predicted annual mean NO₂ and PM₁₀ concentrations were below the relevant air quality objectives at all locations across the site. The site is therefore considered suitable for the proposed use from an air quality perspective. The proposed development is therefore considered to comply with Policy RC9 of the RCAAP and Policy DM19 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document.

Sustainability

7.36. Account has been taken of the requirements of the emerging policies with respect to sustainability and the draft Sustainable Design and Construction SPD. The site is constrained by the existing building and the relationship with the surrounding listed buildings which restrict the ability to incorporate energy saving measures while delivering a development that is in keeping with the existing building and sensitive of the setting of the nearby listed buildings. Notwithstanding this, the development will deliver a sustainable development which will have a positive impact on the environment including:

- The development is in a town centre location with good access to public transport links
- The development is in a location with good accessibility to a range of local amenities, community facilities and employment opportunities reducing the need to travel by car
- The combined impact of the proposed extension and the conversion of the existing building to residential development agreed under the 2018 prior approval application will result in a reduction in vehicle movements to and from the site
- Cycle stores will be provided within the existing building providing capacity for 54 cycles across the total of 29 flats within the proposed extension and the existing building
- The building will be provided with suitable sanitary and catering equipment to minimise the use of water and energy and it is expected that a planning condition will be attached requiring the development to meet the higher water efficiency standard of 110 litres per person per day which would be secured through the application of the Building Regulations.

8. Planning Obligations and S106

- 8.1. Through the pre-application discussions the requirement for planning obligations via a S106 agreement was discussed. It was confirmed that the infrastructure requirements resulting from the development would be addressed through the Community Infrastructure Levy. It was confirmed that the only matter that would require a S106 agreement is the provision of affordable housing or a financial contribution in lieu of affordable housing.
- 8.2. As set out above, it is proposed to provide a financial contribution to enable the provision of 20% of the housing to be provided elsewhere in the borough in accordance with the requirements of Policy H3 of the new Local Plan. A valuation and calculation of this contribution will be provided to the Council to assist with agreeing a S106 agreement for the development. It is not anticipated that any other matters would need to be addressed by the proposed S106 agreement.

9. Conclusions

- 9.1. The site lies in a sustainable location within the Reading Town Centre boundary with good access to local services and public transport. Prior approval has been granted for the conversion of the existing building to 20 flats. The proposed development will provide a further 9 flats through the provision of a rear extension to the building and the addition of three flats within the roofspace of the existing building and the proposed extension.
- 9.2. The proposed development complies with the relevant policies of the adopted Development Plan and there are no material considerations which outweigh the provisions of the Development Plan and therefore in accordance with the provisions of S38(6) planning permission should be granted. The proposed development will contribute towards meeting the housing requirements for the Borough through the provision of a high quality development which will be in keeping with the existing building and the surrounding area without detracting from the architectural and historic interest of the nearby listed buildings while providing an improved level of landscaping and greening of the street scene to the benefit of the wider area. Given the compliance with the adopted policies of the Development Plan it is respectfully requested that planning permission should be granted at the earliest opportunity.

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