

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Target Date: 18/06/19

Application No: 190619/FUL and 190620/LBC

Address: The Maltings, Fobney Street, Reading RG1 6BT

Proposal: Change of use from use class A3 (restaurant and cafe) to B1(a) to provide new office accommodation and an application for changes to a listed building.

Case Officer: Anthony Scholes

1. Site Description and Surrounding Area

The site this enquiry relates to is the land and buildings associated with 'The Maltings', Bear Wharf, located on the southern side of Fobney Street, Reading RG1 6BT. The site is located within the boundary of the Reading Central Area Action Plan (RCAAP) (2009). The nearby river path is a pedestrian route, Fobney Street is a cycle route and the site is within an area of archaeological importance, an air quality management area, flood zone 2 & 3 and a designated green link (DM17). The site currently contains a two and a half storey building. Although presently vacant, it was previously occupied by the Loch Fyne Restaurant. The building is a Grade II listed building, the listing details are as follows:

FOBNEY STREET 1. 5128 Building now part of Courage's Brewery SU 7173 SW 2/481 II 2. Once probably a malthouse. Picturesque setting on the River Kennet. Early C19. Red brick. 2 1/2 storeys with mansard tiled roof. 7 bays, altered on north side which has 2 dormers. To South: large segmental headed windows on ground floor, small on 1st floor with wood lintels, cast iron glazing bars. Gable end lunettes.

Within the setting of the listed building is an area of hardstanding previously utilised for outdoor seating and a tree lined grassed area up to Fobney Street (which is outside of the site in question). The site is located in close proximity to Reading Town Centre and The Oracle shopping centre. The site also fronts the River Kennet, which would have previously been the main method for receiving deliveries to the building when in use as part of the original brewery. The building is in a reasonable physical state of repair despite being vacant for approximately 18 months. There are a number of broken windows, the guttering is growing a substantial amount of greenery, with damaged fencing and a large amount of litter (although this has since been tidied up upon request of the Council). In addition, the southern corner of the building is being affected by the growing roots of a tree which is damaging that corner of the building.

2. Proposal

This proposed development is for the change of use of the building from A3 (restaurant) to B1(a) (offices), and would require a number of internal changes to facilitate the change, as well as some minor external changes.

3. Internal Consultations

RBC Transport Development Control

No objections subject to conditions.

Environmental health

No objections subject to conditions.

4. External Consultees

Berkshire Archaeology

No objections.

Canal and river trust

No objections, subject to an informative.

Conservation area advisory committee (CAAC)

The comments from CAAC are summarised below:

- No objection to the change of use;
- Restriction should be placed on the change of use from offices B1(a) to residential
- There is no evidence that the building was ever used as a maltings
- Any return to original floor plan and layout is welcomed as is the retention of the interior cast iron columns and steel beams

Neighbours

Two site notices were displayed on the site from 25 April 2019. One letter of objection has been received. The objection was submitted as follows:

"The property is in a key location, surrounded by numerous residential buildings. Changing this building to an office building would be dashing all hopes of a community location/hub. The building should be kept as a restaurant/cafe that provides a positive social impact on the surrounding area, not more offices. There are plenty of empty office buildings around the town as it. I also feel that due to its listed status, it is within the public's best interest to ensure that it is kept as a public space. Ensuring that the building

is used for a local/independent restaurant/cafe that serves the local community around it, is most within public interest.”

5. Relevant Planning History

910626/LBC (91-00838-LBC) - External & internal alt'ns with an extension to Listed Building. Demolition of buildings & structures attached to Listed Building: Change of use to public house, restaurant and hotel facilities. APPROVED 20/12/1991

960928 (96-00984-LBC) - Renewal of 91/0838/LB for external and internal alterations with an extension to listed building. Demolition of buildings and structures attached to listed building. Change of use to public house, restaurant and hotel facilities. WITHDRAWN 15/9/1997

990242 (00-00776-FUL) - Development of The Brewery comprising works of conversion and the use of The Brewery for retail, restaurant and residential purposes. APPROVED 2/5/2002

992305 (99-00097-LBC) - Two c19 brick structures with pitched slate and tile roofs constructed originally for brewing process REFUSED 31/3/1999

020577 (02-00761-LBC) - Installation of lighting below eaves to south elevation of building. APPROVED 9/8/2002

020972 (02-00066-ADV) - Illuminated signage for new restaurant to building externally illuminated hand painted fascias. APPROVED 23/4/2002

6. 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.

7. 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. The Development Plan for Reading relevant to the application site comprises the Reading Local Development Framework 'Core Strategy' 2008 (Altered 2015).

The 'National Planning Policy framework' ('NPPF') 2012 states clearly that its content is to be a material consideration in the determination of applications. The 'NPPF' states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the Local Development Framework (LDF) (Core Strategy and Sites and Detailed Policies Document) according to their degree of consistency with the 'NPPF' (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the 'NPPF', the greater the weight that may be given).

8. Relevant Policies

The application has been assessed against the following policies:

National

National Planning Policy Framework 2019;

National Planning Policy Guidance 2014 onwards;

RBC Local Development Framework

Reading central area action plan (2009)

Core Strategy 2008 (Altered 2015)

CS1	Sustainable construction and design
CS2	Waste minimisation
CS4	Accessibility and the intensity of development
CS5	Inclusive access
CS6	Settlement boundary
CS7	Design and the public realm
CS8	Waterspaces
CS20	Implementation of the Reading transport strategy (local transport plan 2006-2011)
CS24	Car/ Cycle Parking
CS25	Scale and location of retails, leisure and culture development
CS33	Protection and enhancement of the historic environment
CS34	Pollution and water resources

CS35 Flooding

Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012 (Altered 2015)

SD1	Presumption in favour of sustainable development
DM1	Adaptation to climate change
DM4	Safeguarding amenity
DM12	Access, traffic and highway-related matters
DM14	Impact of main town centre uses
DM15	Protection of leisure facilities and public houses

Supplementary Planning Documents

Revised parking standards and design (2011)

9. Appraisal

The main issues are considered to be:

- Principle of development
- Listed building consideration
- Permitted development rights
- Flood Risk assessment
- Environmental health matters
- Transport matters
- Sustainability
- CIL

Principle of development

The NPPF (2018) states that *“Planning policies and decisions should support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation”*. The NPPF definition of ‘town centre’ includes land within or adjacent to the main shopping areas and areas predominantly occupied by town centre uses.

The first land use consideration is that of the loss of an A3 (restaurant) use. Pursuant to Policy DM15 (protection of leisure facilities and public houses), leisure facilities includes restaurants, and as such would be a consideration for this application. The site is located within close proximity to the Reading Town centre and is considered an ‘edge of centre’ use. Policy DM15 requires that the loss of leisure facilities will not be permitted where... the function of this facility can be adequately fulfilled by an existing facility... where that

facility would be at least as accessible to the same catchment. Due to the central location, and the abundance of alternative restaurants within the Town Centre, the loss of a vacant A3 use in this location is not considered to result in any harm or prevent the community from meeting its day to day needs

The Council's LDF SDPD Policy CS26 Hierarchy of Centres requires that the vitality and viability of Reading's centres, including the town centre, be maintained and enhanced. It encourages inclusion of a wide range of uses. The Reading Central Area Action Plan (RCAAP) (2009) Policy RC6 states that, all major office development over 1,000m² to be located within the Office Core, as defined on the proposals maps. Additionally, RC6 states that *"other main town centre uses will take place in the Central Core, as identified on the proposals maps"*. In accordance with the NPPF, main town centre uses include offices. It is also noted at this stage that Policy CS33 also requires features and areas of historic importance to be protected, and where appropriate enhanced.

The proposal would seek to introduce an office use outside of both the office and central cores within the RCAAP. The sequential approach to determine the suitability of the use in this edge of centre location (also in line with paragraphs 86-87 of the NPPF) is required and has been considered by Officers. In this instance, the applicant is seeking to convert the listed building to become a high quality 'character' office. As outlined within the submitted sequential test, there are currently no available office spaces of a similar size, historic character and appearance as the building in question. It is also recognised that the proposal would bring a listed building back into active use and safeguard it from further deterioration.

As such, the opportunity to utilise a building of this format and scale to provide a unique office space, safeguard a listed building in a highly accessible and connected to the town centre, is considered to satisfy the requirements of the paragraphs 86-87 of the NPPF

Therefore, the principle of the redevelopment of the site for office development is considered acceptable subject to the other material planning considerations below.

Listed building considerations

An application for Listed Building Consent for any physical internal/external (which impact on the fabric of the building) changes has been submitted in tandem with the application for the change of use of the premises.

The change of use does not require substantial changes to the façade. The key changes include:

- Internal: installation of secondary internal glazing
- Ground-floor: removal of central modern stairway, removal of internal lobby and doors, removal of modern side staircase and partial removal of one internal wall, voids infilled;
- First-floor: removal of modern stud work walls and internal doors;
- Second-floor: removal of modern internal stud walls forming back-of-house restaurant area; and
- External: removal of existing sign light and lighting, galvanised steel single glazed windows refurbished and painted black and cctv removed; plain clay tile roof repaired and replaced where damaged, root damage to brickwork repaired.

Internally the building has been converted to restaurant use but retains internal features of architectural and historic interest including cast iron columns, internal historic timberwork to mansard roof with iron reinforcing straps, crittal windows throughout, timber flooring. The internal dog-leg staircase and other staircases are modern insertions (an external staircase originally existing, as do the two staircases at either end of the building).

As the building is beginning to deteriorate due to lack of occupancy by a tenant, the re-use of the building in a sustainable function which is compatible with the retaining the historic fabric and character of the building is considered to be a priority. The re-use of the building as small, flexible-space offices is considered to be compatible with the Listed Building and there are no objections to conversion which would potentially minimally affect the Listed Building.

Overall, the changes to the building are considered minimal, and are considered acceptable subject to conditions relating to materials.

Permitted development rights

Concerns have been raised during the consultation process about the potential for a change of use of the premise to residential under permitted development rights. As the premise is a listed building, such a building would not benefit from any permitted development rights under Part 3, Class O, of the GPDO (2015, as amended).

Flood Risk assessment

The applicant has demonstrated that the proposed development would meet the Environmental Agency's requirements for development within a flood zone. A condition is recommended to ensure the recommendations of the FRA are implemented.

Environmental health matters

Environmental Protection Officers have made the following comments:

Applications which include noise generating plant when there are nearby noise sensitive receptors should be accompanied by an acoustic assessment carried out in accordance with BS4142:2014 methodology. If air conditioning or other air handling plant is proposed as part of the application then a noise assessment will be required. The noise assessment needs to establish the predicted noise rating level taking account of any characteristic factors like tonality or impulsiveness of the noise. The rating level should be compared with the background noise level.

Within Reading there is strong justification for requiring the plant specific sound level to be at least -10dB below the measured background level and for the plant noise rating level to not exceed the measured background level. Specifically to prevent cumulative impact from addition of plant over time which could result in background creeping up to levels which might cause adverse health impact, which is more likely in a densely occupied town such as Reading. Levels of -10dB ensure that the background level is not increased and nuisance is unlikely.

However, there may be some situations where this cannot be achieved there may be some flexibility where this is justifiable for example where there are very low background noise levels, etc. Reasons should be clearly stated within the assessment conclusion.

Obviously should externally located plant be proposed as part of your future application this will need to be very carefully considered, especially in the context of the listed building too.

Transport matters

The following comments were received from the Highway Authority:

The site is located within the Reading Central Area and within Reading's primary shopping area. The site is located within Zone 1 of the adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD which is an area at the very heart of Reading Borough, consisting primarily of retail and commercial office developments, with limited residential. This area is well served by rail and bus links and also contains the largest proportion of public car parking spaces.

The proposal consists of the change of use from A3 use to B1 Office use. The proposal includes no parking spaces. However, the site does benefit from a short stay pay & display bay to the front of the site on Fobney Street.

The site is well serviced by public transport services and the surrounding road network all have extensive parking restrictions preventing on-street parking. Therefore, the proposed change of use is likely to be acceptable in this town centre location.

However, the development must provide secure covered cycle parking facilities in line with the Council's standards.

Sustainability

Policies CS1 and CS2 of the Core Strategy state that new developments will be acceptable where the design of buildings and site layouts use energy, water, minerals and materials appropriately and efficiently. Developments should also demonstrate measures to minimise the generation of waste in the construction, use and life of buildings, and promote more sustainable approaches to waste management.

A sustainability statement has not been submitted as part of the application. Policy CS1 of the Core Strategy, supported by the Council's Sustainable Design and Construction SPD also seeks that the proposal should comply with BREEAM Level of 'Very Good'. A condition shall be attached to the planning permission to require a pre-commencement estimator and a post construction BREEAM certificate to be submitted demonstrating that this level has been met. As the proposal is for the refurbishment of a Listed Building, the standard BREEAM Post Construction Review (PCR) mechanism has been altered to allow 6 months for the submission of the PCR from first occupation. This would continue to seek compliance with Policy CS1 of the LDF.

CIL

The proposal does not include any additional floor space and as such is not CIL liable.

10. Conclusion

Having regard to the material considerations and all matters raised, the Local Planning Authority considers that the balance of considerations therefore weigh in favour of granting consent subject to conditions.

11. Recommendation

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