



Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee
17 July 2019

Dear Matthew Burns

SHILLINGFORD HOUSE 190549

Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC) object to the application to demolish Shillingford House and replace it with a new build block.

1. HERITAGE

1.1 Shillingford House occupies a prominent corner position as the gateway to the Oxford Road from the town centre. It is welcoming, domestic and comfortable in scale. It is situated opposite the Russell Street/ Castle Hill Conservation Area (CA) and Grade II listed Roxborough House.



Approaching Oxford Road from the town centre

1.2 The proposal will affect the setting of the CA within its current boundaries. In addition the CA appraisal for the area is currently under review and at an advanced stage of preparation. This proposes an extension of the boundary taking in an area north of the Oxford Road which would include Shillingford House.

1.3 The proposal will adversely affect the setting of listed buildings in the immediate area, particularly Roxborough House.

1.4 Shillingford House was probably built between the wars and retains the style and detailing typical of the time despite the insensitive modern additions of satellite dishes and replacement windows. There are few buildings of this age in Reading and consequently its loss would be regrettable.



Shillingford House from Alfred Street

1.5 It is to be noted that even the 'Reading 2050' vision which shows scant regard for the Russell Street/Castle Hill CA retained Shillingford House, albeit adapted, in its Oxford Road vision.

2. DESIGN

2.1 The proposed building whilst maximizing on the number of flats is not an attractive design and Reading CAAC would like to request that the developer consider how they might adhere to the aims and principles of the 'Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission' who have just published their interim report (<https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/building-better-building-beautiful-commission>).

2.2 The building proposed will be too big and dominant on this corner plot, overshadowing and menacing neighbouring properties along the Oxford Road.



Shillingford House from Howard Street

2.3 Shillingford House is already the tallest building along this stretch of Oxford Road and Reading CAAC would resist any increase in height of the building on this corner plot which would be detrimental to the setting of the CA and views out of the CA and consequently contravenes Policy CS33 (see image above).

2.4 The proximity to the IDR which is currently a very noisy and busy thoroughfare means that the balconies proposed on the Oxford Road and Alfred Street frontages will be unusable outdoor space because of poor air quality. The design and access statement says:

“Given there is a reasonable chance that the air is of poor quality, each dwelling will be mechanical vented from the rear of the building and the incoming air will be filtered”.

Some residents may use the balcony for plants and others for hanging out washing but they are an unnecessary and fussy detail which does not enhance the design.

2.5 There is no provision for green space, green walls or green roofs in this application. A new development in a town centre location such as this needs to provide a contribution to greening the town.

3. AMENITY FOR OCCUPIERS

3.1 The proposed replacement of 4 x 2 bedroom flats over two floors with 14 flats over four floors is a net gain in residential units but these are very, very small homes. The three studios are only 27sqm in size and the two bedroom units are up to 60sqm compare with up to 71sqm in the existing building.

3.2 Air pollution is expected to be significant (see 2.2 above).

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 The proposal has a negative impact on the Russell Street/ Castle Hill CA and nearby listed buildings due to its height and inappropriate and fussy design.

4.2 The development does not represent an aesthetic improvement on the building (Shillingford House) that currently occupies the plot.

4.3 The design would be improved by the removal of the balconies and reduction in the number of floors.

4.4 If this application were to be approved a 'green element' should be added such as a green roof or wall to contribute to the local environment and quality of life and wellbeing of residents.

Yours sincerely

Evelyn Williams

Chair Reading CAAC
On behalf of Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee
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