

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Target Date: 25/01/2019
EoT Date: N/A

Application No: 182094

Ward: Tilehurst

Address: 30A Gratwicke Road, Reading, RG30 4TT

Proposal: Retrospective planning permission for the change of use of a 6-bedroom HMO (C4 class) to a 7-bedroom HMO (Sui Generis) for a maximum of 7 professionals.

Case Officer: James Overall

Site Description and Surrounding Area

The application site is a two storey detached property located on the corner of Gratwicke Road and Bran Close. The front elevation of the property faces Gratwicke Road.

The property is not constrained by an Article 4, and therefore has been in operation as an HMO via implementing permitted development rights. This application has come about due to legislation change which occurred on 1st October 2018.

Proposal

The proposal is a retrospective application for the change of use of a small 6-bed HMO (C4) to a large 7-bed HMO (sui generis). The room which has been converted was a storage room, and is now a bedroom. The room has an area of 12.6 square metres and is located on the ground floor.

Plans Considered

Plan Type	Description	Drawing Number	Date Received
Floor Plan	Existing	N/A	29 Nov-18
Floor Plan	Proposed	N/A	29 Nov-18
Site Layout Plan	Shows parking, bin & cycle storage as well as dropped kerbs	N/A	8 Jan-19

Relevant Planning History

None.

Consultation Responses

The following neighbouring owners and occupiers were consulted by letter:

- 32 Gratwicke Road, Tilehurst, RG30 4TT
- 37 Gratwicke Road, Tilehurst, RG30 4TT
- 20 Bramble Crescent, Tilehurst, RG30 4TX
- 18 Thicket Road, Tilehurst, RG30 4TY

A site notice was displayed.

Two letters of representation were received from neighbouring properties objecting on the grounds of parking. These comments stated:

37 Gratwicke Road

"We are concerned with the parking of additional cars. This once family home has already been converted and has caused problems with parking. The property has space for 4 cars which is not enough recent double yellow lines also restrict the amount of parking outside the property and down the road, this has lost at least 3 parking places which prevents the occupiers from parking directly outside their property, so they park where they can. We have had to pay the cost of having an

additional drop kerb to help us park our own cars at our own property. Please can you consider this re application”.

18 Thicket Road

“...main objection is the number of vehicles this could generate. There is only space for 3 vehicles on the front of the property. The rest of cars parking mainly in Bramble Crescent which is access to Thicket Road. There has been a recent installation of double yellow lines because of parking on the corners and not being able to turn into Road, all this has done is push the cars back into the road. Allowing more would increase the issue plus visitors/ guests staying etc. could generate up to 14 cars”.

Transport

The Transport Department were initially consulted on 3 December 2018. Their comments requested amended plans. After negotiation, amended plans were submitted, and on 8 January 2019 the Transport department submitted the following comments:

“Following the submission of the amended plan I have no objections subject to...conditions and informatives”.

Environmental Health

On 3 December 2018 the HMO team were consulted on this application. No comments were received.

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.

Relevant Planning Policy and Guidance

The following local and national planning policy and guidance is relevant to this application:

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Nation Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

Reading Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2008, altered 2015

Policy CS1: Sustainable Construction and Design

Policy CS2: Waste Minimisation

Policy CS18: Residential Conversions

Policy CS24: Car/Cycle Parking

Policy CS34: Pollution and Water Resources

Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012, altered 2015

Policy SD1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

Policy DM4: Safeguarding Amenity

Policy DM8: Residential Conversions

Policy DM10: Private and Communal Outdoor Space

Supplementary Planning Guidance

Residential Conversions SPD (2013)

Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011)

Appraisal

Policy CS18 states that *“Proposals to convert properties into self-contained flats or for multiple occupation will be assessed against the impact on the amenity and character of the surrounding area, particularly in terms of intensification of activity, loss of privacy, loss of external amenity space, the provision and location of adequate on-site car parking, and the treatment of bin storage areas”*.

Policy DM8 provides further detail and states: *“Proposals to convert properties into self-contained flats or for multiple occupation under Core Strategy Policy CS18 will only be acceptable...in the case of sui generis houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) [where]:*

- *The property to be converted has four or more bedrooms or measures more than 120 square metres gross ;*
- *There is an appropriate balance between communal and private areas for sui generis HMOs”*.

Along with the relevant adopted local planning policies the appraisal of this report has been based on the Adopted Residential Conversions SPD (2013), which provides further detail for the adopted policies. Section A of the SPD, deals with the ‘General Assessment of all Conversions’ (i.e. from C3 dwellinghouses to flats or HMOs (both small C4 use and sui generis HMOs). Section B specifically covers the assessment of applications for HMOs within the area covered by the Article 4 Direction, but the SPD states at paragraph 4.2 that “ Planning applications for the change of use of properties into large HMOs will be assessed using the threshold limit...”. However, as the property was previously a permitted C4 small HMO, its change to a large HMO will not have any further effect on the balance and mix of properties in the local area.

Principle

Planning permission is required to change the use of a small HMO to a large HMO, or to intensify the use of a lawful large HMO (without any physical extension or external alteration to the property) by increasing the number of occupiers. As stated above the threshold limit will not be triggered as the HMO has already been established in the street and, therefore, it has no further effect on the concentration of HMOs and balance and mix of households in the local community.

These types of planning applications are assessed on their own individual merits on a case by case basis against the Council’s relevant policies and guidance, including mixed and sustainable communities, character of the area, residential amenity, parking standards, cycle storage and bin storage, as set out in adopted policy and in this SPD.

To achieve these aims; the following points should be taken into account in the determination of such an application:

- Minimum Size of Property for Conversion (maintaining supply of family housing)
- Appropriate Balance Between Communal and Private Areas
- A standard of one communal room for every 4-6 bedrooms (depending on the size of the bedroom) will be provided, which will have acceptable amenity standards and appropriate access for all residents.

- A proper agreement may be required to ensure acceptable management of all communal parts of the HMO.

It is considered that the principle of having an HMO in this location is acceptable; however, this does not automatically mean that a large HMO would be acceptable.

The amenity of future occupiers of the development and existing residents of nearby properties

The Residential Conversions SPD sets out a number of checklist items which provide further detail related to adopted policies DM4, DM8, DM9 and DM10 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document. These items consist of:

- Room Sizes
- Communal Space
- Amenity Space
- Layout/Stacking of Rooms

Room Sizes

The residential conversions SPD states, *“Where the cooking facilities are provided in a separate room, each bedroom must be a minimum of:*

- *6.5 square metres if occupied by one person;*
- *10.5 square metres if occupied by two persons”.*

The bedrooms within this property are for one person and there is a separate communal kitchen.

The bedrooms are all larger than 6.5 square metres.

The room sizes are considered to be acceptable.

Communal Space

The residential conversions SPD states, *“The amount of communal space in larger HMOs that is considered appropriate will depend on the number of bedrooms and the size of the bedrooms proposed.*

Communal rooms will be expected to have an acceptable outlook and meet the amenity standards as set out in policy DM4 in particular, in terms of access to sunlight and daylight, noise and disturbance and artificial lighting to ensure the standard of accommodation meets the needs of the occupants using this space.

If the bedrooms provided as part of the HMO are at the minimum size considered appropriate, then a standard of one communal room per four bedrooms as a guide would be sought. Each communal room must provide sufficient space for four occupants, given that bedrooms are likely to have little or no room for any living space. It is not sufficient to have one large room, as with a significant number of residents living together this is considered more likely to result in conflict between the users. It should be assumed that the provision of a communal room is in addition to the provision of a kitchen, particularly where the kitchen provides no seating area or space to relax and is purely a functional area.

Where all bedrooms significantly exceed minimum room standards and Environmental Health confirms that any licence demonstrates the rooms are intended for single occupancy only, as a guide, one communal room per six bedrooms, may be considered appropriate.

All units of occupation shall have independent access to the communal areas. Proposals which rely on access through another unit of occupation will not be accepted”.

Whilst the proposal is for a 7 bedroom HMO, and Policy suggests a second communal room would likely be required, the bedroom sizes of the HMO in question considerably exceed the minimum space standards as set out in Appendix 1 of the SPD and therefore are acceptable in this regard, based on single occupancy.

The lounge is of a satisfactory size measuring about 14 square metres; however the bedrooms all considerably exceed the minimum space for a bedroom, and as such it is considered that there is sufficient space for inhabitants of the property to not be detrimentally impacted in terms of amenity.

Amenity Space

The residential conversions SPD states, *“useable private outdoor space should be no less than the gross floor area of the dwelling to which it relates”*.

The property has a footprint of ~100 square metres, whilst the private rear garden has an area of ~288 square metres. As such this is considered acceptable.

External Windows

All habitable rooms benefit from existing external windows and are considered to be served by adequate daylighting and outlook.

Layout/Stacking of Rooms

The Council's SPD seeks to avoid layouts which locate living rooms, bathrooms and kitchens, next to, above, or below, proposed or neighbouring bedrooms.

The layout is not considered unreasonable, particularly in that it keeps the communal facilities all at ground floor level.

Privacy and Overlooking

The proposal does not seek to introduce any additional windows and makes use of existing openings. The new bedroom is located on the ground floor and front of the property. Therefore the change of use to a large HMO is not considered to have resulted in any material increase in overlooking or loss of privacy above the existing situation.

Noise and Disturbance and Pollution

It would not be expected that the amount of the noise from the property, housing a maximum of seven adults, nor within the garden, would be appreciably different from that generated from a fully occupied large five bedroom family house.

A condition is recommended for the submission and approval of a management agreement, which includes addressing how noise inside and outside will be managed.

Effect on the character of the host property and surrounding area

Policy CS7 seeks that development should preserve or enhance the character of the area of Reading in which it is located.

There is no evidence of external alterations to the property and as such there would be no discernible differences from the appearance of the property. As such it is considered to accord with Policy CS7.

Transport Impacts

Policies DM12 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document and CS20 and CS24 of the Core Strategy seek to address access, traffic, highway and parking relates matters relating to development.

The number of bedrooms proposed would require a provision of 2 spaces. The provision of 3 parking spaces as shown on the amended plans is therefore deemed acceptable.

The Council's Parking SPD a provision of one cycle parking space would be required. This would need to be located within a covered, lockable and conveniently located store and equipped with a Sheffield type stand. The cycle parking provided would not be equipped with a Sheffield type stand but would be sufficient given that the store is lockable. The information provided also states that this could be used for up to 4 bicycles, given the dimensions only 2 bicycles would be able to access the store but given only 1 cycle space is required this is deemed acceptable.

There would be an assumption that any future occupants of the proposed HMO will not be issued with a residents parking permit. This would be secured by way of suitably worded conditions and an informative and will ensure that the development does not harm the existing amenities of the neighbouring residential properties by adding to the already high level of on street car parking in the area.

The Transport department have reviewed the latest submitted layout plan and have confirmed that it is acceptable.

The suggested conditions included pre-occupation conditions; however since the property is already occupied, the conditions will be reworded.

Conclusion

The property is considered to be capable of hosting an additional bedroom, in order to host a total of 7 tenants. The bedrooms are of good sizes and these coupled with the lounge are considered to provide an appropriate amount of communal space. There is sufficient natural light to communal and habitable rooms. There are no transport concerns or planning concerns and as such planning permission is recommended for approval.

RECOMMENDATION

Grant Planning Permission subject to conditions and informatives.