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DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT:-

CONVERSION OF OFFICES TO 5 x 1-BED SELF-CONTAINED FLATS INVOLVING REPLACEMENT OF UNSYMPATHETIC GROUND & FIRST FLOOR REAR EXTENSIONS WITH GROUND FLOOR EXTENSION, INTERNAL SUBDIVISION AND CONVERSION OF BASEMENT.

SITE LOCATION:-

50 QUEENS ROAD, READING, RG1 4AU

PLANS AND DOCUMENTS:-

19.02.01 1:100/500/1250 @ A3 Location, Block & Existing Floorplans.

19.02.02 1:100/200 @ A3 Proposed Floor & Roof Plan, Parking, Bins & Bikes.

19.02.03 1:100 @ A3 Existing Elevations.

19.02.04 1:100 @ A3 Proposed Elevations and Section.

Flood Risk Assessment (FRA).

Noise & Pollution Assessment.

Heritage Statement (accompanies separate application for LBC).

Design & Access Statement (this document).

CIL Documentation.

1.00 BACKGROUND

1.01

Planning and listed building consent for conversion from offices back to residential has (save for the application site) now been granted for the four terraced buildings either side numbered 46-52 Oxford Road. This allows restoration of the eastern end of the GII (GV) listed terrace back to its original residential use. Approval of the current scheme will maintain this momentum of restoration back to residential use.

1.02

The character of the frontage of the whole GV listed terrace from 24-52 has largely been maintained. However the rear elevations of the terrace are notable for the plethora of unattractive and contrived commercial rear extensions of mixed size, design and materials created through past unsympathetic office conversions.

1.03

The current proposal leaves the listed frontage unchanged. It principally involves the demolition of the unsightly extended rear office toilet block and staff room which has a flat roofed kitchen extension at first-floor level and a water tank above at second floor level (see photo 1. overleaf) together with a flat-roofed rear projection. It will be replaced by a self-contained single-storey flat whose design and materials are much more sympathetic and in accord with the character of the original listed terrace.



PHOTO 1. Unsightly rear office toilet block and staff room with flat roofed kitchen extension above and a water tank above that. The proposal replaces this jumbled excrescence with a self-contained single-storey pitched-roofed extension whose design and materials are much more sympathetic and in accord with the character of the original listed terrace.

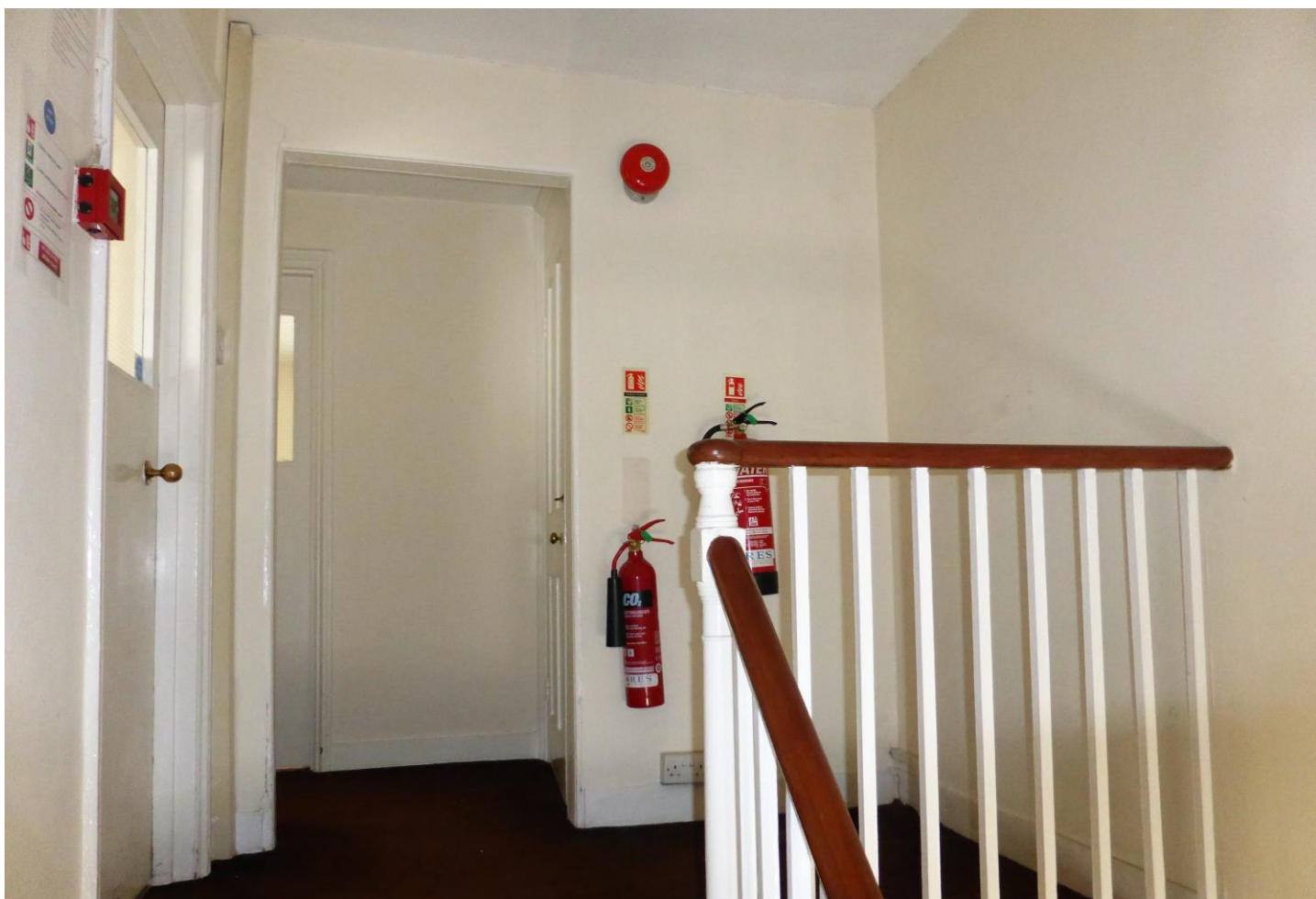


PHOTO 2. Second-floor landing. The remainder of the interior has the same utilitarian appearance.

1.04

Internally the original historic character and layout of the interior has been obliterated by the previous office conversion. Only the staircase balusters and handrail appear to be original and these will be retained (see photo 2. above). Skirtings, architraves, plaster cornices, original doors and door cases, fireplaces and their surrounds have in the past been removed in their entirety to satisfy the need for fire doors, fire prevention and escape routes. Where original door cases, skirtings, picture rails and cornices survive they will be retained.

1.05

The proposal does not seek to return the listed interior to its original state. However it will reverse the excesses of the previous office conversion, return the building to the residential use for which it was designed and, through the provision of an economic return, ensure the future preservation of the remaining listed fabric.

2.00 THE PROPOSAL

2.01

The whole of the building is in legitimate B1(a) office use. It is currently vacant. Since the building is listed the current GPDO relaxation allowing conversion from office to residential does not apply; hence the current application. The approved conversion of adjoining properties from offices to residential has established a precedent, so in principle there can be no objection to the proposed change of use.

2.02

As mentioned previously the Bath stone listed frontage is unaffected by the proposal. The conversion of the basement requires the creation of a ground level lightwell similar to that already approved next door at number 52 (also owned by the applicant) and further examples west along the terrace. Frontage windows already have secondary glazing fitted behind the original windows. This will be tested to ensure it maintains <30db in living rooms and replaced as necessary. Therefore the effect of the proposal on the listed frontage will be minimal and undetectable by the general public.

2.03

The principal changes to fabric take place at the rear of the building. Photo 1. above shows the existing two storey rear extensions that feature an unsympathetic mixture of roof types, window types and materials topped by an exposed water tank. This staff toilet and staff room harms the setting of the listed building and has a substandard internal layout that resists conversion to modern residential requirements.

2.04

Therefore the proposal involves the complete demolition and removal of all of the mixed rear extensions and associated paraphernalia. The proposed replacement is a single-storey low hipped-roofed building of sympathetic design that is less tall than the original and 1.8m wider in order to provide sufficient internal space for the proposed one-bed self-contained flat. It will be attached to the rear elevation by a roofed porch open on two sides providing access from the rear car park to all of the proposed flats.

2.05

The ground floor rear elevation will be extended outwards by some 1.7m with a pitched roof marrying in with the proposed porch roof and will adjoin the two-storey rear extension to the adjoining property number 48.

2.06

The new self-contained flat has a floor area of 39.01m² thus exceeding the requirements of the DCLG national space standards. The principal aspect is to the west facing the former ground floor office extension to number 48 which (according to the approved COU plans) is a 'playroom' with 5 east facing windows. There is a gap of 2.6m between these two sets of ground-floor windows which complies with the Governments daylighting standards. To avoid the possibility of loss of privacy a 1.8m light grey stained close boarded fence will be inserted along the shared boundary.

2.07

External materials will be yellow/buff bricks to compliment the original Bath stone. Windows and doors will be white coated DG aluminium, the replacement hipped roof and porch will be blue/black slate.

2.08

Internally the current utilitarian office layout will be sympathetically adapted to residential use. Each floor will have its own frontage living/dining/kitchen room and a rear bedroom with ensuite. Ground floor, first floor and second floor are all accessed via the existing common staircase leading to the front-door and rear porch. The basement flat has its own independent access from the rear porch.

2.09

The conversion will require the removal of internal basement walls and a second-floor dividing wall between rooms 1 and 3. Changes of door locations will require new doors to be inserted (and old doors blocked) at first floor between room 1 and 2 and at second floor between room 2 and rooms 1 and 3. However since none of these walls retain any features of historic value their alteration will be less than significant. Works to the basement are identical to those already approved in connection with the applicant's next door property number 52 under approvals reference 161066 and 161067.

2.10

The proposed front and rear subterranean light wells will have no material effect on the appearance and setting of the listed building. As with the clients adjoining property they are designed to reduce noise from Queens Road and have a lip to resist surface water flooding. The proposal respects the physical character of the area since the external works to create the light-wells are minimal and do not have a material effect on the external appearance of the listed building.

2.11

The front part of the site lies within the Environment Agencies Flood Zone 2 (medium risk, 1% - 0.1% annual probability of river flooding). The rear lies outside the flood zone. Ground level at the front of the building is 39.01m AOD and is therefore comfortably above the 1% annual probability flood level by over 1.5m giving continuous dry access. A Flood Risk Assessment is attached separately.

2.12

The proposed basement floor will be 1.7m above the local water table and there are no records of groundwater flooding in the vicinity of the site. However in accordance with the precautionary principle the proposal utilises a cavity drain waterproofing system with sumps and pumps together with a flood guard valve on foul drains.

2.13

Frontage noise levels have been assessed and at 70dB are consistent with those recorded at the opposite end of the terrace in 2007 in connection with the approval of four self-contained flats (07/01369/FUL). Please note that this approval set the precedent for subsequent residential use of basements in the terrace. In this case we have specified double glazing which will ensure both a living room and bedroom noise level of <30dB (good). A Noise and Pollution Assessment is attached separately.

2.14

The proposed development is located within an air quality management area (AQMA). Mitigation measures through positive ventilation from the rear will be provided as part of the proposal to protect the residents from the effects of poor air quality from the A329 in accordance with Reading Borough Council's Air Quality Policy DM19.

2.15

The GIA of the enlarged basement is 52m² therefore all rooms comfortably exceed the minima set out in the DCLG national space standards. Headroom has been increased to 2.3m and in terms of stacking and location of uses the living room and bedroom are laid out identically to the floor above.



PHOTO 1. The frontage of 50 Queens Road lies dead centre. It is a 3 storey building constructed of Bath stone ashlar. It and all the crescent to the right are GII GV Listed Buildings.

2.16

The site is located within Reading Town Centre and so is within a short level walking distance of all facilities, amenities and public transport connections. As such it is considered to be a sustainable location in accordance with the requirements of the NPPF.

3.00 PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

3.01

The proposal is appropriate in the context of Policy DM8 (Residential Conversions) of the adopted Sites and Detailed Policies Document (Revised January 2015) and national policy relating to residential development set out in the NPPF which advises that development should be directed to sustainable sites such as this. Accordingly in our submission there is a presumption in favour of residential development.

3.02

It is a material consideration that the principle of conversion back to residential use within the terrace is well established either on approval or by passage of time. Schemes for conversion such as those at 28, 46, 48 and 52 Queens Road set a clear and unequivocal precedent for residential conversion on this particular site.

3.03

Proposals to convert properties into self-contained flats under Policy CS18 and DM8 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.

3.04

In our submission the proposal respects the physical character of the area since the external works improve the external appearance of the rear of the building. There will be no unacceptable adverse impacts to other residential properties arising from the conversion in terms of either noise or disturbance since the proposed residential use has an identical type and timing of activities. In terms of layout the stacking and location of rooms is appropriate to the floor above. Suitable noise insulation will be incorporated in accordance with the Building Regulations.

3.05

Adequate bin and cycle storage has already been provided to the applicants adjoining property 52 Queens Road and the 1:200 Site Layout (drawing 19/02/02) demonstrates how both schemes will be combined.

3.06

Accordingly it is our submission that the proposal complies with the requirements of the two applicable key development plan policies CS18 and DM8 together with the requirements of the NPPF so there is a consequent presumption in favour of the proposed development.

4.00 TREES AND LANDSCAPING

4.01

There are no trees on or adjoining the site. The combining of the two parking areas to the rear of the property provides a more balanced rear aspect. Modern concrete slab paving at the front of the site will be cleaned and re-levelled as part of the works required to insert the frontage light-well.

5.00 ACCESS PRINCIPLES AND SOLUTIONS

5.01

The site lies on the boundary of the Zone 1 (Central) and Zone 2 (Primary) Core Areas adjoining a high frequency bus route and within level walking distance of all central facilities, amenities and public transport connections. As such it is considered to be a sustainable location in accordance with the requirements of the NPPF. The existing legitimate office use generates a parking demand that significantly exceeds that of the proposed residential use and the consequent reduction in traffic generation is a positive benefit in terms of highway safety.

5.02

Vehicular access to the site is via Livery Close to the rear (south) where there is an existing private surface parking area with three spaces combined with the adjoining parking area approved in connection with the 2011 approval for four 1-2 bed flats at 52 Queens Road. Using the Zone 2 requirement of 1 space per 1-2 bed flat four parking spaces are required. Since the site lies on the margin of Zone 1 (0.5 space requirement) and generates less demand for parking than the existing commercial use we consider that the three spaces proposed are sufficient.

5.03

Adequate bin and cycle storage has already been provided to the applicants adjoining property 52 Queens Road and the 1:200 Site Layout (drawing 19/02/02) demonstrates how both schemes will be combined with bin and cycle provision mirroring that which exists.

6.00 COMPLIANCE WITH ECOLOGICAL AND CLIMATE CONTROLS

6.01

The proposal will comply with the requirements of the Building Regulations. Therefore we can confirm that the proposed dwelling will accord with the spirit and purpose of local and national policy and incorporate on-site renewable energy and/or an efficient supply of heat, cooling and power. Materials left over from construction will be recycled and building materials will be obtained from sustainable sources.

7.00 CIL CONTRIBUTIONS AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

7.01

The proposal will attract CIL and the necessary PAAIR form accompanies this application.

8.00 PLANNING POLICY AND THE PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

8.01

The revised NPPF is a material consideration. It maintains a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which paragraph 11 advises should be applied in both plan-making and decision-taking.

8.02

At paragraph 8 the NPPF identifies three overarching objectives to sustainable development:- economic, social and environmental. The policies of the NPPF taken as a whole, constitute the Governments view of what sustainable development in England means in practice for the planning system.

8.03

The provision of new housing in sustainable locations is a clear social benefit which supports strong, vibrant and healthy communities. The NPPF clearly seeks to significantly boost the supply of housing and, as explained above, the application site is considered to be a sustainable location for residential development and thus provides the social benefits that justify a presumption in favour of development.

8.04

In terms of the economic role of planning, sustainable growth is supported, including the provision of infrastructure. The applicant will enter into a CIL agreement with the Council to mitigate the impact of the development on the local infrastructure, services and amenities made necessary by the development. This justifies a presumption in favour of development.

8.05

Contributing to, protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment is fundamental to fulfilling the environmental role of planning. The impact of a return to the original residential use on the character and appearance of the area has been assessed as part of the design process and is considered a planning gain. As such it is considered that there are no environmental reasons to justify withholding planning permission for the proposed development.

8.06

For the above reasons the proposal is supported by the economic, social and environmental objectives of sustainable development as required by the revised NPPF. Therefore the proposal constitutes sustainable development and benefits from the presumption in favour of development.

9.00 CONCLUSIONS

9.01

Having regard to the relevant development plan policies and other material considerations as detailed above we submit that there are no sound and clear-cut planning reasons to object to the development. It benefits from the NPPF presumption in favour of sustainable development, deserves support and we look forward to a favourable determination.