

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Southcote

App Ref: 190148/FUL

Address: Land Adjacent The Horncastle, 208 Bath Road, Reading, RG30 2HJ

Proposals: Application under s.73. Erection of one four bedroom dwelling at the rear of the Horncastle public house on New Lane Hill. Variation of condition 2 of planning permission 162366.

Case Officer: Steve Vigar

Applicant: Bull Luxury Living Ltd

Date received (valid from): 13 March 2019

Target Decision date: 8 May 2019

1. INTRODUCTION

The site is located close to the western boundary of the Borough at the junction of New Lane Hill and Bath Road (A4) and forms part of land formerly associated with The Horncastle public house, which is now in use as a retail shop.

The site forms part of the Horncastle Conservation Area. The Horncastle Conservation Area Appraisal (RBC, 2010) describes the area as follows. *“The Conservation Area comprises a small roughly triangular area between Hogarth Avenue to the east and the main A4 Bath Road out of Reading to the south. It is known locally as “Horncastle”. A Public House of the same name fronts Bath Road. New Lane Hill, Greenwood Road and Poplar Avenue interlace the area, intersecting at a central area of grassed open space. The area is attractively framed on the east and south sides by a collection of small scale domestic properties, and on the west side by a backcloth of protected trees (but actually outside the Conservation Area itself). The roads in the area are not kerbed, although the margins of the central open space meet the carriageway with granite sets. This space is also defined by traditional style bollards, which together with the sets were introduced as part of an environmental improvement scheme implemented shortly after formal designation of the Conservation Area in order to protect the grassed area from ingress by motor vehicles. The improvements also included traditional style street lights on and around the central green. Seats which formed part of the original scheme are not however currently apparent. The overall character of the area is therefore one of informality with a peaceful rural rather than urban 4 quality to it, despite its being immediately north of the busy A4. This character is emphasised by traffic management measures which prevent through traffic accessing the area.”*

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The current proposals seek a Minor Material Amendment to the extant permission 162166 by varying condition 2 (approved drawings) under s.73 of the Act.

The extant permission provides for a detached three bedroom dwelling. The current proposal seeks to enlarge the existing design with a new first floor gabled element to the rear and raised eaves heights.

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

152170 Erection of two new semi-detached dwellings at land adjacent to Horncastle Pub on New Lane Hill, Calcot, Reading - Withdrawn

141002 - (two houses to the north) - 2 Horncastle Cottages, New Lane Hill - Demolition of the existing garage and replacement with a two storey extension, including a replacement garage. Single storey rear extension and a garden wall. Approved. Extant but not yet built.

162366/FUL Erection of one new dwelling at the rear of the Horncastle public house on New Lane Hill. Resubmission of withdrawn application 152170. Approved

4. CONSULTATIONS

RBC Transport (Highways Authority)

No additional comment to original advice given under 162366, as follows:

"The site is located within Zone 3, Secondary Core Area, of the Council's adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD. Typically these areas are within 400m of a Reading Buses high frequency 'Premier Route', which provides high quality bus routes to and from Reading town centre and other local centre facilities. In accordance with the adopted SPD, the development would be required to provide a parking provision of 2 spaces for a 3+ bedroom dwelling. Plans submitted indicate that the proposed development will be provided with 2 parking spaces, both of which would be located adjacent to the pet store.

Transport have reviewed the sites in question and an assessment of the forecourt to the frontage of the pet store has identified that it would be able to accommodate car parking for both the pet store and residential above in accordance with the Councils parking standards and as a result Transport are happy that the proposed parking for the residential unit is acceptable.

The development site is located in an area designated as a Residents Parking Permit Area. Under the Borough's current parking standards, this proposal would generate additional pressure for parking in the area. Therefore there should be an assumption that any future occupants of the flats will not be issued with resident parking permits.

In accordance with the adopted Parking SPD, a 3+ bedroom development is required to provide a minimum of 2.0 cycle parking spaces which should be in a conveniently located, lockable, covered store which can be in the form of a garden shed or garage. The provision of a shed in the rear garden has been provided and therefore I am happy that cycle storage can be provided.

Bin storage has been illustrated on the plans in a location that complies with policy.

In the circumstances there are no transport objections to the proposal subject to the following conditions:

Conditions

CO2 Construction Method Statement

DC1 Vehicle parking space provided in accordance with approved plans

DC3 Bicycle parking space provided in accordance with approved plans

DC7 Parking permits 1

DC8 Parking permits 2

Informatives

IF3 Highways

I13 Parking Permits"

Berkshire Archaeology

Advice given under 162366 - no material change in circumstances since:

“There is no need for an archaeology condition in this case. The proposals are only small in scale and there is little known archaeology within the immediate area to warrant any investigations.”

RBC Natural Environment - Trees

No objection to revision as no change in footprint. Comments for 162366 were as follows:

“No objections to the revised proposals, subject to protection of existing trees to be retained as shown on the revised layout plan and landscaping plan. I note the changes to the Landscape Proposals plan L1 E in that the tree stock sizes have changed and a clear stem height allowed to ensure no conflict with pedestrians/car users and also the plan labels the retention of the trees at the rear. The tree species on the frontage are as they were on Rev D (3 upright Hornbeam and 1 Whitebeam) - we discussed the appropriateness of this and questioned whether a ‘cottage’ feel, suitable for the conservation area. Discussed further and on balance not of sufficient concern to pursue.”

RBC Ecologist

Confirmed no comment further to original 162366 comments

There are no objections to this application on ecology grounds. Recommend conditions to secure landscaping and ecological enhancements, as below:

Condition 1: Hard and Soft landscaping - details.

Condition 2: Implementation of approved landscaping

Condition 3: Installation of bird boxes

RBC Environmental Protection

Request controls over noise, dust and bonfires during construction.

Thames Water

No objection received.

Neighbours

The following addresses were consulted by letter.

8 New Lane Hill, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 4JF
3 New Lane Hill, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 4JE
1 New Lane Hill Tilehurst, Reading
9 New Lane Hill, Reading
Stamford House, Stamford House, Calcot Park, Calcot, RG31 7RN
16 Pentland Close, Reading, RG30 4QS
15 New Lane Hill, Tilehurst, Reading, RG30 4JE
5 New Lane Hill, Tilehurst, Reading, RG30 4JE
7 New Lane Hill, Tilehurst, Reading, RG30 4JE
6 New Lane Hill, Tilehurst, Reading, RG30 4JF

2 letters of objection have been received raising the following concerns:

- *“I do not wish to have further developments in this area as I do not believe that the road can accommodate another home and the additional traffic that will bring with it.*

The convenience store has caused congestion in the past and as I live right next door to it, I constantly experience problems with people 'dumping' their vehicles across my driveway and even blocking the road on a regular basis. I understand that the owner

wants to close the store and develop the land for residential use which will add to the traffic and the need for parking.

Added to this, congestion in the Bath Rd makes it difficult for pedestrian and vehicular traffic to cross the road at all times with the current people that live in this conservation area. The Aldi store and now a Lidl store right next door will make it impossible to live in this quiet conservation area. Delivery vehicles are often unable to make their way up this section of New Lane Hill road so I can only imagine what another home will do to create further problems.

I have lived in New Lane Hill for the past 17 years and I was always led to believe that the land adjacent to the Horncastle Pub was designated as a green space in perpetuity, as this is a conservation area. I bought my property on that basis and was shocked to find that there is a proposal to have it developed. The pub was never allowed to use the land as a part of their outdoor entertainment area either, as it was never going to be developed. The change in approach from the council has concerned me!

I also contacted Reading Borough Council and Thames Water in 2003 regarding connection to the mains sewer and was told that the drainage and sewer arrangements were never designed to accommodate further development. I do not understand how these plans can be approved under these circumstances.

However, if the decision is to go ahead with building a 4 bedroomed house, which I hope does not happen, then at least have the driveway to the right hand side of the post box. This will ensure that we do not lose valuable parking space and that I will be able to get in and out of my property unhindered. A driveway directly opposite mine and the narrow lane means unnecessary congestion will be inevitable.

I am totally opposed to further development in this 'Conservation section' of New Lane Hill."

- "Supply and drainage? Where is it going into?

On this application there is no detail as to where cars will be parked, or how the frontage is to be managed.

With the addition of a fourth bedroom this is getting into potential HMO territory- as there are scant details about the layout in the plans.

Not to mention the detriment to wildlife; which has seen a decline since the site has been cleared

Again, I object to this application"

5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

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. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'.

Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. When considering any planning application that affects a conservation area a local planning authority must pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

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

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework

National Planning Practice Guidance

Reading Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2008)

CS1 (Sustainable Design and Construction)

CS2 (Waste Minimisation)

CS4 (Accessibility and the Intensity of Development)

CS5 (Inclusive Access)

CS7 (Design and the Public Realm)

CS9 (Infrastructure, Services, Resources and Amenities)

CS16 (Affordable Housing)

CS20 (Implementation of The Reading Transport Strategy)

CS24 (Car/Cycle Parking)

CS33 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment)

CS34 (Pollution and Water Resources)

CS35 (Flooding)

CS36 (Biodiversity and Geology)

CS38 (Trees, Hedges and Woodlands)

Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012)

SD1 (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development)

DM1 (Adaptation to Climate Change)

DM3 (Infrastructure Planning)

DM4 (Safeguarding Amenity)

DM6 (Affordable Housing)

DM10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space)

DM12 (Access, Traffic and Highway Related Matters)

DM18 (Tree Planting)

DM19 (Air Quality)

SPG/SPD

- Planning Obligations SPD
- Affordable Housing SPD
- Parking Standards and Design (Supplementary Planning Document).

6. APPRAISAL

Character and Appearance

Within the context of Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act) 1990, national policy is clear that there is no moratorium on development in conservation areas rather *“Conservation is an active process of maintenance and managing change. It requires a flexible and thoughtful approach to get the best out of assets...”*

The supporting text to DP Policy CS33 explains that *“In making decisions on development proposals in Conservation Areas, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that particular area. As such, new development in Conservation Areas will be expected to make a contribution to the area by respecting and enhancing its architectural and visual qualities, and achieving a high standard of design. The Council will therefore have regard to both the quality of the townscape and the quality and interest of the area, rather than solely that of the individual building.”*

As with the extant permission, the current proposal does not affect the triangular green space which is the Horncastle Conservation Area Appraisal identifies as being the key feature. It also

maintains the existing street pattern, including the front gardens and soft highway edges (most of the highway edge is in the freehold ownership of Reading Borough Council adjacent to the site and not part of the application site).

The appraisal identifies buildings around the green as being *“of domestic use, scale and character with small informal front gardens and which generally can be described as being of cottage style”* It explains that “The remaining buildings [those not specifically singled out as being of particular significance] ... do not always pay any particular recognition to the character of the area in design terms, but nor to they cause particular harm. Their scale is in keeping with that of the Conservation Area as a whole”.

Within this context, the LPA, when considering 162366/FUL, sought to limit the scale of what is proposed to that of a pair of cottages such as those at 11 and 15 New Lane Hill. After a number of revisions an acceptable proposal was arrived at with a 9 metre wide footprint, slightly larger than the 8 metre width of 11 and 15 as originally built. The height was also significantly less than the adjacent new houses, being more than a metre lower above datum. It is considered that the scale of the extant permission proposal reflects the domestic scale of older buildings in the conservation area and would not be out of keeping. The proposed scale and land levels would ensure the proposal does not appear overbearing on the cottages opposite in character terms.

A key improvement secured under 162366 was that the massing of the building was reduced during the application process to reduce the apparent bulk and present a less deep flank to the south. It was considered that this, combined with the acceptable height would result in the building not appearing overly dominant within key views from the south including views into the conservation area from the junction with Bath Road.

This exercise, as described above, demonstrates a positive and proactive on the part of the LPA in attempting to achieve an acceptable design. It is relevant to note that this exercise was against the backdrop of the developer wishing to maximise the scale of the building. The resultant design approved under 162366 is therefore considered to be at the very limits of what could be considered acceptable in the context of the conservation area. The appearance of the approved house, in terms of form, proportions and detailing is comparable to that of Horncastle Cottages.

It is therefore regrettable that the current proposal seeks to significantly enlarge upon the negotiated, approved, design. The proposed first floor enlargement (relative to 162366) would take the form of a much enlarged mass to the southern flank both at first floor and with a substantial roof above. The rear of the building is now proposed as a bulky and uncharacteristic double gable arrangement which no longer reflects the massing or form of cottages in the conservation area. The visual harm would be particularly pronounced due to the visual prominence of the plot, being the first plot in the street when approaching from the south and from outside the conservation area. This prominence means that in general terms any development of this plot will contribute significantly, either positively or negatively to the overall character of the conservation area and the way in which it is experienced; in effect ‘setting the tone’ for the conservation area. In the case of the proposal the effect would be negative and harmful for the reasons given above and therefore contrary to development plan Policy CS33.

Trees (including character and appearance)

Consistent with previous comments given for this site (ref 152170), the Council’s Natural Environment (tree) officer has no objection in principle to the development.

The trees on the south corner of the site, whilst not specimens, provide a significant green feature to this prominent corner and are an appropriate feature at the entrance to the conservation area. The retention or provision of significant greenery on this corner will be important as part of the proposals, along with additional planting on the New Lane Hill frontage.

The Norway spruce in the back garden is a good specimen and it's proposed retention is noted. Suitable protection will be required to ensure it is not harmed during construction, along with protection for any other retained trees on site. A condition is recommended to secure this.

The Root Protection Areas of retained trees need to be plotted and clarification of any grounds works within those RPAs to be provided in order that the application can be fully assessed in relation to trees. The Natural Environment Officer has agreed that these details could be secured by condition as the trees in question are not immediately affected by the proposed building.

The Natural Environment Officer confirms that the amended layout allows the retention of some trees on the corner, which is beneficial. The principle of the landscaping is positive, particularly the trees on the frontage; the use of an Oak (ultimately large species) is particularly positive given the prominence of this corner - Oak is present in the Conservation Area.

The existing hedge on the frontage appears in poor condition in terms of appearance (not necessarily plant health). The Council's Ecologist confirms there is not much of a hedge left, and it would not be "important" under the hedgerow regulations (there is no "ancient" hedge in law). The landscape plan includes a mixed native hedge will form part of the approved plans. We just need to make sure that we have a condition stating that it will be replaced if it dies.

The mature Holly is noted on the topographical survey drawing and would need to be removed to allow for a house on the site. It is considered that the proposed new tree planting adjacent to the road would outweigh harm arising from removal of the Holly and ensure the character of the conservation area is preserved.

Ecology

As with 162366 the Council's Ecologist confirms that there are no ecological objections to the proposals, subject to appropriate landscaping being provided, including the native-species hedge and tree planting. A condition securing three bird boxes within the development is recommended on Ecologist advice. The proposal accords with Policy CS36 on this basis.

Residential Amenity

The proposed house would lie 7.8 metres to the south of New Lane Cottages and separated by the neighbouring garage. It is considered that sufficient distance exists between properties to avoid harmful loss of light, outlook or other overbearing effects. There would be no harmful overlooking of neighbouring land or windows, provided that the north facing first floor bedroom window is obscure glazed and non-openable. This could be secured by condition.

As with 162366 views to the west, across the street would be focussed at the gap between 9 and 11 New Lane Hill. Any intervisibility would be at a reasonable distance of 15 metres in a standard front-to-front relationship across the public realm. The proposal would therefore not harm the amenity of houses opposite on New Lane Hill due to the arrangement of buildings and the distances involved.

The proposal would include a good-sized private garden area to serve future occupiers.

The proposals are considered to accord with Policies DM4 and DM10 on this basis.

Transport

The proposals, amended under 162366 to omit a new vehicle access, are now far more low-impact in transport terms than originally proposed under that application. The detailed comments of the Highways Authority are set out above. It is considered that the access, parking and highway safety aspects of the proposal are acceptable on this basis, in accordance with Policies DM12, CS20 and CS24 and consistent with the extant permission.

Drainage

The objector comments and the absence of objection from Thames water are noted. No evidence has been received to suggest that adequate drainage cannot be achieved. The site is close the former pub building which presumably benefits from adequate drainage. A single house is unlikely to result in the existing drainage system being overloaded.

Archaeology

Berkshire Archaeology confirm that there are no archaeological constraints in this location.

Affordable Housing

In order to comply with Policy DM6, the applicant has agreed to secure the sum of £21,000 [twenty one thousand pounds] towards the provision of Affordable Housing within the Borough of Reading, (payable prior to first occupation of the dwelling and index-linked from the date of permission). This equates to 5% of the GDV, as demonstrated by two separate valuations from local estate agents. Given the other concerns with the proposal this matter has not been progressed. The application therefore does not meet housing need and this should therefore form a reason for refusal. This matter could be resolved through completion of a suitably worded S106 agreement.

7. CONCLUSION

The proposed development would be harmful to the character and appearance of the Horncastle Conservation Area, as described above and does not currently secure the necessary contribution towards Affordable Housing. The proposal is recommended for refusal on this basis.

Equality Act

In determining this application the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation. It is considered that there is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the current applications) that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE Full Planning Permission

Reason 1:

The proposed dwelling, by reason of its excessive scale, uncharacteristic form, and visual prominence, would appear as an incongruous and unsympathetic addition to the streetscene that would fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area. The

proposal is therefore contrary to Policies CS33 and CS7 of the Reading Borough LDF Core Strategy 2008 (altered 2015).

Reason 2: In the absence of a completed legal agreement to secure an acceptable contribution towards the provision of Affordable Housing, the proposal fails to contribute adequately to the housing needs of Reading Borough and the objective of creating mixed and balanced communities and as such is contrary to Policy DM6 (Affordable Housing) of the Reading Borough Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012 (altered 2015), Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (2013) and para. 61 of the NPPF.