

Norcot Community Centre and Affordable Housing

Planning Statement
July 2018

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Comment

Insert comment about this version

This document has been prepared and checked in accordance with ISO 9001:2008.

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1.0 Introduction

1.1. Project Brief

LDA Design have been commissioned by Reading Borough Council to prepare a planning application for land to the north of Lyndhurst Road at grid reference: 467886 (eastings), 174513 (northings) (referred to in this document as 'the site') in Reading, Berkshire. The planning application is for the erection of a three to four storey building comprising 21 (7x1 and 14x2 bed) residential units (Class C3) with associated bin and cycle storage, a 105sqm building for community use (Use Class D1), vehicle parking, landscaping and associated works.

Reading Borough Council has held a long-standing commitment to ensuring a supply of affordable housing to meet local housing needs. The Council has retained its housing stock and currently owns circa 7,000 homes and as part of its commitment to increasing the new affordable housing supply, Reading Borough Council is developing its own programme of new build housing.

Reading Borough Council considers that the site provides an opportunity to develop quality homes for the residents of Reading.

1.2. Structure of document

This Planning Statement provides a thorough assessment of the relevant issues under the following headings:

- 1) Introduction
- 2) Site Context
- 3) The proposals
- 4) Planning policy and guidance
- 5) Planning assessment
- 6) Conclusion

Appendix:

- 1) Drawing Register

The Planning Statement is informed by, and should be read in conjunction with, the following additional submissions:

- The planning application form, notices and certificates
- Design and Access Statement (DAS), including Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
- Bat Survey
- Archaeological Desk Based Assessment
- Arboricultural Report

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- Drainage Strategy
- Planning Application Drawings Pack

1.3. Approach to planning application

A full detailed planning application has been prepared to secure the development of the site for affordable housing. A pre-application meeting with RBC Planning Officers was held on 18th August 2017 with Richard Eatough and Ralph Chakadya to discuss the scheme. This meeting and subsequent correspondence has helped to inform the scope and content of information required to support the planning application. Design advice provided during this meeting is discussed in the Design and Access Statement.

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2.0 Site Context

2.1. Location

The site occupies a 0.17ha plot of previously developed land located in west Reading (see drawing 7870_PL101_rev A Location Plan). The site lies within the administrative area of Reading Borough Council. The site is occupied by Norcot Youth and Community Centre with an associated area of hardstanding for car parking, accessed from Lyndhurst Road.

The site is located in a predominantly residential area. The gardens of the residential properties of Weald Rise and Thirlmere Ave bound the site to the west and north-west. To the north-east of the site is a 2 storey block of flats. The properties of Lyndhurst Road and Ringwood Road are located to the south-east. There is a small grass mound along the site's south eastern boundary which may have potential heritage significance.

2.2. Site ownership

The site is owned by Reading Borough Council, who are also the applicant.

2.3. Planning History

The relevant known planning history for the site is listed below:

- Application ref: 940835 - Incorporation of land within Norcot Community Centre for use as a car park and erection of perimeter fencing. REGULATION 3 (Decision date: 28/04/1994)
- Application ref: 050722 – Erection of Youth Shelter (Decision date: 09/11/2005)

Given the age of both of these applications no application documents are held on RBC's online planning register.

There are no other extant planning permissions within the site.

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3.0 The Proposals

This section provides a brief description of the proposals. Further detailed information can be found within the DAS which should be read in conjunction with this Planning Statement.

3.1. Scheme Description

The key features of the proposal are as follows:

- Provision of 21 new affordable one and two bed dwellings close to local services;
- Development of a 105sqm (NIA) building for community use to replacing the existing youth building with an upgraded and modernised building that is fit for purpose;
- Creation of a private communal courtyard garden for use by all residents of the development;
- Access to private amenity space for each apartment, either through provision of a private patio area for ground floor dwellings, or provision of private balconies for dwellings above ground level;
- Provision of 20 car parking spaces and secure, on-site bicycle storage providing 21 spaces;
- Implementation of Root Protection Areas around trees which encroach onto the site in order to prevent any damage or removal of any trees;
- Planting of additional trees to screen direct views into the site.

3.2. Consultation

A consultation newsletter, which provided information on the emerging proposals, was hand delivered to local residents on the 4th May 2018. The newsletter outlined the key features of the proposal and sought views from the local community on the proposal to help inform the design. Around 100 copies of the newsletter were distributed to properties adjoining the site, as well as to the local nursery/children's centre and to the current users of the community centre.

The project team received sixteen responses to the newsletter. The responses raised a number of common issues, summarised below:

- Overlooking and impact on gardens
- Quantity of parking
- Building heights and views
- Existing trees
- Heritage impacts
- Impacts upon property values

Following receipt of the feedback the design of the scheme was amended (see the Design and Access Statement for a full description of the amendments) to address some of the concerns of local residents, and a second 'you said, we did' consultation flyer produced identifying the amendments. The second flyer was distributed on the 21st June 2018 to the same distribution

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list and provided details of an exhibition of the proposals held at Norcot Community Centre on 28th June 2018 where the proposals were presented and members of the project team were on hand to answer any questions. Fifteen people attended the event where questions were answered and clarifications provided by the project team.

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4.0 Planning policy and guidance

The following policy review assesses how this proposed scheme performs against national and local planning policy objectives and the Development Plan.

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires an application to be determined in accordance with the provisions of the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate to the contrary.

Material considerations include, amongst other matters, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the National Planning Practice Guidance, and other policy documents, the views of the statutory consultees and the views of the public.

This statement will highlight the most relevant policy and seeks to deliver a coherent argument that demonstrates the proposed scheme's compliance with various policy documents.

4.1. The Development Plan

The Development Plan for Reading comprises the following policy documents:

- Core Strategy (adopted January 2008 with Alteration adopted 27th January 2015)
- Reading Central Area Action Plan (adopted January 2009)
- Sites and Detailed Policies Document (Adopted October 2012 (altered January 2015))

The relevant policies of the Development Plan documents are outlined below.

Reading Core Strategy (adopted January 2008, altered January 2015)

The Core Strategy sets out Reading Borough Council (RBC)'s overall planning strategy. It was originally adopted in 2008 and subsequently altered to update Policy CS16 following RBC's review of their affordable housing policies, in conjunction with introducing the Community Infrastructure Levy. The alterations were adopted on 27th January 2015. The policies that are relevant for the purposes of this application are outlined below:

Under Policy CS1 (Sustainable Construction and Design) proposals for new development will be acceptable where the design of buildings and site layouts use energy, water, minerals, materials and other natural resources appropriately, efficiently and with care and take account of the effects of climate change.

Policy CS2 (Waste Minimisation) requires development to demonstrate measures to minimise the generation of waste in the construction, use and life of buildings and promote more sustainable approaches to waste management, including promoting layouts and designs that provide adequate space to facilitate waste storage, reuse, recycling and composting.

Policy CS3 (Social Inclusion and Diversity) requires major developments to demonstrate measures to enhance social inclusion in terms of access to housing, employment, services, community facilities, leisure, health, education, and other services and facilities.

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Policy CS4 (Accessibility and the Intensity of Development) requires development to be at a scale, density and intensity related to its level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport to a range of services and facilities.

Policy CS5 (Inclusive Access) requires all buildings to be located, sited and designed to provide suitable access to, into and within, its facilities, for all potential users, including disabled people, so that they can use them safely and easily.

Policy CS7 (Design and the Public Realm) expects development to be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. Development will be assessed to ensure that they respond positively to their local context and create or reinforce local character and distinctiveness; create safe and accessible environments; address the needs of all in society; are visually attractive as a result of good high quality built forms and spaces, the inclusion of public art and appropriate materials and landscaping. Policy CS7 further requires that applications be supported by a Design and Access Statement that deal with these matters.

Policy CS9 (Infrastructure, Services, Resources and Amenities) will not permit proposals for development unless the Local Planning Authority (LPA) is satisfied that infrastructure, services, resources, amenities or other assets lost or impacted upon as a result of the development or made necessary by the development will be provided or re-provided at the appropriate time. Planning obligations will be required to secure the enhancement of additional physical and social infrastructure, services, resources, amenities or other assets.

Policy CS14 (Provision of Housing) specifies that provision will be made for the completion of an average of at least 572 dwellings per annum in the period 2006-2016, and 521 dwellings per annum in the period 2016-2026. The supporting text to Policy CS14 outlines that locations for residential development should follow the principles that:

- Major development should be located in areas of high accessibility;
- Development should be directed to areas in most need of regeneration;
- Development must have access to efficient and effective public transport.

Policy CS15 (Location, Accessibility, Density and Housing Mix) seeks to provide an appropriate density and mix of residential development within the Borough. This will be informed by:

- An assessment of the characteristics, including the mix of uses of the area in which it is located;
- Its current and future level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport, as defined in Policy CS4;
- The need to achieve high quality design in accordance with Policy CS7; and
- The need to minimise environmental impacts, including detrimental impacts on the amenities of adjoining occupiers.

Development should provide an appropriate range of housing opportunities in terms of a mix of housing types, sizes and tenures, and include an appropriate proportion of units designed to the Lifetime Homes standard. Policy CS15 outlines indicative net densities dependent on the location of development. For 'Accessible Suburban' areas (defined as 'areas

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of medium housing density, which are predominantly residential in character and are easily accessible to services and public transport routes”) an indicative density of 35-55 dwellings per ha. is suggested.

Policy CS16 (Affordable Housing) states that all developments of 15 dwellings and above will provide 30% of the total number of dwellings in the form of affordable housing to meet the needs of the area. The Council will seek an appropriate tenure mix of affordable housing to include social rented, affordable rent, intermediate rent and shared ownership affordable units. Priority needs identified in the Core Strategy (needs at 2014) are for family sized housing, specialist accommodation for vulnerable people and extra care housing. The Council will regularly monitor and review the need for, and delivery of, affordable housing.

Under Policy CS22 (Transport Assessments) planning permission will not be granted unless development proposals make appropriate provision for works and contributions to ensure an adequate level of accessibility and safety by all modes of transport from all parts of a development, particularly by public transport, walking and cycling, in accordance with an agreed transport assessment submitted as part of the application.

Policy CS23 (Sustainable Travel and Travel Plans) requires major development proposals to make a commitment to implement measures to promote and improve sustainable transport facilities and through agreed travel plans, safe routes to schools, safe routes to parks and similar measures.

Policy CS24 (Car/ Cycle Parking) applies maximum car parking standards and cycle parking requirements in relation to the accessibility of locations to sustainable transport facilities.

Policy CS29 (Provision of Open Space) requires all new developments to make provision for the open space needs of the development through appropriate on or off-site provision, or through contributions towards the provision or improvement of leisure or recreational facilities, including open space. On sites of less than 50 dwellings or in area not identified as deficient in the provision of open space, new open space provision/improvements/enhancements will be sought through appropriate contributions.

Policy CS31 (Additional and Existing Community Facilities) states that proposals for new, extended or improved community facilities will be acceptable, particularly where this will involve co-location of facilities on a single site.

Policy CS32 (Impacts on Community Facilities) stipulates that where development would have an adverse impact in terms of increasing the need for additional community facilities, or the extension or upgrading of existing facilities, mitigation measures should be provided in line with the scale of the impact.

Under Policy CS33 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment), historic features and areas of historic importance and other elements of the historic environment, including their settings, will be protected and where appropriate enhanced.

Policy CS34 (Pollution and Water Resources) will only permit development where it would not be damaging to the environment through air, land, noise or light pollution; where it would preserve or ideally enhance ground and surface water quality; and where existing water resources, sewerage and wastewater treatment infrastructure are adequate to support the proposed development. Proposals for development that are sensitive to the effects of air, noise or light pollution only be permitted in areas where they will not be subject to high

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level of such pollution, unless adequate mitigation measures are provided to minimise the impact of such pollution.

In line with Policy CS36 (Biodiversity and Geology), development should retain, protect and incorporate features of biodiversity or geological interest found within the application site into their schemes. On sites with recognised biodiversity or geological value, development will not be permitted where there would be a direct or indirect adverse impact on the site, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that: The need for development clearly outweighs the need to protect the value of the site; and appropriate compensation, impact minimisation, mitigation and compensation are provided.

CS38 (Trees, Hedges and Woodlands) seeks to protect individual trees, groups of trees, hedges and woodlands from damage or removal, and extend the Borough's vegetation cover.

Sites and Detailed Policies Document (October 2012)

Policy SD1 (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development) takes a positive approach to considering development proposals that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the NPPF.

Policy DM1 (Adaptation to Climate Change) requires developments to demonstrate how they have been designed to incorporate measures to adapt to climate change, and lists the measure that should be incorporated into development. These include orientating buildings to maximise natural heating and ventilation; using trees and landscaping to provide shading; and minimising the impact of surface water runoff from the development in the design of the drainage system.

Policy DM3 (Infrastructure Planning) requires proposals to make appropriate provision for infrastructure, services, resources and amenities through planning obligations and/or the Community Infrastructure Levy as relevant.

Policy DM4 (Safeguarding Amenity) ensures that development will not cause a significant detrimental impact to the living environment of existing or new residential properties in terms of:

- Privacy and overlooking;
- Access to sunlight and daylight;
- Visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development;
- Noise and disturbance;
- Artificial lighting;
- Vibration;
- Dust and fumes;
- Smell; or
- Crime and safety.

Policy DM4 recognises that the position of habitable rooms, windows and outdoor living spaces will be particularly important. It states that a back to back distance of 20 metres

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between dwellings is usually appropriate, although the circumstances on individual sites may enable dwellings to be closer without a detrimental effect on privacy.

Policy DM10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space) requires dwellings to be provided with functional private or communal open space that allows for suitable sitting-out areas, children's play areas, home food production, green waste composting, refuse storage, general outdoor storage and drying space. Flats may be provided with communal outdoor space, balconies and/or roof gardens. The design of outdoor areas will respect the size and character of other similar spaces in the vicinity.

Policy DM12 (Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters) will give consideration to the effect on safety, congestion and the environment in the determination of proposals involving a new or altered access onto the transport network. Development will only be permitted where: the proposed access complies with the accepted standards of the transport authority; the development would not have a detrimental impact on the functioning of the network or to the safety of users of the transport network.

Policy DM16 (Provision of Open Space) states that the amount and type of publically accessible open space to be provided will be as laid out in the most up to date Open Spaces Strategy. The most up to date strategy is the Reading Open Spaces Strategy (RBC, March 2007). The provision of open space should satisfy the most urgent need in terms of type of open space to be provided in a location. The Policy details requirements for the delivery of open space in terms of its usability, accessibility, and aesthetic, wildlife and recreational value.

Policy DM17 (Green Network) identifies the Green Network, as shown on the Proposals Map, which comprises Local Wildlife Sites, Local Nature Reserves, Areas of Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitats and designated open space plus both existing and potential Green Links. Under Policy DM17 these Green Links will be maintained, protected, consolidated, extended and enhanced. New development is required to demonstrate how the location and type of open space and landscaping provided in the scheme have been arranged such that they maintain or link into the existing Green Network and contribute to its consolidation. Such features should be designed to maximise the opportunities for enhancing this network.

Policy DM18 (Tree Planting) requires new development to make provision for tree planting within the application site, or off-site where appropriate, in order to improve tree coverage, enhance the area's character and appearance, provide for biodiversity, and contribute to measures to reduce carbon.

4.2. Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (July 2018)

The revised NPPF was published on 24th July 2018 and replaces the previous National Planning Policy Framework published in March 2012. The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and states how they are to be applied.

The core theme of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should inform every planning decision. As per paragraph 11, in terms of decision taking for local planning authorities this means:

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- Approving development proposals that accord with an up to date development plan without delay; and
- Where there are no relevant development plan policies or the policies that are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:
 - The application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provide a clear reason for refusing the development proposed, or
 - Any adverse impact of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against policies in this framework as a whole.

Paragraph 47 clarifies that local planning authorities may give weight to relevant policies in emerging development plans according to:

- a) the stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced its preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);
- b) the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and
- c) the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the Framework (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given).

The NPPF sets out a number of policies that are particularly relevant to this application. These are set out below.

Paragraph 8 outlines the roles that planning should play in respect of each element of sustainable development. The social role of the planning system is outlined as, ‘supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations’.

Chapter 11 outlines the policies in relation to making effective use of land. Paragraph 117 clarifies that planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses. Paragraph 118(c) outlines that planning policies and decisions should ‘give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs’. Paragraph 118(d) requires planning to ‘promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings, especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing where land supply is constrained and available sites could be used more effectively’.

Paragraph 59 states that to support the Government’s objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay.

The NPPF defines affordable housing as housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers) (Annexe 2).

Paragraph 92 outlines that in order to provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should plan positively

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for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments.

Submission Draft Reading Borough Local Plan (March 2018)

The Submission Draft Reading Borough Local Plan (March 2018) and Proposals Map were submitted for examination on 29th March 2018. Hearings are expected to commence in September 2018. Once adopted the new Local Plan will replace all existing development plans in Reading. In line with NPPF paragraph 48, weight may be given to relevant policies in emerging plans, according to the stage of its preparation, the extent to which they are unresolved objections and the degree of consistency of policies in the emerging plan to the NPPF policies.

The Submission Draft Local Plan contains general, cross-cutting development management policies that are applicable to the whole of Reading, along with site-specific policies and allocations. A number of the new draft policies are broadly similar to existing, adopted policies of the Core Strategy and Site and Detailed Policies. Notable differences in approach relevant to the consideration of this application are outlined below.

The site is included as an allocation under draft Policy WR3q (shown on Proposal Map B). This specifically allocates Norcot Community Centre, Lyndhurst Road for residential development and replacement community use. The policy stipulates that development should:

- Avoid detrimental effects on the green link and pedestrian route between Oxford Road and McIlroy Park; and
- Take account of potential archaeological significance.

The policy indicates that the site could deliver in the range of 13 – 20 dwellings. The supporting text to the policy clarifies that where dwelling figures are given alongside allocations they are intended as a guide, and are based on an initial assessment taking into account the characteristics of each site. It is acknowledged, however that the capacity of sites will ultimately depend on various factors that need to be addressed at application stage (paragraph 7.3.13). The Submission Local Plan recognises that as well as contributing to meeting the identified needs of the Borough, the site allocation can help provide physical regeneration of sites which are in some cases vacant or underused.

Policy H1 (Provision of Housing) updates Core Strategy Policy CS14 and the District's housing requirement figure. Draft Policy H1 outlines that Reading Borough will make provision for 'at least an additional 15,433 homes in the Borough over the new plan period of 2013 – 2036 (averaging 671 homes per year). This is a notably higher annual housing requirement compared to that required by Policy CS14 (572 dwellings per annum in the period 2006-2016, and 521 dwellings per annum in the period 2016-2026).

Policy H2 (Density and Mix) updates Core Strategy Policy CS15 and provides a higher ceiling for the indicative residential density ranges. Figure 4.5 in the Submission Local Plan outlines that the indicative density range for suburban areas is 30 - 60 dwellings per hectare. Policy H2 confirms that the criteria informing appropriate density (which includes the character and mix of the area; the level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport; the need to maximise efficient of land use) may indicate that a different density is appropriate.

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Berkshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) (February 2016, GL Hearn)

The SHMA (2016) considers the objectively assessed need (OAN) for housing across the Berkshire Housing Market Area, and forms part of the evidence base that underpins the new Local Plan.

The SHMA identifies Reading as part of the Western Berkshire Housing Market Area, for which an objectively assessed need of 2,855 homes every year up to 2036 is calculated. Reading's share of this is identified as 16,077 homes between 2013-2036, or 699 homes per year. In setting the housing requirement for the District, RBC acknowledge in the Submission Draft Local Plan that Reading is a tightly defined urban area with limited sites for development, and a reliance on previously developed land, which constrains the amount of land that can realistically be developed. Thus, the housing requirement figure presented in the Submission Draft Local Plan is slightly lower than the objectively assessed SHMA figure, at 15,433 dwellings between 2013 - 2036 (equating to 671 per annum). This is considered to represent a realistic figure for housing that could be delivered but will be subject to testing during the Examination of the Local Plan.

The SHMA also includes an assessment of affordable housing need following the methodology in the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). For Reading, the estimated level of affordable housing need is for 406 affordable dwellings per annum.

Supplementary Planning Documents

Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (July 2013)

The Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is intended to provide users of the planning service in Reading with an appropriate framework for determining the size, type, form and content of affordable housing that will be sought in considering whether planning applications for development accord with various local planning policies that form part of the development plan for the Borough. The guidance contained in the SPD is largely geared towards schemes for which there is a proportion of affordable housing, as opposed to schemes such as the Proposed Development which proposes only affordable housing.

Community Infrastructure Levy (January 2015)

RBC have an adopted Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) charging schedule which sets the borough wide CIL rate for residential development at £120 per m². As a 100% affordable housing scheme, it has been agreed with the Local Authority that the scheme will be exempt from CIL charges, in line with the regulations.

Planning Obligations under Section 106 SPD (April 2015)

The SPD sets out the Council's approach towards seeking planning obligations, alongside the introduction of the Council's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule.

Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (October 2011)

The Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD provides guidance on the level of parking provision required for new developments. It explains that a zonal scheme is applied to determine parking standards. The site is within 'Zone 2 Primary Core Area', which is described as follows:

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‘Typically this zone is well served by public transport, with buses continuing either into or out of the Central Core Area via this zone. Much of this area is within acceptable walking distance (400m) of either the main railway station, or Reading West railway station. Walking and cycling in this area tends to be encouraged through the provision of wide and safe footways, with some dedicated or shared cycle ways. The areas within Zone 2 also typically have smaller local centres, providing day-to-day access to retail and some commercial facilities. Future growth in these areas is likely to be more mixed than in the core area, with larger amounts of residential than commercial space’.

Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (July 2011)

The SPD aims to promote high standards of Sustainable Design and Construction, providing detail on how to comply with development plan policies set out in the Core Strategy. It aims to assist applicants in ensuring that relevant information is submitted at the appropriate stage of an application to comply with the requirements of Reading’s sustainability policies and national guidance.

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5.0 Planning Assessment

5.1. The principle of the development

The site is included in the Submission Draft Local Plan (March 2018) as a draft site allocation for residential development (13 – 20 dwellings) and replacement community use. The proposed allocation of the site demonstrates that RBC accept the principle of development at the site and show that RBC considers the site is suitable for residential development.

The location of the site accords with the principles outlined in the supporting text to Core Strategy Policy CS14 in being in an area of high accessibility and having access to efficient and effective public transport. The site is located within an established residential area which is served by a range of facilities and services. There are schools, a park and local shops within 1km radius of the site. The centre of the site is located approx. 250m from the bus stops on Oxford Road which are served by Skyblue 16 providing a frequent service to Reading town centre. Tilehurst Station is located approx. 1km to the north west of the site, providing connections to Reading mainline station (and on to London) and to Oxford.

The development of the site is therefore considered to be in conformity with the principles of Core Strategy Policy CS14, Sites and Detailed Policies Policy SD1, and the emerging Submission Draft Local Plan policies.

5.2. Effective use of previously developed land

The revised policy wording of the NPPF reflects government's strengthened support for planning decisions that make effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses. Paragraph 118(c) states that planning decisions should give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs. Further to this, paragraph 118(d) supports planning to promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings, especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing where land supply is constrained and available sites could be used more effectively.

One of the objectives of the Submission Draft Local Plan (listed at paragraph 2.2.2) is to make the most efficient use of Reading's limited land, particularly previously developed land to ensure that as many new homes as possible are delivered to meet identified needs, particularly needs for affordable housing.

The proposed development represents an efficient and sustainable use of previously developed land, which helps contribute to delivering Reading's housing need in the context of a tightly defined urban area with limited suitable, available sites for new development. The use of previously developed land avoids the use of green field land and minimises the impact on ecology, given the low biodiversity value of the site (see section 5.8 below).

It is considered that the proposed development therefore accords with national planning policy and the aims of the emerging Submission Draft Local Plan in this regard.

5.3. Affordable Housing Provision

RBC have identified a significant need for affordable housing provision and view this as a high priority. This is outlined in the supporting text to Core Strategy Policy CS16 and in the Affordable Housing SPD. The more recently updated evidence presented in the Berkshire

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SHMA (February 2016) emphasised the critical need for affordable housing within Reading. The SHMA suggests there is a need for 406 new affordable homes per year, which represents the majority of the overall housing required. As recognised by the Submission Draft Local Plan, the consequences of not providing much-needed affordable homes would be severe, and would include homelessness, households in temporary or unsuitable accommodation, overcrowding and younger people having to remain living with parents for increasing periods. The proposed scheme proposes 21 affordable 1 and 2 bed dwellings that will provide a significant contribution to the overall affordable housing supply in the Borough, thereby meeting the principles of Policy CS16.

5.4. Provision of community facilities

The proposed development includes a 105sqm (NIA) building for community use (use class D1). The proposed community use building will replace the existing Norcot Youth and Community Centre, providing improved, modernised facilities. The provision of good quality community facilities such as this is considered crucial to ensuring a good quality of life and encouraging social inclusion. Co-location of community facilities and residential dwellings on single sites is encouraged by RBC, and the proposed development is considered to represent an appropriate and sustainable approach in this regard. The location is inherently suitable and sustainable, as demonstrated by the siting of the existing community centre. It is within a well established residential area and highly accessible by a choice of means of travel including walking, cycling and by public transport. It is proposed that the community use building will be a locally-scaled facility serving residents in the immediate local vicinity and it is therefore envisaged that the majority of trips will be made on foot or by bike. In terms of managing car parking for both residents and users of the community building, it is proposed that the use of the community building will be promoted during the week and especially during working hours when resident parking spaces will be available for visitors to the community centre to use. The intention is that whilst the community centre will be available for hire during the weekend users will be informed that there is limited parking available.

In light of the above it is considered that the provision of improved community facilities is in conformity with Core Strategy Policy CS31.

5.5. High quality design

The Proposed Development has been designed to ensure that it responds sensitively to the existing context, is accessible, sustainable, and attractive. The DAS that supports this application provides detail on the design principles that have informed the Proposed Development.

Housing Mix and Density

Core Strategy Policy CS15 requires the provision of an appropriate density and mix of residential development. The proposed housing mix has been developed with regard to up to date evidence of affordable housing needs.

The Submission Draft Local Plan draws on the 2016 SHMA to inform the latest policy direction in terms of appropriate housing mix (Policy H2: Density and Mix). Figure 4.6 in the Submission Draft Local Plan presents estimated size of accommodation type required in

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Reading. This demonstrates that the highest level of requirement is for 1 and 2 bed dwellings. The breakdown for affordable housing requirements is given as follows:

	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4+ bed
Affordable	43.4%	32.9%	21.6%	2.1%

The proposed development delivers 7x 1 bed dwellings and 14x 2 bed dwellings, which provides a significant contribution to meeting the identified needs.

Policy CS15 gives an indicative density range of between 35 – 55 dwellings per hectare (dph) for ‘Accessible suburban’ areas. Policy H2 from the Submission Draft Local Plan updates this to provide a higher ceiling for the indicative residential density ranges (range of 30 – 60), but also specifies that the criteria informing appropriate density (which includes the character and mix of the area; the level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport; the need to maximise efficient of land use) may indicate that a different density is appropriate.

The density of the Proposed Development is 124dph. It is acknowledged that this exceeds the indicative ranges given in both the Core Strategy and the Submission Draft Local Plan. However, as demonstrated in the DAS, the layout has been well organised in order to deliver this density whilst still delivering high quality amenity space. It is also noted that the density range to meet the suggested level of units in emerging policy WR3q would be 76-118dph. It is therefore considered that the proposed density is appropriate for this site, as required by Policy CS15.

Responding to Local Character

The Development Plan requires development to ensure that it responds positively to its local context and create or reinforce local character and distinctiveness. The DAS provides an analysis of the local character of the area in which the site is located. The scheme aims to respond to its context and enhance distinctiveness in an appropriate way by:

- Using a palette of materials, including red brick, to reflect the materials in the surrounding area and help enhance the sense of place.
- Designing the height of the proposed development to respond to, and minimise impact on, neighbouring properties. The proposed development ‘steps down’ from four storeys to three storeys at the ‘ends’ of the building, closest to the surrounding properties, in order to minimise potential shadowing effects on neighbouring gardens. The roof is designed to be flat in order to reduce the height of the building.
- Lowering the overall level of the site in order to accommodate the proposed development. This will ensure that the proposed development is ‘set down’ the slope, thereby ensuring that the height of the building sits comfortably alongside existing neighbouring properties.
- Designing the footprint of the proposed development around the root protection areas (RPAs) of existing trees (while the trees themselves are off-site, their RPAs encroach into the site).
- Making improvements to the boundary between the south of the site and the public footpath that links Lyndhurst Road with Thirlmere Avenue.

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Safeguarding Amenity

The layout of the Proposed Development has been designed to help safeguard the amenity of surrounding residents. The design of the scheme achieve the recommended 20m offset identified in Policy DM4. It is proposed that tree planting will be used to assist with screening of the proposed development. A landscaping scheme will be controlled by way of a condition attached to any consent. The layout of the proposed development along the south-west boundary facing Thirlmere Avenue addresses overlooking by setting the proposed building below the level of the existing gardens.

Sustainable Design

Sustainable design principles are proposed to be incorporated into the proposed development to ensure that it adequately takes account of the effects of climate change, through building construction and site layout.

The following measures are proposed to be incorporated into the design:

- The development has been located close to existing community facilities and amenities, with local schools, shops and transport links all within a short walk of the site;
- A 'Fabric First' approach will be taken to reducing energy demand and consumption within the proposed development. This includes providing a well-insulated building envelope;
- Use of mechanical ventilation with heat recovery (MVHR) which will reduce the energy needed to heat the homes through the use of heat recovery;
- Installation of photo voltaic (PV) or combined PV and solar thermal panel array on the roof of the central block;
- Proposed use of low flush toilets in the development to reduce wastage of water;
- The orientation and layout of the proposed building, in an 'h' shape, enables all apartments to have direct sunlight throughout the course of the day;
- Protection of existing root protection areas of trees off-site through the orientation of the proposed development and, in the proposed car park, through the use of non-dig hard surfacing along with any necessary tree protection fencing;
- Sustainable drainage systems will be integrated to ensure that surface water run-off from the development will be no greater than the current rate;
- Cycling is promoted through the provision of secure cycle storage, integrated into the design of the building.

Open Space

The proposed development includes the provision of a communal garden. This provides an amenity space and opportunity for informal play for residents and enhances the setting for the dwellings overlooking the space. The communal garden will have defensible planting and a path around the perimeter of the building, which transitions into a soft landscaping/grassed area in the centre. The design of the building will ensure the creation of a well-defined space with good levels of surveillance over the communal garden to enhance the feeling of security.

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All ground floor apartments will have access to their own private patio area.

Trees and Landscaping

In order to identify all trees that may reasonably be affected by the proposed development and assess the direct and indirect impact of the scheme upon those trees, a tree survey has been completed and a Detailed Arboricultural Report is submitted with the application.

Whilst there are no trees within the redline boundary of the site itself, the canopies and root protection areas of trees just outside of the site encroach across the redline boundary and into the developable area. A total of five arboricultural features were surveyed within the Study Area (defined as all trees whose root protection area may be directly impacted by development). These comprise four moderate quality trees and a single group of three low quality trees. The identified arboricultural impacts can be successfully mitigated through the implementation of appropriate tree protection measures as identified in the Arboricultural Report. The proposed development has been orientated in such a way as to avoid impact on RPAs where possible; the footprint of the proposed building has been designed around RPAs to prevent any damage or removal of trees. In the area car park, non-dig hard surfacing will be used along with any necessary tree protection fencing.

New trees are proposed to be planted across the site. New trees will be planted as part of the front entrance courtyard and are proposed to be used to screen the development along the north west boundary. Detailed planting proposals will be secured through planning condition.

The adopted proposals map shows a Green Link (Policy DM17) connecting Thirlmere Avenue with Oxford Road, running adjacent to the south-east boundary of the site. The use of a retaining wall and proposed planting along this boundary will help to improve the boundary and its relationship with the path, thereby enhancing the Green Link and complying with the aims of Policy DM17.

Parking provision

Car parking provision within the proposed development will be provided with reference to the maximum standards set out by Reading Borough Council in the Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (adopted 31st October 2011). The site is within 'Zone 3 Secondary Core Area'. The parking standards within Zone 3 for flats are set out below.

- C3 Dwelling Flat 1-2 bed: 1.5 spaces per dwelling
- Visitor Parking: 1 space per 4 dwellings (Flats only)
- 1 space per 16sqm of D1 community use

The Parking Standards SPD states that, 'should a developer require fewer spaces than are set out here then there would need to be demonstration, to the Highway Authority's satisfaction, that there would be no detriment to highway safety as a result'.

The RBC Transport Development Control Officer provided advice regarding the interpretation of parking standards and how they would apply to the development in a memo dated 12th October 2017. The memo states that, "The Council's residential parking standards have been revised to minimum / required standards and are therefore in line with the National Planning Policy (NPPF) which states among other things that parking provision

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should be based on local car ownership levels.... Car ownership levels within the Norcot Ward indicate that car ownership is in the region 0.93 parking spaces per dwelling.”

The proposed development includes 20 parking spaces; a ratio of 0.95 per unit, which will be provided at the entrance to the site, benefitting from natural surveillance from adjacent dwellings and movement corridors.

The proposed level of car parking is deemed appropriate to serve the site, on the basis that:

- The proposed community use is intended to serve the local populous, and as such the majority of trips to and from the community use would be on foot or by bicycle, and not by car. This is supported by the site’s sustainable location.
- Use of the proposed community building would be promoted during the week and especially during working hours when demand for the spaces by residents would be lower. Whilst the community centre will be available for hire during the weekend users will be informed that there is limited parking available.
- The ratio of parking spaces per dwelling equates to 0.95, which is in excess of local car ownership levels within the Norcot Ward (which is 0.93 parking spaces per dwelling). Furthermore, it should be noted that development comprises predominantly social rented units, in which car ownership levels are historically recognised to be lower than that of privately rented / owned flats.
- Reading Borough Council would retain ownership of the site and would be able to control the allocation / use of the spaces, so that demand does not exceed provision.

The proposals fully comply with NPPF guidance (specifically paragraph 105), in that they include appropriate car parking provision that takes into consideration the accessibility of the site by sustainable modes (including public transport), and also that they reflect local car ownership levels.

Waste Storage

The Proposed Development includes adequate provision of waste storage as required by Policy CS2. Communal bin storage for waste and recycling is provided in close proximity to the apartments, in a convenient locations for collection.

In light of all the above design aspects, it is considered that, in respect of delivering high quality design the Proposed Development is compliant with Core Strategy Policies CS1, CS2, CS7, CS24, CS29 and CS38 as well as Sites and Detailed Policies Document Policies DM1, DM4, DM10, DM16, DM17, and DM18.

5.6. Transport

Vehicle access to the site is proposed directly from Lyndhurst Road, as per the existing arrangement. The existing car parking area located to the west of the site will be redeveloped. Car parking will instead be provided at the east of the site, where there is currently an access road and turning area.

All parking spaces have been designed to standards, and will be fully accessible by car.

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As per the existing arrangement, pedestrian access will be directly from the existing footways provided along Lyndhurst Road. Cyclists will be able to access the site directly from the existing road network.

The site is located within 200m walk distance of bus stops located on Oxford Road, which is in line with IHT guidelines.

The proposals are not anticipated to generate significant vehicle or multi-modal trips and are therefore not anticipated to adversely impact on local highway safety or operation.

Traffic impacts during construction can be managed through the use of a Construction Management Plan which would require contractors to demonstrate how they intend to carry out works prior to starting on site. The approval of a Construction Management Plan would be secured by way of a planning condition attached to any consent.

It is considered that the proposed development complies with Core Strategy Policy CS22 and Site and Detailed Policies Document Policy DM12.

5.7. Drainage Strategy

A Drainage Strategy Statement is submitted with the application.

The site has an existing surface water discharge network controlling surface water. In designing an appropriate drainage strategy for the site it has been assumed that surface water from this site will discharge to the local surface water system (Thames Water sewer in Lyndhurst Road). Surface water attenuation will be provided to limit runoff up to the 1 in 100 year + 40 climate change event. The maximum calculated storage volume for this would be 64m³. This volume can be provided within the redline boundary outside of adoptable roads and structures.

It is proposed that foul water discharge from the site would be connected to the existing Thames Water infrastructure in Lyndhurst Road.

It is considered the proposed development complies with policies DM1 of the Sites and Detailed Policies DPD and Core Strategy Policies CS1 and CS34.

5.8. Ecology and Biodiversity

A Preliminary Ecological Report is submitted with the application. This provides information on the ecological resources present or potentially present at the site. The survey found that the majority of the site consisted of hardstanding. In addition, areas of scrub offer potential to support bats and be used by nesting birds in the breeding season. The existing building on the site was assessed as having low roosting potential for bats. In addition, the site sits within a wider landscape which has suitable habitat for foraging and commuting bats.

Should any vegetation removal be carried out during the nesting bird season (March – September inclusive) then a nesting bird check would need to be carried out no earlier than 24 hours prior to the commencement of works.

The PEA recommended that emergence surveys should be undertaken in order to determine whether bats are utilising the building on the site for roosting. In line with current best practice (Bat Surveys: Good Practice Guidelines 3rd edition, Collins, 2016), it is recommended

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that one emergence survey is undertaken during May to August (inclusive). Other than their potential to support birds and bats, the habitats identified within the Phase 1 habitat survey are considered to be of low nature conservation interest.

In light of the conclusions of the PEA, a bat survey was undertaken on the building in August 2017. The dusk emergence and dawn re-entry survey confirmed the likely absence of roosts from the building with no bats observed entering or leaving the building. However, the timing of arrival and departure of bats on-site indicate that bats roost close by. The presence of potential roosting features, as well as the behaviour of a common pipistrelle bat flying close to the building close to sunrise during the pre-dawn survey, indicates a residual risk that bats may choose to roost in the building in the future. A precautionary approach to the demolition of the building has therefore been recommended due to the low level risk of the building supporting individual bats.

It is considered that the proposed development is in conformity with Core Strategy Policy CS36.

5.9. Heritage and Archaeology

The site does not contain any scheduled monuments, world heritage sites or listed buildings. The closest listed building lies 500m to the west and is the Grade II listed Kentwood Farmhouse and Outhouse (A4). The site does not lie within a conservation area and the LPA does not hold archaeological priority area/alert areas. There are no locally listed buildings within the 500m study area.

An Archaeological Desk Based Assessment has been undertaken and is submitted with this application. The desk-based study assesses the impact on buried heritage assets (archaeological remains).

Buried heritage assets that may be affected by the proposals comprise post-medieval agricultural features (ditches, cultivation soils) of negligible heritage significance and, possibly, previously unrecorded prehistoric artefactual remains (uncertain but possibly moderate potential), of low heritage significance.

Berkshire Archaeology has indicated the presence of a nearby earthwork bank of possible archaeological interest. Based on current information; the asset is considered to be of low heritage significance, since there is no evidence to support its early date. In accordance with the NPPF, the feature is not considered to warrant a setting assessment in response to the proposed development and it not considered a material consideration. It also lies outside of the site boundary; consequently there are no archaeological impacts associated with construction of the proposed development.

It is considered that the proposed development is in conformity with Core Strategy Policy CS33.

5.10. Sustainable communities

The site is in an intrinsically sustainable location being close to existing services and amenities, and close to public transport. The site benefits from good access to a number of facilities and amenities which are within walking distance of the site. The site has schools, supermarkets and shops within a 1km radius of the site.

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The nature of the Proposed Development in delivering a quantum of affordable housing fulfils social sustainability objectives by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations, thereby enhancing access to suitable housing. The provision of upgraded community facilities, co-located with housing, contributes to the promotion of socially inclusion communities.

Inclusive access has been taken into account in the design of the proposed development. Level access is provided to the ground floor apartments and to the refuse and bike stores. The Community Centre has level access from the car park.

In light of the above it is considered that the Proposed Development is compliant with Core Strategy Policies CS3, CS4, CS5, CS9 and Sites and Detailed Policies Document Policy DM3.

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6.0 Conclusions

The proposed will deliver considerable benefit in respect of affordable housing provision, and is supported through national guidance and specific local policies.

The scheme will deliver:

- Provision of 21 new affordable one and two bed dwellings close to local services, comprising a housing mix that meets identifies needs;
- Development of a 105sqm (NIA) building for community use to replacing the existing youth building with an upgraded and modernised building that is fit for purpose;
- Creation of a private communal courtyard garden for use by all residents of the development;
- Access to private amenity space for each apartment, either through provision of a private patio area for ground floor dwellings, or provision of private balconies for dwellings above ground level;
- Reflection of the local vernacular in terms of materials selection to ensure that the proposed development respects and reinforces the local built character.
- Provision of 20 car parking spaces and secure, on-site bicycle storage providing 21 spaces;
- Implementation of Root Protection Areas around trees which encroach onto the site in order to prevent any damage or removal of any trees;
- Provision of new trees and landscaping.

As identified in this statement and the other supporting information, the development is considered to be a wholly appropriate for the site and its context, which has been justified in accordance with the planning policy requirements.

In conclusion, it has been demonstrated that the proposals have been informed by, and are developed in accordance with, national, regional and local planning policies. The overriding social, economic and environmental impacts of the scheme are positive, and where, potential impacts have been identified, suitable mitigation measures have been deployed to either remove or minimise the significance of potential effects. The proposal acceptability in planning policy terms provides a clear route for consenting the scheme in line with the normal development management process.

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Appendix 1 Drawing Register

7870_PL101_rev A Location Plan
7870_PL102_rev B Rendered Site Plan
7870_PL103_rev A Roof Plan
7870_PL104_rev A Proposed Ground Floor
7870_PL105_rev A Proposed First and Second Floor
7870_PL106_rev A Proposed Third Floor
7870_PL107_rev A Proposed South East and North East Elevations
7870_PL108_rev A North West and South West Elevations
7870_PL109_rev A Proposed Sections A-A, B-B and C-C
7870_PL110_rev A Artist Impression from Lyndhurst Road
7870_PL111 Areas for CIL Calculations