

Non-Technical Air Quality Report

57 Baker Street, Reading

Prepared For
BDS Surveyors Ltd

8869
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bell cornwell

CHARTERED TOWN PLANNERS

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 On behalf of our client, Bell Cornwell LLP have been instructed to produce this report to accompany the application at 57 Baker Street, Reading, RG1 7XX. The application relates to developing the existing vacant site with residential development of 9 dwellings, comprising 2no 2-bed and 7no 3-bed dwellings with associated external works.
- 1.2 This report is specifically in response to the validation requirement that an air quality assessment is submitted, *‘where a development would introduce a sensitive use (such as residential, schools and nurseries, hospitals, care facilities) into, or intensify such uses within an Air Quality Management Area, detrimental effects on that use will be mitigated. Mitigation measures should be detailed on any planning application’*.
- 1.3 The proposed use comprises residential development and the site is located within the Air Quality Management Area. It therefore requires an air quality assessment report as part of the application. There is no requirement for this to be a technical document, the level of information provided must be consistent with the nature of the area, the type of development and the size of development proposed.
- 1.4 There are two clear areas of consideration:
- i) The impact of the development on the Air Quality of the area
 - ii) The impact of the existing Air Quality on the proposed development.



2 AIR QUALITY ASSESSMENT

- 2.1 Paragraph 124 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out that *‘planning policies should sustain compliance with and contribute towards EU limit values or national objectives for pollutants, taking into account the presence of Air Quality Management Areas and the cumulative impacts on air quality from individual sites in local areas. Planning decisions should ensure that any new development in Air Quality Management Areas is consistent with the local air quality action plan’*.
- 2.2 The NPPF provides a definition for Air Quality Management Areas – *‘Areas designated by local authorities because they are not likely to achieve national air quality objectives by the relevant deadlines’*. As said in the introduction, according to the Proposals Map (adopted October 2012), the application site is located within the Air Quality Management Area. In some areas of Reading the levels of nitrogen dioxide are currently exceeding National Air Quality Objectives and EU limit value level. To tackle this, the Council declared a single Air Quality Management Area across a large area of Reading.
- 2.3 As set out above in the NPPF local policies are required to address air quality. Policy DM19 in the Sites and Detailed Policies Document (adopted 2012) address air quality across the borough, it states:

Development should have regard to the need to improve air quality and reduce the effects of poor air quality.

- i. Development that would detrimentally affect air quality will not be permitted unless the effect is to be mitigated. The following criteria should be taken into account:*
 - Whether the proposal, including when combined with the cumulative effect of other developments already permitted, would significantly reduce air quality;*
 - Whether the development is within, or accessed via, an Air Quality Management Area; and*
 - Whether it can be demonstrated that a local reduction in air quality would be offset by an overall improvement in air quality, for instance through reduction in the need to travel.*
- ii. Where a development would introduce sensitive uses (such as residential, school and nurseries, hospitals, care facilities) into, or intensify such uses within, an Air Quality Management Area, detrimental effects on that use will be mitigated, mitigation measures should be detailed in any planning application.*



- iii. *Where required, planning obligations will be used to secure contributions to measure to tackle poor air quality monitoring.*
- 2.4 This policy is straightforward in what it is trying to achieve, which is to improve air quality, and reduce the effects of poor air quality in Reading. The policy fulfils the Council's duty to meet the relevant targets identified in the NPPF. The proposed development will not negatively impact on the Council's targets.
- 2.5 The existing site is vacant, however, it was formerly occupied by various single storey workshop buildings and a builder's yard and due to economic circumstances the workshop buildings were demolished in 2010. Since then the site has been vacant and unused, and whilst it is kept secure, self-seeded weed growth has become established. However, until a new use is established on site through an implemented planning permission, the site maintains its commercial builder's yard use. Since in Reading, nitrogen dioxide has been identified as the problem for air quality, of which road traffic has been shown to be the predominant source of pollution, the focus is on the road traffic associated with the site and the proposed development.
- 2.6 Whilst the site is currently vacant, the site is a brownfield site and should be encouraging the sustainable redevelopment of the site. Despite the historic commercial use of the site, the site is located within a residential area. Minus a few exceptions, the site is nearly completely surrounded by residential properties. DM19 sets out that residential is a sensitive use, when considering air quality. However, the test needs to be whether there will be any detrimental effects on that use. There will be 7 parking spaces with the development. In the previous application the Council conditioned that residential units will not be entitled to a parking permit, it is likely a similar condition will be implemented this time. On this basis, it can safely be assumed that that there will be 7 vehicles associated with the site at any one time under this proposal.
- 2.7 The existing site appears to have no restrictions in terms of vehicle movements or parking, therefore in a commercial use the site could experience a high level of vehicle movements. The proposed residential development would help to restrict the vehicle movements associated with the site.
- 2.8 The scale of the proposed development and fact that the application will be removing a commercial site for a residential area, means no mitigation measures are required. The Council



have previously found the proposed development on site acceptable without the need for air quality mitigation measures, the situation is no different now (application: 1411116).

- 2.9 The proposed residential use will not have any detrimental impact on the level of Air Quality in the area. Likewise, there is no evidence to suggest that the surrounding properties are materially affected by the air quality. If the role of the AQMA is to improve the air quality, then the proposed development which removes a builders' yard use achieves this. Generally, however, a new development of this nature in a large urban area is going to have no material impact on the quality of air in the area.



3 CONCLUSION

- 3.1 On the basis that the application is reusing a brownfield site, which currently has a commercial use, the proposed residential development is likely going to improve the air quality of the immediate surrounding area. Residential development of this scale is not harmful in terms of impacting on air quality and will not reduce the air quality of the area.
- 3.2 The site is located within a residential area of Reading, surrounded on near all sides by residential properties. Despite local policy classifying residential development as a 'sensitive use', the context of the site and surrounding area mean the proposed development is acceptable. Whilst the current site is vacant of its previous commercial use, the potential of the commercial use of the site needs to be considered against the proposed development, rather than the vacant site.
- 3.3 This report satisfies the validation requirement and demonstrates that the proposed development will not impact on the air quality of the area and that there will be no impact on the proposed residential units.