

Design and access statement

Reading Borough Council

For

Ground floor shop extension (front), double storey rear extensions and conversion of upper parts to form 4no self-contained flats of Use Class C3.

At

40 Church Street
Caversham Reading
RG4 8AU

By

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Design and access statement

Introduction

This design and access statement is written in support of the following proposal: -

Ground floor shop extension (front), double storey rear extensions and conversion of upper parts to form 4no self-contained flats of Use Class C3.

Planning policy

The proposal has been considered in line with planning policy at a local national and local level.

The National Planning Policy Framework

The NPPF was published on 27th March 2012. There is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (Paragraph 14) which particularly applies to housing applications (paragraph 49). Local Planning Authorities should adopt a positive approach looking for solutions rather than problems (Paragraph 187). It also emphasises good design (Paragraph 56). It confirms the Government's commitment to delivering a wide choice of quality homes that people want and need, creating sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities (Paragraph 50).

Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard

This standard deals with internal space within new dwellings and is suitable for application across all tenures. It sets out requirements for the Gross Internal (floor) Area of new dwellings at a defined level of occupancy as well as floor areas and dimensions for key parts of the home, notably bedrooms, storage and floor to ceiling height.

Local Policy Framework

Reading Council's LDF Core Strategy (2008, Altered 2015), Sites and the Detailed Policies (2012, Altered 2015) Document and the Reading Central Area Action Plan (2009).

Site location and description

The application site comprises of a terraced building of two storeys in the centre of Caversham. The ground floor has a commercial use which opens directly onto the pavement at church street. The first floor is used ancillary to the commercial space. To the rear of the site is a yard with gated access taken from the car park accessed from Chester Street. There is a single storey extension at the rear which extends all the way to the rear boundary which is used as part of the commercial premises. The rear yard is used for servicing purposes.

The surrounding area is characterised by similar uses with a mix of building types. The site is in a highly sustainable location in terms of proximity to local services, transport links and easy access to the wider community. The application site is not within a Conservation Area, it contains no listed building and is situated within Flood Zone 1 and so has a low probability of flooding.

Use

This application involves the change of use of the upper floors from commercial A1 to Residential C3. It is accepted that Local Policy CS27 of the Core Strategy seeks that the retail character of the centres identified within the Borough is retained as these are the main contributor to the vitality and viability of these Centres. Whilst other uses play a valuable role, there should not be an over-concentration of non-retail uses in one part of the Centre. The policy indicates that 50% of A1, A2, A3, A4, A5 and Sui Generis uses within each centre should be in A1 use.

The proposal would retain the A1 use at ground floor level and is considered to be in accordance with Policy CS27. In terms of the change of use of the upper floor(s), this was predominately used as ancillary space and not aimed at visiting members of the public. On this basis the loss of commercial space will not adversely impact the vitality of vibrancy of the local retail centre.

The change of use is further justified on the following grounds: -

- The existing building is oversized and underused.
- The upper parts of the building lends itself well to being converted into flats.
- The Council recognises that flat developments can make an important contribution to housing provision, in particular smaller units and that they can make more efficient use of urban land, particularly in town centre locations.
- The surrounding area is characterised by commercial uses at ground floor with residential above.
- The site has good access to local transport networks.
- The site is in close proximity to an array of local amenities, restaurants, shopping centres, schools, doctor's surgeries, and leisure facilities.
- The proposal is located close to parks and open space.

On the above basis the site is considered to be highly sustainable in line with NPPF and the principle of the development is acceptable.

Amount

The proposal provides accommodation for 4no self-contained flats and retains the commercial use on the ground floor (which is to be increased). The proposed schedule of accommodation is as follows: -

Unit No.	Floor	Occupation	GI/Am2
Commercial	Ground	A1 shop	80
Flat 1	Ground	2B 3P	69
Flat 2	First	2B 3P	61
Flat 3	First	1B2P	50
Flat 4	First	1B1P	37

Policy CS15 of the Reading Core Strategy (2008, altered 2015) states that the appropriate density and mix of residential development will be informed by the characteristics of the area in which it is located and accessibility. Given the town centre location it is considered that the proposed mix of 2 x 2 bed, 1 x 1 bed and 1 x Studio flat will be acceptable in this location. It would be unreasonable to assume that family accommodation, i.e. 3 bed plus would be appropriate in this location.

The importance of ensuring that all new residential development is of a high quality with good living conditions has been a paramount consideration in the planning of the new residential flat units. It is noted that minimum floor area standards ensure an adequate amount of space is provided in residential development. In light of this, the proposed flat areas and room sizes adhere to and go beyond the technical housing standards.

It is acknowledged that the nationally described space standard sets a minimum ceiling height of 2.3 meters for at least 75% of the gross internal area of the dwelling so that new housing is of adequate quality, especially in terms of light, ventilation and sense of space. All flats exceed the minimum height recommendation.

In terms of amenity space, given the town centre setting and the fact that the units are not orientated at families, little to no amenity space is proposed. On balance this approach is considered acceptable particularly given the proximity to Christchurch Meadows.

Further to the above the scheme is able to support adequate provision of cycle parking which promotes sustainable transport methods. Two cycle spaces are proposed for the two bed units and one for each of the one bed units (6 total). The proposal provides adequate refuse and recycling provision within convenient access of the street for collection. 8no 240 L bins are proposed. In regards to car parking none is proposed owing to the sites town centre location and good transport links.

Layout

The internal layout of the flats has been planned around the sites access arrangements. Internally all of the new flats have been designed to ensure that adequate ventilation and sunlight and daylight reaches habitable rooms. The following additional design criteria has governed the design: -

- A single bedroom has a floor area of at least 7.5m² and is at least 2.15m wide
- A double (or twin bedroom) has a floor area of at least 11m² and is at least 2.75m wide.
- A living room has a width of at least 3m and a floor area relative to its GIA.
- Any area with a headroom of less than 1.5m is not counted within the Gross Internal Area unless used solely for storage. Any other area that is used solely for storage and has a headroom of 900-1500mm (such as under eaves) is counted at 50% of its floor area, and any area lower than 900mm is not counted at all.
- The minimum floor to ceiling height is 2.3m for at least 75% of the Gross Internal Area
- The minimum width of hallways and other circulation spaces inside the home should be 900mm.
- An accessible bathroom is to be provided in every dwelling

Scale and appearance

There is an existing single storey extension across part of the width at the rear of the site. This extends all the way to the rear boundary. As part of the proposal this existing extension would be demolished and replaced with a double storey rear extension. The new extension would be the same depth as the original and would be 5.5m in width. Instead of a lean-to roof, a dual pitch is proposed. The extension would be slightly taller than the neighbours rear extension at number 38, however owing to the roof design, at the boundary, the new extension would be of a similar height to number 38. The proposed extension would be located more than 2.5m from the boundary of number 40/42. Both extensions and host properties at numbers 38 and 42 have no windows situated within the flank walls.

The rear wall of the existing building will be extended by 2.4m. Given that number 38 has no windows to the rear elevation at the upper floors there can be no adverse impact. At number 42 the upper floors are in use as commercial and so there is no adverse impact in terms of residential amenity.

The extensions would be considered in keeping with the surrounding area in terms of scale and design. The proposed materials would match the existing building to create continuity and preserve the host building appearance.

Landscaping

There is potential for new hard and soft landscaping strategies to the rear yard area.

Access

In terms of inclusive design, the proposed residential unit will be compliant, where appropriate with Part M of the Building Regulations. The following has been considered through careful design considerations: -

- Enable ease of use of all entrances for the widest range of people.
- Enable convenient movement in hallways and through doorways.
- Enable convenient movement in rooms for as many people as possible.
- Enable people to have a reasonable line of sight from a seated position in the living room and to use at least one window for ventilation in each room.
- Locate regularly used service controls, or those needed in an emergency, so that they are usable by a wide range of household members - including those with restricted movement and limited reach.
- The provision of an accessible WC.

Sustainability

The proposal emphasises that development should make a contribution to minimising carbon dioxide emissions in accordance with guidance set in the London Plan. The relevant measures to be undertaken include: -

- High standards of insulation to reduce the amount of energy required to maintain comfortable temperature levels.
- The use of thermally massive materials, which represents the ability of materials to store heat or cool, is important as a means to control building temperatures and better manage day/night fluctuations.
- Efficient lighting and appliances will reduce energy consumption.
- Low temperature heating systems.
- The use of an energy efficient water heating system.
- Ensuring water consumption does not exceed 105 litres per head per day. The designs seek to minimise water use through a variety of techniques and technologies, including the fitting of water efficient toilets, taps, showers, dishwashers and washing machines.