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DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

Project **RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT**

Address **57 BAKER STREET, READING, BERKSHIRE, RG1 7XX**

Client **MESSRS WG AND CH LITTEN**

BDS Surveyors Limited

Date: 8th August 2018

Ref: TCG/6671-designstat Rev A

INTRODUCTION

The attached application seeks consent to develop the existing vacant site with a residential development of 9 dwellings, comprising 2no 2-bed and 7no 3-bed dwellings with associated external works. The application is a resubmission of application 141116, approved on 30th March 2015, but now expired.

THE SITE

The site is on the south side of Baker Street and falls within the Town Centre as defined in the Local Plan.

The site is currently vacant. Formerly it was occupied by various single storey workshop buildings and a builder's yard, although faced with ongoing business rates expenses combined with the absence of any viable letting opportunities to create income from the site, the applicants chose to demolish the workshop buildings in 2010. Since then the site has been vacant and unused, and whilst it is kept secure, self-seeded weed growth has become established.



Views of the existing site

EXISTING BUILDINGS ADJACENT TO THE SITE

The site lies within a predominantly residential area. The Baker Street properties to the north of the site are largely residential with isolated instances of office use, Jesse Terrace to the east is entirely residential, Epping Close to the south is entirely residential and Russell Street to the west is entirely residential with the exception an isolated instance of office use at the junction with Epping Close.



View of the Epping Close apartments



View of the rear of the Russell Street properties



View of the rear of the Baker Street properties



View of the rear of the Jesse Terrace properties

VIABILITY OF THE EXISTING USE

Given the almost entirely residential nature of the surrounding buildings, the somewhat unusual site shape and limited vehicular access for HGV's, the site does not lend itself well to an ongoing industrial use. Far better opportunities for industrial activity exist elsewhere in the borough which is largely why the property remained vacant and was subsequently cleared.

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

Government Policy is clear in that appropriate use of existing redundant buildings and sites within our towns must be made in order to meet Government targets for new housing whilst also relieving the pressure for building in the open countryside. This site is a perfect example where such urban regeneration can satisfy these requirements whilst also having a positive effect on the locality.

PLANNING HISTORY

Relevant planning history consists of application 141116 approved on 30th March 2015. This application was for an identical scheme proposal to the attached application, but has since expired.

SITE APPRAISAL

The proposed development represents an opportunity to improve what is currently an unused plot that is falling into disrepair, and in doing so have a consequential beneficial effect on the immediate locality.

The scheme proposals must be respectful of the nearby listed buildings in order to maintain their setting, and also mindful of the existing built form surrounding the site in general. Given the primarily traditional Victorian building stock in the locality, the site lends itself for a mews development of traditional housing. With it being an infill development, building heights are to be subservient to the existing street-frontage properties. The scheme design must also provide appropriate parking provision, amenity areas, refuse storage, cycle storage and landscaping to meet policy requirements.

THE DESIGN PROPOSALS

The proposals consist of a development of 9 dwellings in a mews arrangement of two terraces. The larger of the two is positioned in an east-west orientation across the site, providing 4no 3-bedroom town houses within the widest part of the site reducing down to 2no 2-bed mews cottages, reflecting the reduction in width in this area of the site. The smaller building is terrace of 3no 3-bedroom town houses in a north-south orientation.

The two buildings are orientated to avoid loss of privacy and overlooking to the adjacent houses and flats, whilst also making appropriate use of the site in terms of providing parking and amenity area.

CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

The previous removal of the existing single storey buildings, builder's yard workshops and stores has had a positive effect on the conservation area, although as a vacant site it now looks untidy and has the potential to attract unsociable behaviour. Bringing the site back into use with an appropriate development designed to complement the existing built environment and the nearby instances of listed property will serve to positively enhance the area and compliment the conservation area status of the locality.

DWELLING TYPES

Plots 1 and 2 are 2-bedroom mews cottages over 2 storeys. Plots 3-6 are 3-bedroom town houses over 3 storeys, and plots 7 to 9 are also 3-bedroom town houses spread over 3 storeys. All dwellings benefit from their own entrance door and their own private amenity space. It is considered that the provision of amenity space to every unit is a positive reflection of the appropriate density of development for a town centre site, achieving the appropriate balance of maximising the benefit from the site whilst also creating good quality accommodation.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The application recognises the need for the scheme to contribute towards Affordable Housing within the Borough, and the contents of the supplementary planning document for Affordable Housing are noted. In accordance with Policy DM6, Development Schemes of 5 to 9 units are required to make an on-site contribution of 20%. The proposed scheme is for 9 units and 20% of this equals 1.8 units, rounded up to 2 units. Therefore, in order to satisfy planning policy requirements, plots 8 and 9 are offered as an on-site provision for affordable housing, secured by way of a Section 106 Agreement. The application is accompanied by Title Deed documentation in readiness for instructions to be passed to the Council's Legal Department.

APPEARANCE

The buildings have been designed in a mews arrangement with an appearance to fully respect the original character of Baker Street, Russell Street, and indeed the vast majority of Victorian terrace housing within the Oxford Road area. Traditional materials of brick walls, relatively low pitched slate roofs and white painted timber windows are shown, combined with features such as splay bay windows and lead capped roof hips. Particular attention is paid to the proportion of the windows in order to create a cohesive appearance. Whilst relevant in terms of height in relation to the built environment, for the purposes of external appearance the existing buildings in Epping Close have not influenced the design.

OVERLOOKING AND LOSS OF PRIVACY

The development has been carefully designed to avoid the creation of overlooking aspects leading to loss of privacy. For units 1-6, units 1 and 2 are located opposite the rear of numbers 49 and 51 Baker Street and are therefore restricted to 2 storeys in order to avoid elevated views, whilst the frontage of plots 3-6 look out over the site access and number 55 Baker Street but in a manner which does lead to loss of privacy. To the rear, whilst it is acknowledged that the separation distance of the boundary is approximately 5m, the areas beyond the site boundary consist of the gravel parking area to the offices of 61 Russell Street, and the garages/parking area to the Epping Close flats. Therefore no existing private amenity areas are affected.

Plots 7-9 are positioned to have appropriate separation distance to the flank wall of plot 1, whilst to the rear, the building has ample rear garden length and separation distance measured to the rear of the Jesse Terrace properties.

ACCESS AND PARKING

Access to the site is via the existing Baker Street gated entrance. Having originally been designed to cater for commercial vehicles, the access is appropriate in width for the necessary fire appliance access, therefore no alterations are proposed.



The existing gated entrance

With regard to parking the development provides a total of 8 car parking spaces, 1 of which is retained for use in conjunction with the 55A Baker Street with the remaining 7 associated with the development. Three of the spaces are in a parallel parking arrangement, making them available for wheelchair user use. The site also features an appropriate turning area provision in order to allow vehicles to enter and exit the site in forward gear, and the manoeuvring space also provides the ability for a fire appliance to gain access into the site to get within sufficient distance of plots 7-9 to comply with Building Regulation requirements for fire fighting purposes.

ALTERNATIVE METHODS OF TRANSPORT

The site is within walking distance of the Town Centre, allowing easy use of public transport. The proposals also feature a secure covered cycle store area, encouraging residents to use methods of transport other than the private car.

REFUSE DISPOSAL

The proposals include appropriate refuse storage for both land fill and recyclable waste on an individual unit basis. The refuse stores are provided adjacent to the site access, achieving the necessary objectives of being located away from dwellings whilst falling within the 25m of highway to allow easy collection by refuse operatives.

TREES AND PLANTING

The application is accompanied by a BS5837 Tree Survey. It is acknowledged that some removal of overhanging branches of trees in adjacent properties will be required. However the applicant has Common Law Right to remove hanging branches from trees at any time and therefore this is considered not to be a Planning Policy based matter.

However, as indicated on the site plan the appropriate density of development combined with an economic parking arrangement serves to ensure that ample opportunity exists for soft landscaping to be provided, and any pre-commencement condition regarding the requirement of a planting scheme will be accepted.

INCLUSIVE DESIGN

The development proposals are in compliance with Part M of the Building Regulations, providing hard standing level access from the parking area to all plot entrance doors. The entrance storeys provide appropriate door widths, and access to the principle living room and WC provision.

BOUNDARY TREATMENTS

The boundaries of the site primarily of brick walls varying in height and condition. Whilst in need of some attention the walls provide an effective site perimeter treatment and it is therefore proposed that they are retained, dismantled and capped at an appropriate height of approximately 2m and refinished to give an appropriate appearance. The one exception is the far most eastern boundary to the rear of plot 7-9, this is currently a 2.4m wire mesh fence and it is proposed that this is replaced by a 1.8m close boarded timber fence in order to provide improved screening to the rear gardens of the Jesse Terrace properties.

SUSTAINABILITY

The need to achieve sustainable development and to minimise the change in the earth's climate arising from the effect of heating the country's housing stock is recognised. The following provisions will be implemented during the scheme:

- The remaining site clearance will be undertaken by an approved demolition contractor, with the waste materials arising being shipped to a transfer station for recycling.
- Building materials for the new houses will be sourced from managed resources.
- The thermal performance of the new dwellings will achieve minimum standard of Level 3 of the Code for Sustainable Homes.
- The installation of modern service installations and controls combined with good thermal performance of the building fabric will serve to ensure reduced fuel consumption during the lifespan of the buildings.

CONTAMINATION

The previous 2008 planning application contained a desktop survey for contamination, plus some limited sampling on site. Whilst there is no knowledge of previous contaminating uses or any concern arising from the testing under taken to date, it is acknowledged that the site is currently hard-standing, and any pre-commencement condition requiring further investigation and reports to be submitted will be actioned.

AIR QUALITY

The application is accompanied by a non-technical air quality report, the conclusions of which confirm that there are no air quality issues present to prevent the principal of residential development going ahead.

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL)

It is acknowledged that the development proposals represent a net gain of dwellings and are therefore will attract a CIL payment in accordance with the Council's supplementary planning guidance. The application is duly accompanied by a CIL information form, along with a corresponding floor plan drawing to indicate how the total floor area figure has been arrived at. This has been calculated for plots 1 to 7 only, on the basis that plots 8 and 9 will not attract a CIL payment as they are being offered as affordable housing.

CONCLUSION

In light of the above, the attached application is considered to be an appropriate redevelopment of an existing redundant town centre site providing much needed housing at an affordable level. It is therefore respectfully requested that the application be considered favourably.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tony Grover', is positioned above a horizontal line.

Tony Grover

DipSurv MRICS MCABE
BDS Surveyors Limited