

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Target Date: 2/11/18

Application No: 181510

Address: 1a Stanley Grove

Proposal: Change of use of commercial building to 1-bed residential cottage

Case Officer: Anthony Scholes

Site Description and Surrounding Area

The subject site is a parcel of land is 112.5m² which historically formed part of the back garden of the adjacent 2 George Street. It is imagined that the building itself was an outbuilding of 2 George Street. The site is accessed via a narrow walkway which runs along the back garden of the properties along George Street and is immediately next to 1 Stanley Grove. The site is bound by residential properties to the North, and to the South by the Oxford Road Primary School. The immediate surrounds are predominantly residential to the North of Oxford Road, with a mix of uses along Oxford Road itself.

Proposal

The applicant seeks approval for the conversion of the premise from its previous use as a B8 storage and distribution warehouse to a 1-bed residential use.

Plans Considered

The agent supplied the following, received on 10 September 2018:

Drawing No: 3523/100 - Block and location plan

Drawing No: 3523/101 - Existing floor plans and elevations

Drawing No: 3523/200 - Proposed floor plans and elevations

Relevant Planning History

910196 - Change of use from storage and ancillary offices to light industrial with ancillary offices - Approved 03 March 1992

060931 - Proposed 4no skylights (retrospective) - Approved 08 March 2007

070296 - Change of use from storage building to residential unit - Refused 08 June 2007

071272 - Change of use from storage building to residential unit - Refused 14 September 2007

171454 - Certificate of lawful use for existing residential use of property - Withdrawn 09 October 2017

External Consultation Responses

Neighbouring owners and occupiers at were consulted by letter. A site notice was displayed. No responses have been received.

Internal Consultation Responses

Environmental Health - A response from RBC's environmental health officers was received noting no concern with the proposed development.

Transport - No concerns regarding the proposal were raised. It was noted that the provision of 1 parking space would be applicable, but due to the restricted access it would not be possible, in this instance, due to its proximity to the central core area and the site being well serviced by public transport the non-provision is acceptable. Conditions have also been recommended to ensure that provision is made for bin storage areas, cycle stores and the restriction on parking permits.

Equality Act 2010

In determining this application, the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. However, there is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application. Therefore in terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

Relevant Planning Policy and Guidance

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

National Planning Policy Framework

Reading Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2008)

Policy CS1 - Sustainable construction and design

Policy CS5 - Inclusive access

Policy CS7 - Design and the public realm

Policy CS11 - Use of employment land for alternative uses

Policy CS18 - Residential conversions

Policy CS24 - Car/cycle parking

Reading Central Action Plan

Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012)

Policy SD1 - Presumption in favour of sustainable development

Policy DM1 - Adaptation to climate change

Policy DM4 - Safeguarding amenity

Policy DM8 - Residential conversions

Policy DM10 - Private and communal outdoor space

Policy DM11 - Development of private residential gardens

Supplementary Planning Documents

Revised parking standard and design supplementary planning document

Residential conversions supplementary planning document

Appraisal

Introduction

The proposed development is located to the rear of what would have originally formed the garden space of 2 George Street, with the only access provided by a 25m long access, which is at its narrowest 1.5m wide. The current building exists and has done since the early 20th century.

The provision of a dwelling in this location represents an inconsistent urban form which disrupts the grain of the surrounding area.

Quality of internal accommodation

The proposed development does not represent a satisfactory level of residential amenity for future occupants. An occupier of the dwelling would suffer from a cramped living quarter without the benefit of suitable outlook. The only windows from the proposed dwelling would be skyward via the rooflights, alternatively the two windows which borrow the outlook of the adjoining properties with not protection that the outlook would remain unimpeded by structures on any adjoining property.

The proposed development is inconsistent with a number of aspects of DM4: Safeguarding amenity. As previously mentioned, the building is built up to the adjoining property boundary. It appears that an additional window to the proposed bedroom has been constructed on the building unlawfully. The proposed development will have a detrimental effect on the privacy of both the proposed dwelling and the amenity space of all adjoining properties.

Safety and security

The long and narrow access to the proposed development is not conducive to promoting a safe and accessible environment. The space has the possibility to present concealment points which could create a fear of crime. Although not specifically identified on the proposed plans, the development would require space to be provided on site for the storage of bins. Issue in terms of CS7, but not ultimately bad enough to warrant and reasons for refusal.

Amenity space/gardens

The proposal site is predominantly covered by the existing storage building. The conversion thereof would result in a dwelling which is constructed to each adjoining property boundary, as the proposed development is for a single detached house, the policies of Reading Borough Council's (RBC) Local Development Framework (LDF) require the provision of private amenity space. It is acknowledged that the provision of amenity space on the current site boundary is not possible which is considered to detrimentally affect the quality of the housing, which combined with the size of the dwelling would create poor living conditions for any future residents. Conclusion, poor but not a reason for refusal under policy DM10 context.

As the previous use was that of a B8 storage and distribution (online book store) service, the building currently displays materials which are industrial in appearance, for instance

metal sheet roof or similar non-tiled roofing, white painted brick walls. The building appears to be vacant.

The building as proposed does not include the provision of any changes to the structure and would further detract from the character and appearance of the area. It is acknowledged that the building, by virtue of its location, is not visible from the public realm; however it would be highly visible from all adjoining properties and, as such is considered unacceptable. But this is not directly as a result of this proposal so again, difficult to substantiate as a reason for refusal of the application.

Affordable Housing

The proposed development is for the conversion and does not involve construction of additional floor space and therefore does not require a contribution to affordable housing under Policy DM6.

Community infrastructure levy

The proposed development is less an 100m² and is therefore not CIL liable.

Conclusion

The historic B8 'storage and distribution' use is stated to no longer be viable but there is no evidence (sales/marketing) to support this; and the landowner is proposing to change the use to a residential dwelling. However, notwithstanding the unsympathetic way in which the existing structure interacts with its surroundings, the introduction of a residential use, through the necessity for outlooks, would unacceptably diminish/invade the privacy of the neighbouring property and the proposed residential unit itself.

RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE

Reasons for refusal:

1. The proposed residential use would not be provided with a satisfactory level of outlook, with the bedroom and living areas looking directly out onto adjoining properties. The proposed conversion, by reason of its location and positioning of windows and habitable rooms in relation to adjoining properties would create an unacceptable lack of privacy, and overlooking opportunities for current/future occupiers. For these reasons the proposed will have a significantly detrimental impact on the living environment of any new occupants by failing to provide a suitable level of amenity required by a class C3 dwelling, contrary to Policies DM4 (Safeguarding Amenity) and DM10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space) of the Reading Borough LDF; Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012, as altered 2015) and Policy CS7 'Design and the Public Realm' of the Core Strategy (Adopted January 2008)