

# TONY THORPE ASSOCIATES

## CHARTERED TOWN PLANNERS

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## **PLANNING DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT**

### **PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT:-**

OUTLINE APPLICATION FOR THE DEMOLITION OF EXISTING STORAGE BUILDING, WET DOCK AND SLIPWAY AND ERECTION OF TWO DETACHED DWELLINGS.

### **SITE LOCATION:-**

THE MOORINGS, MILL GREEN, LOWER CAVERSHAM, READING RG4 8EX

### **PLANS AND DOCUMENTS:-**

AJT/01 1:1250

Location Plan.

AJT/02 1:500

Site Plan.

Flood Risk Assessment.

Heads of Terms for Affordable Housing.

## **1.00 BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW**

### **1.01**

This statement accompanies an outline application for the erection of two detached dwellings on this 'brownfield' site classified by the Council as 'mooring and premises' that fronts the north bank of the Thames at Lower Caversham. It takes vehicular and pedestrian access from Mill Green and thence to Star Road.

### **1.02**

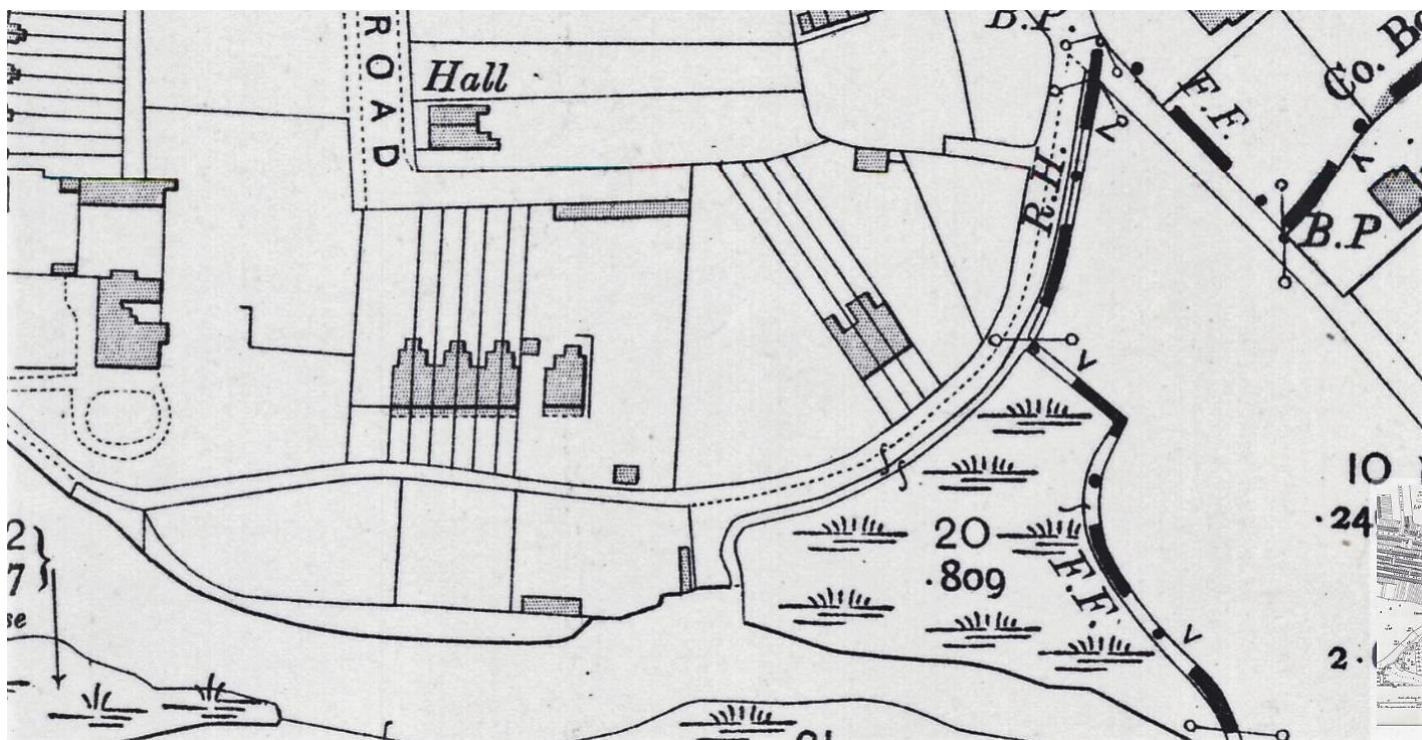
This application is one option to redevelop the site; the other option being live/work units as supported by paragraph 21 of the NPPF by which the Government wishes to "*...facilitate flexible working practices such as the integration of residential and commercial uses within the same unit.*".

### **1.03**

Whilst open market housing is the preferred option our client is also willing to consider the option of live/work units as a fall-back since the adjoining 'Better Boating' boat yard and chandlery to the east already integrates residential and commercial uses within the same unit (see Photo 1.). Please note that the existing storage building (see Photo 3.) is capable of conversion to residential use under GPDO Class 'P' (subject to standard notification).

### **1.04**

The site has an historic commercial use and the Ordnance Survey shows the presence of the existing covered commercial wet dock and slipway in 1898 and the storage shed in 1910. These buildings and the commercial use of the site were well established before the completion of more modern residential properties to the north. The attached 25 inch OS (Map 1. Overleaf) shows the situation as surveyed in 1912.



**MAP 1.** Extract from 25 inch OS revised 1912. The storage shed, covered wet dock and slipway are clearly visible along with the established vehicular access along Mill Green to both the site and the adjoining local ferryboat landing. The 'Better Boating' site now adjoining to the east is notated as marshland. OS License 100048991.



**AIRPHOTO 1.** This shows the same geographical area as Map 1. above some 94 years later. Previously open land has now been developed. Most notably the adjoining 'Better Boating' yard and chandlery to the east. The application site is catering for a total of six boats at this time.

1.05

An understanding of the history of the site is important since the Council's 6<sup>th</sup> August 2010 response to the applicant's pre-application enquiry asserted incorrectly that ***"From the site history it would appear that the site was extended into adjacent land to create a larger site for commercial use in the past, and then subdivided from the adjacent Boat Yard in recent years."***

1.06

As a matter of fact the application site has never been either extended or subdivided. The development of the adjoining 'Better Boating' yard and chandlery was entirely separate and by different owners who drained the original marsh, partly culverted existing streams and raised land levels up to that of the application site to reduce flooding. Prior to the 'Better Boating' use the land was allotments.

1.07

The application site was laid out before 1898 and subsequently run as a commercial enterprise providing a wet dock, slipway, moorings and secure storage. Airphoto 1. shows the site was still commercially active in 2006. In our submission the original commercial use has not been abandoned although it inevitably declined following the opening of the adjoining modern boat yard.

1.08

At the current time the roof (but not the walls) over the wet dock and slipway has been removed on grounds of safety pending imminent replacement (supported by the pre-application response). The commercial mooring area has been given a promenade frontage to the river laid out with brickwork, flower beds and paving to make it more attractive for private boats on tour. The lawful use of the storage building for use class B8 purposes continues as part of the Council Tax 'mooring and premises' use classification.

1.09

In the Council's 6<sup>th</sup> August 2010 response to the applicant's pre-application enquiry the site was described as a 'leisure plot'. We do not consider this assessment to be correct. The storage building has no toilet, cooking or washing facilities.

## **2.00 PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT**

2.01

The fall-back commercial use of the site is no longer viable with no reasonable prospect of it becoming so again in the foreseeable future. In response to this change in economic circumstances and against the background of a shortage of sites for residential development in Reading the site is being promoted for residential development.

2.02

The site is previously developed (brownfield) land set within the defined settlement boundary of Reading. In accordance with local and national planning policy it is sustainable and the NPPF advises planning authorities that development should be directed to sustainable sites such as this. Accordingly there is a presumption in favour of residential development.

## 2.03

The character of the area to the north of the application site is predominantly residential. The top floor of the two storey 'Better Boating' building adjoining to the east is also in legitimate residential use (see Photo 1. below). The 'Better Boating' yard is a very large riverfront commercial enterprise. Entering Reading along the Thames upstream from the east it is essentially the 'gateway' building that marks the boundary between the undeveloped riverbank downstream to Sonning and the developed Caversham riverbank upstream.



**PHOTO 1.** View north from south bank towpath showing the application site and existing storage shed on the left with the wet dock in the centre just in front of the prow of the blue narrowboat. The 'Better Boating' building is the flat roofed timber-clad building on the right. The top floor is in legitimate residential use. All photos dated 22/09/2017.



**PHOTO 2.** View north from King's Meadow riverbank showing the three-storey Heron Island riverside development. This development and the 'Better Boating' development essentially 'bookend' the application site which can be regarded as an infill site.

#### 2.04

The view which opens up upstream of the 'Better Boating' yard (Photo 1.) features the high-density, three-storey, Heron Island residential development (Photo 2.) as a conspicuous skyline backdrop. The application site is situated in-between these two very prominent 'statement' riverside developments and is in essence an infill development rounding off and completing the development of the north bank. The proposal will not prevent the future development of adjoining land to the west.

#### 2.05

New housing development on riverside sites is not precluded in principle so long as significant emphasis is given to compliance with development plan policies and other material considerations. The overall Caversham riverfront from the Chase to the west and 'Better Boating' to the east is nationally recognised as an attractive developed north riverbank opposite the Reading 'promenade'. The removal of the existing unattractive storage shed and its replacement with a pair of architect designed dwellings can only lead to an enhancement to the immediate riverside setting.

### **3.00 COMPLIANCE WITH PLANNING POLICY.**

#### 3.01

The most up to date statement of policy is the Draft Local Plan. The Caversham & Emmer Green section covers the site but has no policies specific to it. Kings Meadow is covered by policy CR14m however this only applies to the west end of the park and not the bank and towpath opposite the application site. From this document there appears to be a number of common themes relating to future riverfront development over and above normal planning considerations:-

- 1) There must be a reasonable setback from the riverbank. In this case the precedent set by on-site and adjoining buildings suggests a setback of between 2-4m.
- 2) The proposal should add to or maintain the setting and character of the Thames.
- 3) Wildlife Corridors must be maintained. The Policy DM17 corridor lies behind the site running along the footpath (the site is not in a Biodiversity Opportunity Area).
- 4) Cycle routes must be protected and extended.

#### 3.02

Overall SDPD and Core Strategy Policy is that green corridors along the Rivers Thames and Kennet will be protected and enhanced as a recreational and ecological resource.

#### 3.03

Core Strategy Policy CS37 relates to major landscape features and strategic open spaces. We note that the site is not included in the list of strategic open space under Policy SA16. Policy CS37 requires new development to maintain the natural beauty and visual amenity of strategic open space and major landscape areas. The site is neither 'strategic' nor 'major' since it is a small unit of already developed commercial 'brownfield' land, adjoins a major boatyard and is seen in context with the three-storey heron island development to the west.

### 3.04

It would be unrealistic to suggest that the site or its immediate surroundings have any major or strategic intrinsic landscape or open space quality. Rather they act as part of a brownfield transition area set on the opposite bank to the Kings Meadow Park opposite. Kings Meadow, due to its size and position, is a major landscape feature although not designated as strategic open space under policy SA16.

### 3.05

Core Strategy Policy CS8 relates to Readings waterspaces. Since the site does not adjoin the Kennet only the policy section relating to the Thames is applicable. It tells us that riverside development should be attractive, accessible, and that uses and facilities should be diversified. So far as we are aware the proposal complies with all of these policy requirements.

### 3.06

Core Strategy Policy CS36 relates to established wildlife links. The river is the principal wildlife link and the proposal has no effect on it role. The footpath to the rear (north) of the site is already a wildlife link and corridor. Again the proposal has no effect on its role and does not sever or threaten it in any manner.

### 3.07

Planning policy recognises that save for the development of major sites the Council expects the gradual development of minor non-brownfield backland and infill residential plots together with brownfield land. The site benefits from this exhortation to develop 'windfall' infill, brownfield and backland sites.

### 3.08

In terms of sustainability the site is previously developed (brownfield) land set within the defined settlement boundary of Reading. Therefore it is by definition sustainable and the NPPF advises planning authorities that development should be directed to sustainable brownfield sites such as this. Accordingly there is a double policy presumption in favour of residential development.

## **4.00 CONSIDERATIONS**

### 4.01

This is an outline application to determine the principle of residential development. The site has sufficient space to accommodate two dwellings whilst complying with the requirements set out at section 3.00 above. The proposed dwellings will be complimentary to and make a positive contribution to the character of the area. They will be designed to relate well to the existing built form, character and spaces around buildings.

### 4.02

With regard to plot to dwelling ratio the proposed developable site area of 936m<sup>2</sup> reflects local ratios and a glance at the ordnance survey and airphotos will show that the proposed plot sizes will be physically consistent with their surroundings in all respects. Density is some 21 dph which is consistent with adjoining new and old development.



**PHOTO 3.** View of existing storage shed from south bank.

#### 4.03

There is currently a reasonable standard of hard and soft landscaping with well-defined site boundaries and a strong backdrop of mature off-site trees whose RPA will not be affected by the proposal. Arboricultural details of the new scheme will be submitted at reserved matters stage.

#### 4.04

The proposal will be compatible with general building height, materials, elevational details, arrangement of doors, windows and other architectural features. Final ridge height will be determined by floor level in relation to flood level AOD (to be determined following approval in-principle). The proposal will make a positive architectural contribution to the character of the area replacing a somewhat run-down and utilitarian store building.

#### 4.05

The two plots are an adequate size and have a regular square shape and dimensions sufficient to accommodate the proposed dwellings in terms of both setting and space about buildings including amenity space. The requirement for a setback from the riverbank is noted. In this case the precedent set by on-site and adjoining buildings suggests a setback of between 2-4m.

#### 4.06

The proposal is sustainable. There is a long established vehicular access to the surrounding highway network to the east shown on OS maps as far back as 1898. The access was illegally blocked on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2017 apparently in the hopes of establishing 'adverse possession'. However a prior claim to right of way already exists having been lodged with the Land Registry 5<sup>th</sup> November 2008. This is not a planning matter and is being dealt with elsewhere by submissions.

#### 4.07

In addition there is a footpath access to the west. Since the residential use will generate less traffic than the historic commercial use we consider that the proposal will have no effect of the free flow and safety of traffic on the local highway network. The dock is the principal access to the site from the river for the delivery of goods and materials. The 1910 original winch associated with the slipway is used to draw boats out of the water for maintenance or to be trailered off-site.

#### 4.08

The proposal does not include any public areas. Accordingly there is no need for additional physical security measures. Since the existing single access is retained and surveilled by the proposed dwellings the existing 'defensible space' remains and the proposal is secure by design.

#### 4.09

The core principles of the NPPF state that planning should always seek to secure a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupiers. We consider that the proposal will make a positive contribution to the quality of life in Caversham. The proposed dwellings will exceed the Council's minimum distances between properties relating to maintaining privacy and daylight.

#### 4.10

There is sufficient adjoining buffer space to the north and east to ensure that through proper screening and planting the effect of the proposal on the amenity of adjoining residential properties will be minimal.

#### 4.11

The proposal will have no effect on biodiversity and it does not lie in any Special Protection Area. Existing buildings will be surveyed to check for the presence of bats and other protected species. There are no ponds or evidence of use by protected species therefore no specific mitigation is necessary. Since the existing boundary hedges, shrubs and means of enclosure are to be maintained any existing animal access routes will remain undisturbed and the proposal will not lead to fragmentation of habitat or the green network.

#### 4.12

So far as we are aware the site does not lie in an area of archaeological potential. The site is within the floodplain and is not contaminated or tipped or liable to subsidence due to underground workings. The proposal will not prejudice the satisfactory development of a wider area and does not in any way prejudice the satisfactory development of remaining land to the west.

### **5.00 COMMUNITY PRE-APPLICATION INVOLVEMENT.**

#### 5.01

As this is an outline application the views of the occupiers of neighbouring properties have not been canvassed by the applicant. Should outline approval be given then consultation will be carried out and comments responded to. A pre-application submission was made and responded to by the Council on 6<sup>th</sup> August 2010.

## **6.00 TREES AND LANDSCAPING**

### **6.01**

A detailed tree appraisal of on and off-site trees in relation to BS5237 (2012) will be carried out at reserved matters stage.

### **6.02**

Details of landscaping and planting will be submitted as part of any landscaping condition. Other than that we consider no further hard or soft structural landscaping is required. 'Personal Preference' internal landscaping will be carried out when the garden areas are laid out.

## **7.00 ACCESS PRINCIPLES AND SOLUTIONS**

### **7.01**

The site has been served by an established vehicular access since at least 1898. At that time the access served both the application site and a slipway/dock adjoining to the east used by local residents to ferry across the Thames (now unused). Currently the access is a partial public right of way metalled on the northern side. It allows vehicular access to and from the site but will need to be upgraded.



**PHOTO 3.** View of existing site access gates (centre of photo). The proposal involves upgrading and levelling the existing hardstanding to improve vehicular access on to the local highway network.

#### 7.02

The site is currently classified by the Council as 'mooring and premises'. As set out previously it has a history of commercial use and was laid out before 1898 and subsequently run as a commercial enterprise providing a wet dock, slipway, moorings and secure storage. Airphoto 1. shows the site was still commercially active in 2006. In our submission the original commercial use has not been abandoned although it inevitably declined following competition from the adjoining modern boatyard.

#### 7.03

Since the proposed residential use is likely to generate fewer trips with smaller vehicles than the legitimate commercial use it is concluded that the proposed access arrangements would provide for safe and secure access for all highway users and would not result in a material impact on the existing operational safety of the local highway network.

#### 7.04

The proposed upgraded access will be 4m to 5.5m wide and will join with the established 'Better Boating' access on to Mill Green (east) and thence to Star Road. Vehicles will be able to enter and leave the site in a forward gear and two parking spaces and two cycle storage areas will be included for each property along with the necessary bin and cycle stores.

#### 7.05

There is a long established vehicular access to the surrounding highway network to the east shown on OS maps as far back as 1898 (see Map 1. above). The access was illegally blocked on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2017 apparently in the hopes of establishing 'adverse possession'. However a prior claim to right of way already pre-exists having been lodged with the Land Registry on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2008. This is not a planning matter and is being dealt with elsewhere by submissions.

#### 7.06

The site is in a sustainable location with retail, leisure, employment, schools etc. within easy walking/cycling distance. In addition the site is within easy walking distance of bus stops delivering direct and frequent services to and from Reading Railway Station, the town centre and other local services. Accordingly the development is sustainable.

#### 7.07

Given that the proposal is sustainable and will have no demonstrable effect on safety and the free flow of traffic no additional access arrangements other than those proposed are considered necessary. The principal non-vehicular site access is of course by boat from the river.

### **8.00 COMPLIANCE WITH ECOLOGICAL AND CLIMATE CONTROLS**

#### 8.01

The proposal will comply with the requirements of the Building Regulations. Therefore we can confirm that the proposed dwellings will accord with the spirit and purpose of local and national policy and incorporate on-site renewable energy and/or an efficient supply of heat, cooling and power.

#### 8.02

There will be access for the disabled to the ground floor and the small size of the site ensures that the proposal will be disabled friendly. Local topography is comparatively level so hand and powered wheelchairs will have no difficulty negotiating the local area. Materials left over from demolition will be recycled and building materials will be obtained from sustainable sources.

### **9.00 DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS**

#### 9.01

No CIL forms are attached since any liability will be calculated at reserved matters stage. The necessary heads of terms for affordable housing contributions accompany the application.

### **10.00 PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

#### 10.01

The NPPF has introduced a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which paragraph 197 advises should be applied in assessing and determining development proposals.

#### 10.02

The NPPF identifies three dimensions to sustainable development:- economic, social and environmental. The policies of the NPPF taken as a whole, constitute the Governments view of what sustainable development in England means in practice for the planning system.

#### 10.03

The provision of new housing in sustainable locations is a clear social benefit which supports strong, vibrant and healthy communities. The NPPF clearly seeks to significantly boost the supply of housing, and as explained above, the application site is considered to be a sustainable location for two new dwellings and thus provides the social benefits that justify a presumption in favour of development.

#### 10.04

In terms of the economic role of planning, sustainable growth is supported, including the provision of infrastructure. The applicant is willing to enter into a CIL agreement with the Council to mitigate the impact of the development on the local infrastructure, services and amenities made necessary by the development and this justifies a presumption in favour of development.

#### 10.05

Contributing to protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment is fundamental to fulfilling the environmental role of planning. The impact of two new dwellings on the character and appearance of the area has been assessed and is considered less than harmful. As such it is considered that there are no environmental reasons to justify withholding planning permission.

#### 10.06

For the above reasons the proposal is supported by the economic, social and environmental strands of sustainable development as required by the NPPF. Therefore the proposal constitutes sustainable development and benefits from the presumption in favour of development.

## **11.00 CONCLUSIONS**

### **11.01**

Having regard to the relevant development plan policies and other material considerations as detailed above we submit that there are no sound and clear-cut planning reasons to object to the development. It benefits from the NPPF presumption in favour of sustainable development, deserves support and we look forward to a favourable determination.

Anthony J Thorpe BA(Hons) MRTPI DipConsHistEnv(RICS) 9<sup>TH</sup> November 2017