

Design and Access Statement

Section 73 application - Amendments to Planning Permission 150721

16 Residential Units with associated parking and landscaping at 114 Oxford Road, Reading, RG1 7NE.

History

On the 17th of February 2016 planning permission was granted to demolish the existing buildings at the site known as 114 Oxford Road, Reading, with proposals to erect a new building consisting of 16 residential units.

The site was recently sold to a company called Fynecast Limited who are proposing to develop the site according to the permission granted. Having reviewed the plans, Fynecast Limited are proposing to make a few minor amendments to the original application which it is felt will enhance the development, improve the street scene and also improve the accommodation for the tenants. Fynecast Limited are a company which look after and hold onto buildings rather than sell them on for a “quick profit” and to this end might be considered more careful than the usual developer as they have a long-term interest in the property.

Prior to this application, Fynecast Limited approached Reading Borough Council with the pre-application enquiry which is detailed further below.

Pre-application enquiry 172011/PREAPP 114 Oxford Road, Reading.

In November 2017 a pre-application enquiry was sent into Reading Borough Council together with plans seeking further advice which can be summarised as follows:

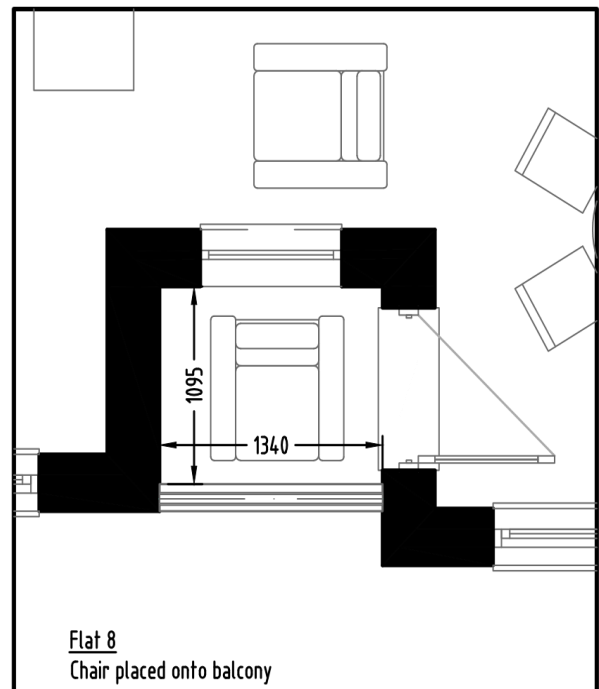
- omission of balconies and a placement with further internal floor space
- removal of mezzanine floor level and associated works
- increase in floor to floor heights, resulting in an overall increase of 0.5 m
- relocation of the bin store entrance and associated works
- change from sliding sash to casement windows

To address each of these points in further detail:

Omission of balconies and a replacement with further internal floor space

It was considered by Fynecast Limited that the first and second floor balconies were unusable owing to them being too small, too dark and enclosed and comprising the internal layout and appearance of the buildings. The internal balcony is also an unusual feature not noted elsewhere in the Borough, at best there are a few examples of some balconies which are split, partly internal and partly external.

The recessed balcony design is also not an efficient design from a heat loss/environmental point of view, requiring insulation to 5 sides of the internally recessed balcony, rather than just to one side as is proposed. It is therefore considered the proposed design will be far more environmentally efficient.



Plan illustrating the cramped nature of the existing proposed balconies.

The opportunity has also been taken to reduce the overlooking issues to the rear internal elevations. This is better illustrated on the accompanying drawing 114-18-405 whereby many of the overlooking issues have been removed to the benefit of both flats either side of the rear access. Currently there is a potential overlooking issue between the balcony of Flat 10 to bedroom 2 of Flat 11 – similar to the floor below between Flats 6 and 7.

Following consultations with the planning officers it was agreed that a system that involved infilling the recessed spaces and including sliding doors for Juliet balconies on both the front and rear elevations would be preferred by the planning officers. This is a common feature on many new developments and is considered a good alternative.

Examples of Juliet style balconies throughout Reading





Removal of mezzanine Floor Level and associated works

It was considered by Fynecast Limited that the mezzanine floor did not really work internally due to the sloping ceilings compromising the space. The approved design was a little misleading and upon closer inspection, the sloping ceilings greatly inhibited the usable space. Fynecast Limited are of the opinion that reformulating the internal layout of the unit on the third floor would provide better usage of the space. This would reflect the layouts of the ground, first and second floor flats. The planning officers considered that no principal issues would be raised with the suggested approach.

Increase in floor to floor Heights, resulting in an overall increase of 0.5 m

From a construction point of view the existing planning consent is virtually unbuildable because the Building Regulations require a minimum floor thickness to achieve acoustic separation between the units. The floor to ceiling height shown on the planning drawings is 2.33m which is the minimum floor height required, so there is no opportunity to reduce ceiling heights to gain the aforementioned floor thicknesses required.

As such, Fynecast Limited propose to increase each floor height by 0.2m to achieve the necessary floor to floor separation required by the Building Regulations. On the face of it this would lead to an overall height increase of 0.6m to the height of the building, however, by lowering the height of the main and prominent gable ended section the overall height of the building will only rise by 0.5m. It is noted that the original permission was sensitive to the impact of the development on the neighbouring listed church and adjacent conservation area. The proposed building is still lower and subservient to the Church and the proposed increase in height only represents a 3.3% increase - a minimal increase.

It should also be borne in mind that when the adjacent property at 106-112 Oxford Road is re-developed, this will have floor to floor heights similar to those proposed at 114 Oxford Road, so the proposed height will not look out of place.

The planning officers considered it unlikely to result in a different overall conclusion to that reached previously.

Location of the bin store entrance and associated works

Whilst Fynecast considered relocating the bin store, having reviewed matters it has been decided to retain the existing approved design.

Change from sliding sash to casement windows

The planning officers have indicated that the sliding sash windows would be preferred and as such we propose to keep this design.

CIL contributions

Assuming the above proposals are approved there will be a slight variation to the CIL calculation and attached drawing number 114:18:407 includes calculations based on the addition or removal of floor space.

Other matters

The above outlined proposals will have a minimum overall effect on the development, but for the sake of completeness each element will be addressed below

Energy Report

The floor areas of flats 5 to 12 have increased slightly and with the omission of the mezzanine floor for flats 13 and 14, the overall demands on the infrastructure for energy will naturally be reduced. Therefore, it is considered there is no material change or real impact on the energy report.

Utilities and servicing statement

The inclusion of the former internal balconies into the flats will have a minimal effect on the utility and servicing requirements of the development and the only flats that have any real change are flats 13 and 14 where the mezzanine floor has been omitted. Floor areas are similar to the as approved designs and therefore the requirements on the utilities and services will be unchanged or even slightly less.

Noise survey

It is acknowledged that the flats will need to be suitably soundproofed to comply with the supplementary noise report that accompanied the original application. As stated earlier, Fynecast is a company that keeps rather than disposes of their developments and let the flats out rather than sell them as soon as they development has finished. Therefore, it is in Fynecast's interests to provide good soundproofing from the noise emitted from The Facebar. The proposed amendments listed above will have no material effect on the noise suppression requirements noted in the report.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is considered that the proposed amendments to the scheme will enhance and improve the overall scheme both from a visual point of view from the street and also for the residents occupying the apartments.

A pre-application was submitted to Reading Borough Council and the above points have received the support of the planning officers. We respectfully request that the above proposed improvements to the scheme are granted planning permission.

Section 106 legal agreement

It is acknowledged that a new s106 legal agreement (possibly through deed of variation) will be needed to reflect the proposed changes and Fynecast Limited will enter into an agreement with the Council during the application process.