

HADWYN HOUSE

FIELD ROAD

READING

RG1 6PP

PLANNING STATEMENT

Day Tanner Ltd
Suite 1A, Market House,
19/21 Market Place,
Wokingham,
RG40 1AP

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1 Summary

- 1.1 This Planning Statement accompanies the application for development at Hadwyn House, Reading, to erect a new mansard roof and to provide additional office space within the roofspace with dormer windows and rooflights. It is also proposed re re-model the exterior of the building to enhance its character within the streetscene.
- 1.2 Planning consent was granted for this scheme in July 2015 by virtue of application reference 141889 but the situation over the intervening period has not been particularly conducive for our clients to undertake the works. As there is no longer a mechanism for renewing planning permissions we are required to re-submit the application but are of the opinion that there have been no material changes to the development plan or site characteristics over the time such that the scheme would now be considered unacceptable.
- 1.3 The building is in use as an office and lies just outside the Reading Central Area within a highly sustainable location in terms of its proximity to local services by means other than the private motor car. According to the Council's Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011) the site is in Zone 2 which;
- “directly surrounds the Central Core Area and extends to walking distances of 2 kilometres from the centre of Reading. Typically this zone is well served by public transport, with buses continuing either into or out of the Central Core Area via this zone. Much of this area is within acceptable walking distance (400m) of either the main railway station, or Reading West railway station”.*
- 1.4 The local area is characterised by a mix of generally Georgian and Victorian buildings with large three storey properties along Castle Hill and Coley Hill to the west of the site and rows of Victorian terraces along Field Road. Hadwyn House is a flat roofed building of no architectural merit and was purpose built as offices probably in the 1970's. It does little to enhance the character of the area and the applicant company requires additional floorspace to satisfy demand for their services.

2 Proposals

- 2.1 The application proposes to erect a mansard roof to provide a second floor of office space to incorporate dormer windows and rooflights and to re-model the exterior of the building to provide a more sympathetic presence in the streetscene.
- 2.2 The design principle was to re-model the building in a mid-Victorian industrial yard style and to change the existing horizontal emphasis of the facade to a vertical emphasis. The roof would be clad in slate tile with powder coated aluminium windows and with facing brick work, possibly interspersed with paneling to be confirmed.
- 2.3 The new roof would extend approximately 2.7m above the existing parapet and would incorporate a mix of protruding and recessed dormers along the frontage and recessed dormers to the rear.
- 2.4 The additional floorspace created would amount to approximately 186m² adding to the existing space of 427m² and resulting in approximately 613m² of B1(a) floorspace in the building. According to the Council's Parking Standards SPD B1(a) floorspace requires one parking space per 100m² and the site can provide 12 spaces in the existing carpark to the rear accessed through an underpass.
- 2.5 Through the course of the previous application revised drawings were submitted at the request of the Council's Conservation Officer, primarily relating to window proportions and general architectural vocabulary, and were considered then to be acceptable in urban design terms. Further to that, at the request of the Planning Officer, a Daylight and Sunlight survey was also submitted and which concluded that the design satisfies the requirements set out in the BRE guide 'Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight and that the development would have a low impact on the light receivable to neighbouring properties.
- 2.6 As noted above, we are of the opinion that there have been no material changes to the development plan or the site context since that time and it is hoped that this current application can similarly be considered acceptable.

3 Development Plan

- 3.1 An assessment of the development plan context for the area would indicate the following policies are relevant:

3.2 National Policy Guidance

- 3.2.1 With the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) on 27 March 2012 all principle PPS's have been replaced. The NPPF identifies a presumption in favour of sustainable development as a "golden thread" running through plan-making and decision-taking and at paragraph 19 states that:

The Government is committed to ensuring that the planning system does everything it can to support sustainable economic growth. Planning should operate to encourage and not act as an impediment to sustainable growth. Therefore significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system.

- 3.2.2 The Framework document also says that: "Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning and should contribute positively to making places better for people".

3.3 Reading Borough Core Strategy and the Sites and Detailed Policies Document

- 3.3.1 **CS Policy CS7: Design and the Public Realm**, is relevant to this proposal where it is required that development is "of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located".
- 3.3.2 **CS12: Maintaining a Variety of Premises**, is also of some relevance where it seeks to ensure that a range of types and sizes of units are present in the Borough, and that proposals maintain or enhance that range.
- 3.3.3 **Policy CS24: Car/ Cycle Parking**, states that maximum car parking standards and cycle parking requirements will be applied in relation to the accessibility of locations within the Borough to sustainable transport facilities, particularly public transport.

- 3.3.4 **SDPD Policy DM4: Safeguarding Amenity**, seeks to ensure that development does not cause a significant detrimental impact to the living environment of existing or new residential properties in terms of, inter alia, privacy, access to sunlight and daylight and visual dominance.

4 Policy appraisal

- 4.1 With regard to the Government's commitment to ensure that the planning system does everything it can to support sustainable economic growth, the ability of companies to expand and grow is clearly an economic imperative for the nation and this is therefore a material consideration. The application here represents a better use of existing employment space that is close to bus routes and within walking distance of the Reading train station and town centre.
- 4.2 The site is not identified in the local plan as being 'employment land' as such but the company has been at this location for 28 years and must therefore be considered as part of the local fabric. There is no policy requirement for any further car parking on the site over that which currently exists and therefore the proposal should not impact to any significant extent on the surrounding road networks.
- 4.3 This is therefore considered to constitute sustainable economic growth of a local company employing local people and who want to remain in Reading and this is considered consistent with the aims of the NPPF.
- 4.4 With respect to Local Plan policies, the proposal is also considered to be acceptable in terms of its location and its efficient use of land in this highly sustainable location.
- 4.5 The design is considered to relate well to the site and its surroundings, certainly it is an improvement on the existing situation in terms of the external appearance and the new roof tends to complete the built form on the site. The new vertical emphasis would relate better to the existing built form in the area and the scale of the proposal is considered to be in keeping with the more Georgian architecture found along Castle Hill and Coley Hill to the rear of the site.

- 4.6 With the introduction of the new roof the building would obviously be taller than it currently is but in terms of residential amenity it is not considered to be overly dominant in the streetscene where it is reflective of the scale of other buildings in the locality and where the bulk of the roof is broken up with discrete dormers.
- 4.7 There is one window in the flank elevation of the house immediately to the south of the site but this would appear to be a secondary window and is already shaded to a large extent by the existing relationship. That house and rear garden are set somewhat behind Hadwin House and to the south such that there should be no significant impact on access to daylight or sunlight to that property. This was certainly the conclusion of the Daylight and Sunlight survey, which was considered acceptable by officers previously and there is no reason to conclude now that the situation has changed.
- 4.8 Furthermore, given the distances to properties on the opposite side of the road, together with the front to front relationship, it is not considered that the increased height of the building would cause any significant detriment to the amenities currently enjoyed by occupiers of those properties.
- 4.9 The scheme allows for the maintenance of a variety of business premises in Reading and where the use has been ongoing for so many years it is considered to be part of the fabric of the area. The company are keen to remain in Reading and to continue to support the local economy in terms of job creation and use of services and facilities.
- 4.10 Given recent changes to the permitted development regime as it relates to office to residential conversions, office space for a company of this scale is becoming increasingly difficult to find at a competitive price. Like many householders who are seeking to extend their properties rather than move the applicants are finding themselves in a similar situation.
- 4.11 However, the amount of development proposed is not considered to be significant in respect of the host building and based on the above assessment we are of the opinion that the proposal complies with relevant development plan policy. That was certainly the assessment previously made by officers and there would not appear to be any material changes to the development plan or

site context such that a different assessment would seem difficult to uphold now.

4.12 Notwithstanding that, it is noted that the previous approval was subject to a S106 Agreement to secure a transport contribution for off-site works. However, with the implementation of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) the pooling of S106 contributions has been limited and it is not considered that the previously requested contribution will be sought with this new application.

4.13 With regards to the CIL, as this site is outside the Central Core area identified in the Council's Charging Schedule the development is not CIL liable.

5 Conclusion

5.1 The application proposes to erect a new mansard roof and to provide additional office space within the roofspace with dormer windows and rooflights. It is also proposed re re-model the exterior of the building to enhance its character within the streetscene.

5.2 The amount of development proposed is the minimum required for the company's continuing growth in the market place and the proposed works to re-model the building are considered to represent a positive enhancement to the site and to the character of the area.

5.3 The National Planning Policy Framework requires that the planning system does everything it can to support sustainable economic growth and states that planning should operate to encourage and not act as an impediment to sustainable growth. The company is a big local employer in Reading who for various reasons, including the lack of appropriate accommodation elsewhere in the town, wish to remain on this site where they have had their headquarters for 28 years.

5.4 We are of the opinion that the works proposed can sit comfortably on the site and within the local area and that the proposal complies with relevant development plan policies. We consider this to be a well thought scheme and one that the Council has previously supported, so we are hopeful that the same assessment will be made this time.