

PLANNING, DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

**Proposed conversion of existing
building from single dwellinghouse to 3
x 1 bed and 1 x 2 bed apartments**

9 Vachel Road, Reading, RG1 1NY

On Behalf of: Mr J Jiggins

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Appendix 1: copy of pre-app guidance

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This statement is produced to support a planning application for the subdivision of an existing dwelling into 4 apartments.
- 1.2 The submission follows the pre-app submission of a similar proposal for 4 x 1 bed apartments. A copy of the council's response is attached at appendix 1.
- 1.3 This planning statement will cover the background to the application and provide the necessary information to enable its determination by officers at the Council. It will consider the proposal in light of relevant planning policies and other material considerations. The conclusion reached is that key material considerations and the wider objectives of National and Local planning policy support the grant of permission.
- 1.3 In addition to this planning statement, the application is accompanied by the appropriate planning application forms and ownership certificate, duly signed and completed, a set of plans prepared by Atelier Set Architecture, and the following documents:
- Noise report prepared by
 - Air quality assessment prepared by
- 1.4 The relevant application fee of £1,848 will be submitted by the applicant separately.

2.0 Site location and description

2.1 The property is a mid terrace 4 storey (with basement) single dwellinghouse. The original/existing floor area is 121m².

2.2 The following site constraints are relevant:

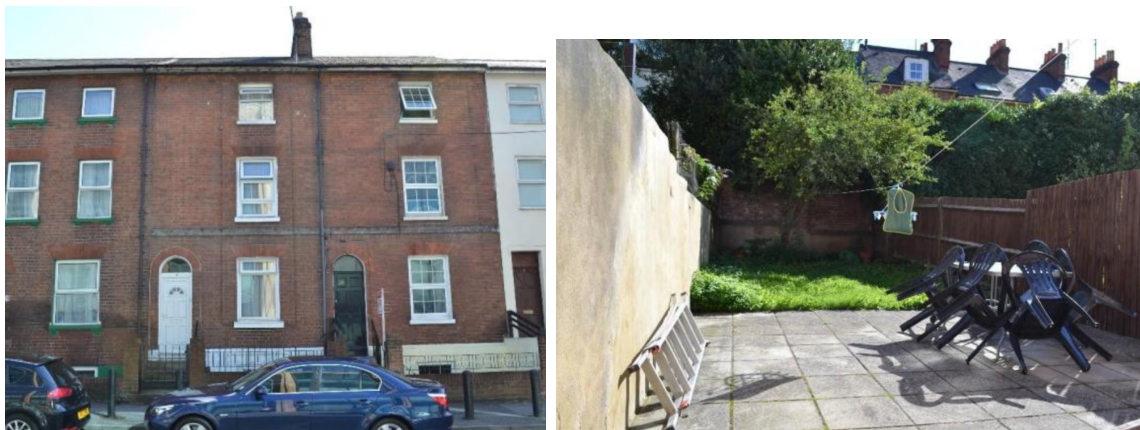
Settlement

DM8 – Residential Conversions

RC9 - Reading Central Area

RC12 – Terraced Housing in the centre

2.3 Images of the site are included below:



3.0 Planning History

3.1 There is no planning history for number 9. Pre-application guidance received in February 2018 confirmed the principle of development was acceptable, subject to the submission of additional information, which has now been included in this submission.

3.2 Numbers 11, 25, 7, 23, 13 have already been approved by the Local Planning Authority (LPA) for conversion to apartments. It is relevant that

the proposed application at number 9 exceeds the space standards of these properties.

4.0 Development Proposals

- 4.1 Regarding the requirements of Circular 01/2006 in respect of Design and Access Statements, the proposal is described as follows:

Use and Amount

- 4.2 The proposal is to subdivide the building into 3 x 1 bedroom and 1 x 2 bedroom apartments. All units would have access to the shared rear garden accessed via the ground floor entry to the building.

Layout and Scale

- 4.3 The proposed apartments are laid out 1 unit per floor, with the top apartment being a duplex units of 2 bedrooms across 2 floors.

Landscaping

- 4.4 The proposal is for change of use of the existing building and as such does not affect landscaping at the site within the rear garden.

Appearance

- 4.5 The proposal is for change of use of the existing building and as such the external appearance of the building is only minimally affected by the inclusion of two rear rooflights. By limiting development to the quantum proposed, ensures that there is minimal external alteration required.

Access and Parking

- 4.6 The site is located in zone 1, the central core area. The property already benefits from 2 on-street parking permits which could be retained for the proposed subdivision. In that way, the parking demand would be no different to the existing dwellinghouse, with central apartments generating

a demand of 0.5 spaces per unit = 2 spaces. Secure cycle storage would be provided for each apartment in the rear garden.

5.0 Policy Assessment

National Guidance

- 5.1 Paragraph 14 of the NPPF states at the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking. For decision-taking this means approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay.
- 5.2 Paragraph 47 requires local planning authorities to significantly boost the supply of housing and Paragraph 49 is clear that housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- 5.3 Paragraph 50 goes on to encourage local planning authorities to deliver a wide choice of high quality homes, widen opportunities for home ownership and create sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities. The measures identified to achieve this include a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community. The proposed development would contribute towards a diverse mix of individual and small family housing in the local area and provide increased choice for residents, resulting in a more inclusive and mixed community.

Local Planning Policy

- 5.4 The Core Strategy and the Sites and Detailed Policies Document form the development plan for Reading Borough Council.

Principle of Development

5.5 The application site is located within the settlement boundary as defined by Core Strategy policy CS6, where residential development is appropriate in principle.

5.6 Core Strategy Policy CS18 specifically refers to Residential Conversions, and states;

'Proposals to convert properties into self-contained flats or for multiple occupation will be assessed against the impact of the amenity and character of the surrounding area, particularly in terms of intensification of activity, loss of privacy, loss of external amenity space, the provision and location of adequate on-site car parking, and the treatment of bin storage areas.'

5.7 Policy DM8 requires at least one unit of accommodation to be suitable for family occupation with a minimum of two bedrooms. The proposed upper unit would achieve this with 2 bedrooms. All units would have access to the private rear garden. The proposal would therefore maintain the provision of small family accommodation in the area.

Character of the Area

5.8 Vachel Road is a residential street of uniform terraced accommodation. As such, the proposal would not detract from the established residential character of the area. The only external works are the insertion of two rear rooflights which are considered not to harm the visual amenity of the streetscene. Mr Worringham in the Council's policy team advised that the purpose of policy RC12 is to ensure that the external character of the buildings is not compromised, and does not restrict conversion proposals in principle.

5.9 It is noted that numbers 11 Vachel Road (02/000810) and 13 Vachel Road (01/00735) were both permitted for conversion to apartments. Whilst policy RC12 did not exist, a very similar policy. CEN2 did exist within the

1998 Local Plan, and this did not prevent the conversions. For information, the relevant text from CEN2 was:

THE FOLLOWING AREAS, WHICH LIE WITHIN THE LINE OF THE INNER DISTRIBUTION ROAD, HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED AS IMPORTANT POCKETS OF TRADITIONAL TOWN CENTRE TERRACED HOUSING:

AREA

C51	CRANE WHARF
C52	QUEENS COTTAGES
C56	BLAKES COTTAGES
C57	TUDOR ROAD/STANSHAW ROAD
C58	VACHEL ROAD/SACKVILLE STREET

THE BOROUGH COUNCIL WILL NOT NORMALLY PERMIT PROPOSALS WHICH WOULD HAVE A DETRIMENTAL EFFECT ON THE CHARACTER OR FABRIC OF THESE AREAS.

- 5.10 It is considered the proposal accords with policy RC12 and has an acceptable effect on the character and appearance of the area.

Residential Amenity

- 5.11 The proposed conversion would deliver 1 x 2 bedroom flat of a good size which Policy DM8 recognises are suitable for family housing. A further 3 x 1 bed flats would deliver a housing mix as required by policy DM8. The proposal would therefore both maintain family housing provision, whilst introducing additional residential units in a highly sustainable location, which is consistent with the spirit of policy DM8 and paragraphs 47 and 50 of the NPPF.
- 5.12 In terms of internal space, the Residential Conversions checklist sets out that proposals will be assessed against the Council's minimum internal floor space standards. The checklist provides specific advice for the internal

space standards in HMO dwellings but does not specify the internal space standards for residential flats. The proposed 1 bed units are considered appropriate as one-person units of accommodation, as the proposed bedroom sizes exceed the minimum single bedroom dimensions for HMO's at 6.5m², but fall below the minimum 10.5m² as a double bedroom. However, combined with the additional living room accommodation, the units are considered ample for 1 person. This complies with the Sites and Detailed Policies Document (SDPD) at paragraph 5.1.11 relating to housing mix states that '*any room designated as a bedroom should contain at least 6.5sqm of useable floorspace*'. Flat 4, the 2 bedroom unit, provides a generous Master bedroom of 14.6m² which exceeds the 10.5m² minimum for a double bedroom. The SPD advises a floor to ceiling height of 2.15m. In this instance, to preserve the external character and harmony of the terrace ridge line, the existing roofspace is to be used, rather than raising the roof. The floor to ceiling height available is 2m. Given that:

- a) the difference is very modest at 2m to the 2.15m SPD guidance,
 - b) the roof is a bedroom, not primary living accommodation,
 - c) all other floors exceed the height standard, including the living accommodation for Flat 4 itself,
 - d) the minimum floor to ceiling standard for building regulations is 1.8m high, and
 - e) retaining the existing ridge to protect the character and appearance of the street in accordance with policy RC12 is considered to take precedence;
- The proposal is considered appropriate in this regard and reflects the discussions agreed with the case officer at the pre-app site visit.

- 5.13 The basement unit would be served by sufficient outlook and daylighting. The unit would be dual aspect and served by two good size light wells and ceiling heights would meet the required 2.15m floor to ceiling height. This was accepted by the Council at the pre-app submission stage.

- 5.14 Policy DM10 requires dwellings to be provided with functional private or communal space that allows for a variety of activities such as sitting-out areas, children's play areas and drying space. As mentioned the existing property benefits from a large private rear garden. The proposal will provide all units with access to the rear garden to use for amenity purposes. This amenity space would provide a versatile area for outdoor seating as well as functional activities such as drying clothes if needed. The proposed development would therefore provide adequate private outdoor space for future residents, in accordance with Policy DM10.

Noise

- 5.15 Policies DM4 and DM8 also require appropriate sound insulation between proposed and neighbouring units before a converted property is occupied. The proposed conversion would be undertaken in accordance with current Building Regulations and would be sufficiently insulated against noise, both between each of the apartments within the building, and to the adjoining properties either side. The proposal would not introduce 'new' residential development into the area, and as such retention of residential habitable use at the address would be comparable to the existing dwelling, with regard to the effect on noise and disturbance.
- 5.16 The proposed layout also maximises where possible the proximity of similar types of rooms as required by Policies DM4 and DM8 to reduce acoustic impact. Each habitable room would also have an external window, providing a source of natural light and ventilation.
- 5.17 A noise assessment has additionally been submitted with the application. This concludes at section 6 that *"noise levels were assessed in accordance with BS8233:2014, which takes target noise level values for adverse noise impact from the WHO Guidelines on Community Noise (1999). The predominant noise source at the location is that of road traffic noise from*

the A329 Caversham Road, part of the Inner Distribution Road or ring road around Reading town centre. No other sources of industrial or commercial noise were noted at the premises. To protect the amenity of future occupants, it is suggested that:

- Glazing is installed with a minimum sound reduction index of 29 dB R_{w+Ctr}*
- Acoustic ventilation should have a minimum sound reduction index of 35 dB $D_{n,e,w+Ctr}$*
- The glazing allows windows to be opened for purge ventilation and heat control.*
- Separating partitions between habitable spaces should conform to the performance standards of Approved Document E of the Building Regulations.*

If these steps are taken, the internal noise levels within the newly created flats will conform to the requirements of the BS8233:2014 and the WHO Guidelines on Community Noise. Reasonable internal noise levels will be achieved to the rear of the property with standard double glazing and ventilation units. Noise levels in the rear garden conform to the requirements of BS8233:2014 for external amenity spaces". This is considered to accord with policies DM4 and DM8.

Parking

- 5.18 Policies DM12 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012, 2015 and CS20 and CS24 of the Core Strategy seek to address access, traffic, highway and parking relates matters relating to development. In accordance with the adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD, the development would be required to provide a parking provision of 0.5 parking spaces for each apartment, equating to a total provision of 2.5.
- 5.19 Given the development's central location a car free development would be considered acceptable and not uncommon. The development site is located

in an area designated as a Residents Parking Permit Area; Zone 04R. The property benefits from two parking permits which could be retained for the proposed apartments; the 2 bed and one of the one bed units. The applicant is agreeable for the additional 2 units not to be issued with a resident parking permit. This will ensure that the development does not harm the existing amenities of the neighbouring residential properties by adding to the already high level of on street car parking in the area.

- 5.20 A total of 5 cycles would be provided in a secure cycle store for the property, exceeding the 0.5/unit requirement by Policy CS24 and the Council's Parking Standards. The design of the cycle store can be agreed by condition.

Refuse

- 5.21 Bin storage would be located to the front of the building for ease of use and collection by the council. The bins will be located beneath the front wall to the property so as not to detract from the street scene character. This was agreed with officers at the pre-application officer site visit.

BREEAM

- 5.22 A final BREEAM Domestic Refurbishment certificate demonstrating that the dwellings achieve at least a 'Very Good' rating is agreed by the applicant, to be submitted as part of a condition of any permission.

Air Quality

- 5.23 The site is located within an Air Quality Management Area. An air quality assessment has been submitted with this application, which confirms at section 9 that "as a consequence of the proposed development, there will not be a significant increase in pollutant concentrations and therefore mitigation is not seen to be necessary, other than those routinely used to control construction dust, as detailed in the previous section. Similarly,

concentrations of all pollutants are below the National Air Quality Objectives at the development site and therefore it is not necessary to implement mitigation to reduce the exposure from NO₂ or any other pollutant to future occupiers of the proposed development". This is therefore considered to accord with policy DM19.

Drainage

- 5.24 No change is proposed to the existing connection system. All new units would be fitted with water efficient sanitary fittings, including low flow toilets and water efficient taps for wash basins. This would deliver the required reduced internal water consumption of 110 litres per person per day.

Affordable Housing

- 5.25 The conversion of an existing building for less than 10 units is not considered to trigger affordable housing, in accordance with the Council's July 2016 Planning Committee decision.

CIL

- 5.26 Whilst liable, the offset provided by the existing floorspace, is such that this change of use scheme would result in a £0 CIL charge. The relevant CIL forms have been completed and submitted with the application.

6.0 Conclusion

- 6.1 The application site is in a sustainable location, close to local amenities with good transport links. The proposed development would provide 1 x 2 bed and 3 x 1 bed flats in a highly sustainable location. The proposed rooflights would not have an appreciable impact on the character and appearance of the street scene.
- 6.2 The proposed flats would be of a sufficient size and arrangement to provide adequate internal space to future residents and would not result in any undue noise or disturbance to neighbouring properties.
- 6.3 In summary it is considered that the proposed development would make a valuable contribution to modest affordable residential accommodation and would provide accommodation for family living as well as boosting the supply of housing in accordance with the requirements of the NPPF.
- 6.4 It is therefore respectfully requested that planning permission be granted for the proposed development.