



Design, Access and Planning Statement

Residential development of land:

**Rear of The Pond Public House
738 Oxford Road
Reading
RG30 1EH**

July 2017

**Red Kite Development Consultancy
On behalf of
RJD London Mayfair Ltd**

DESIGN, ACCESS AND PLANNING STATEMENT

REDEVELOPMENT OF CAR PARK TO THE POND HOUSE, 738 OXFORD ROAD, READING RG30 1EH

1.00 INTRODUCTION

- 1.01 This application seeks approval for an alternative scheme to that allowed on Appeal in July 2016, under reference APP/E0345/15/3141752 (RBC REF 150539).
- 1.02 Full planning permission currently exists for redevelopment of the site to provide 3 x 3 bed townhouses in a single block, with accommodation at ground, first and second floor, and rooflights providing daylight to second floor rooms. The forward part of the site on this approved scheme accommodates parking, turning, cycle and bin storage, with the rear part as private amenity space for new residents.
- 1.03 The scale of the new building was confirmed as acceptable in terms of dimensions and mass, with no adverse impact on neighbours or the character of the immediate area.
- 1.04 The new contractual site owners have carefully considered all matters, and propose a building which is similar in terms of scale, siting and overall character, but which makes more efficient use of the available land by providing accommodation for 6 apartments (4 x 2 bed, 2 x 1 bed), which are popular in this highly accessible location on a primary public transport bus route, and within walking distance to a railway station.
- 1.05 The Appeal decision, and thus the current extant planning permission, is a material consideration in the determination of this application.

2.00 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 2.01 The site previously formed a rear car park to the Public House on the Oxford Road frontage, but has not been used in association with The Pond House in recent years. In the Appeal determined in 2016, the Inspector noted that this separation had been a commercial decision, and that the pub appeared to operate without a customer car park without adverse impacts on trade or on neighbours.
- 2.02 The site lies north-west of the town centre, on the north side of the A329 Oxford Road. Shops and businesses front onto the busy Oxford Road, with the area to the rear almost wholly residential in character.
- 2.03 The car park proposed for residential development has an existing vehicular access from Pangbourne Street, at right angles to Oxford Road. Brick walls, gates and close boarded fencing surround and define the site.
- 2.04 To the north of the car park is Ledbury Close, a terrace of 2-storey 1970's houses. The east boundary adjoins a parking area to the rear No's 730-734 Oxford Road. These buildings comprise businesses including a large greengrocer and butcher at ground floor level facing Oxford Road, with flats above.

- 2.05 South of the car park is an enclosed area forming the rear beer garden to the pub, and a 2-storey brick barn which forms part of the pub's rear trade area. The vendors of the application site, who own and operate the public house, advise that they are in the process of arranging for demolition of a substantial part of the building to increase the size of the pub garden, and carry out other improvements, so the presence of buildings on adjacent land will be substantially reduced.
- 2.06 There is a secondary vehicular access from Oxford Road to the car park to the east side of the pub, which remains available for pub deliveries. Other adjoining properties include the rear gardens of houses adjoining the pub, and the rear parking area of the commercial building at No's 750-752.
- 2.07 West of the site Pangbourne Street features a terrace of bay fronted Edwardian houses on the opposite side of the road, with modern 2 storey terraced housing set back behind an open grassed area immediately adjoining the site.



Application site behind wall within residential area to rear of Oxford Road properties

- 2.08 The principle of residential development of the site is established as acceptable. It lies in a sustainable location, close to a major transport corridor and a wide range of local services.
- 2.09 The access point has also been confirmed as acceptable in the earlier 2016 decision. In townscape terms, it is agreed that new building should follow the general building line of the adjacent 2 storey terrace, leaving room to the rear for amenity space, with parking space close to Pangbourne Street. The extant consent confirms that a building with 2 main storeys, with rooms in the roof provides acceptable massing in relation to surrounding buildings and amenity.
- 3.00 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT**
- 3.01 A comparison between the approved and proposed block plans (overleaf) demonstrates how similar they are, with new building constrained to the central/rear part of the site, and open amenity space occupying the rear.
- 3.02 The approved scheme provided 6 parking spaces for occupiers, plus one Disability parking place, and 2 visitor spaces. The new scheme provides a total of 11 parking spaces with adequate turning space. Three spaces are accessible for disabled drivers.

The new scheme relocates cycle parking into the more secure rear amenity space, accessible via a side gate and pathway.

3.03 Subdivision of the rear amenity space by fencing is avoided as communal gardens are now proposed, giving better opportunities for a comprehensive landscaping scheme.

3.04 The proposed new apartment block has a single central pedestrian access, between new planted areas in front of the building, absent from the approved scheme. Sheds needed in the approved townhouse scheme are unnecessary in a flatted development.



Comparison of approved(above) and proposed(below) siting/layout plans.

3.05 At 210sm (excluding patios), usable amenity space exceeds the standard of 25sm per unit required by local guidelines, and provides a sunny garden space to a standard as good or better than other flats in the area.

3.04 The building design is very similar to that already approved, but the roof is now hipped at the sides rather than gable ended, narrowing its width when viewed from the street.

This has enabled a flat top to be introduced to provide additional skylights and maximise natural light to the central stairwell.

3.05 Juliet style balconies are used at the first floor rear, enhancing occupiers enjoyment of the amenity space, whilst avoiding any risk of undue overlooking to neighbours to the north. No new building lies within the 45' zone from existing windows. No sunlight/daylight assessment is considered necessary, as was the case with the previous approved similar scheme.

3.06 All room sizes meet or exceed the recommended National Space Standards.

4.00 ACCESS AND PARKING

4.01 Access remains as approved, taken from Pangbourne Street where visibility is excellent. The number of parking spaces provided are generally in accordance with adopted standards, as set out in the Reading Borough SPD 2011 [Zone 3 – 1.5 per apartment, plus 1 visitor space per 4 dwellings]. The site is so close to high frequency bus routes, home delivery services and taxis, and walking distance from a wealth of local shops and other facilities, that the units are likely to attract residents with low car ownership.

5.00 LANDSCAPE AND ECOLOGY ISSUES

5.01 The site is currently a surfaced car park, hidden behind boundary walls and gates, and contributes poorly to the quality of the local landscape. The proposed scheme will reduce hard surfacing and provide more opportunities for long term planting, delivering local enhancements to townscape quality and ecological diversity.

5.02 These matters have previously been assessed in the determination of the approved scheme. The new scheme can be seen as neutral or positive in its effects by comparison. A Condition requiring submission and agreement of planting details can be imposed if necessary.

6.00 CONTAMINATION AND AIR QUALITY

6.01 In response to Condition 5 on the approved (appeal) scheme, submissions have already been made to the Council under Planning Portal reference PP-06173521 (Registration with an RBC reference awaited), providing detailed site assessment and remediation measures. These address in full all potential contamination risks throughout the site. Further copies can be provided as part of this application if requested, so that any Condition is restricted to requiring compliance with the agreed programme of works.

6.02 Air quality concerns relate principally to traffic movements within the local area. The scheme proposes a reduction in on site parking capacity, and a pattern of usage which will reduce overall traffic generation. It is considered that this will have a clear net positive impact on Air Quality, and no further assessment is required.

7.00 RELEVANT NATIONAL AND LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

- 7.01 The NPPF urges Local Authorities to ‘boost significantly’ the supply of housing, and to deliver new housing in sustainable locations. The applicants can deliver 6 new units without delay, on receipt of planning permission.
- 7.02 The site is clearly within a sustainable settlement, within an area where new housing is appropriate. It lies immediately to the rear of the Oxford Road, in an urban rather than a suburban character area. In this type of highly accessible location, albeit lying outside a defined local centre, the Council has been prepared to accept that flatted development is appropriate, as an alternative to family housing, and has acknowledged that 2 bedroom units contribute to meeting the needs of small families in an area of significant housing demand and high cost.
- 7.03 The quality of living environment that is proposed is significantly higher than can be achieved (for example) above shops on the Oxford Road frontage, and opportunities for developments locally which can meet all relevant standards are rare. At the same time, the modest scale of this scheme and the form of the development in terms of its mass and scale would not alter the overall character of the immediate area, but would instead contribute to a mixed community without harm to local character.

8.00 AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- 8.01 The need for the provision of affordable housing as part of a scheme on this site was carefully considered in the appeal in 2016, at which time the Inspector took account of supplementary information that the Council provided in support of its case that a contribution was necessary by virtue of Policy DM6 and the adopted SPD on Affordable Housing.
- 8.02 It is well known that appeal decisions on this issue have been inconsistent since the Written Ministerial Statement was published, challenged and confirmed, and since when changes have been made to NPPG in May 2016.
- 8.03 On this site however, a decision was issued, confirming that no AH contribution is required.

Extract from APP/E0345/15/3141752 August 2016

..... the Council has sought to demonstrate that local circumstances are such that it can still justify seeking contributions towards affordable housing below the WMS threshold in line with policy DM6. This includes evidence that almost half of all households in the West Berkshire Housing Market Assessment Area are currently in need of affordable housing whilst high numbers of homelessness and priority cases for affordable housing are recorded on the Council’s housing register. This equates to 58% of Reading’s Objectively Assessed Needs per annum. Moreover, around a quarter of annual completions in the Borough are on sites of ten or less, which in the opinion of the Council justifies a lower threshold.

While I am conscious of the current overall picture in terms of affordable housing locally as well as the aims of policy DM6 and the Council's SPD, these must now be seen in the light of the WMS and PPG and the thrust of the Government's purpose of making such changes which was to tackle the disproportionate burden of developer contributions on small scale developers. I attach considerable weight to the changes to national planning policy and in the context of Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and Section 70(2) of the 1990 Act I find that this outweighs the requirements of policy DM6 and therefore also the SPD. Despite the Council's assertions and further evidence, I do not consider that in this case the local circumstances justify an exception to national policy. An affordable housing contribution should not therefore be sought in this case.

8.04 This is the basis on which the site has been valued and sold on, and while that planning permission remains extant as a fallback, it provides a material consideration in relation to this specific site which must be given significant weight in the determination of the current application. It is important to note that the issue the Inspector was considering applied to all schemes of up to 10 units, and his decision was in no way restricted to a 3 unit scheme only.

8.05 The applicant therefore proposes no Affordable Housing as part of the current application. The scheme remains liable for CIL charging, which will secure other types of infrastructure contributions to a value of around £47,600.

9.00 CONCLUSIONS

9.01 The application proposes an alternative form of development, within the same use Class C3 as previously approved. The dimensions and architectural detailing of the new building are similar to those previously judged acceptable, and parking, access and amenity standards are met.

9.02 The new scheme has the benefit however of providing 6 rather than 3 new homes in a highly accessible location, making more efficient use of scarce urban land, without harm to local character. These units provide an excellent standard of accommodation and a pleasant living environment for future residents. Planning permission is therefore requested.

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