



Wallwork Wainwright LLP

**Land to the rear of 34 – 36 Crown
Street, Reading**

Proposed Residential Building

**Planning Design and Access
Statement**

December 2017



Document control

Document:	Planning Design and Access Statement	
Project:	34-36 Crown Street, Reading	
Client:	Wallwork Wainwright LLP	
Job Number:	A104437	
File Origin:	S:\Job Folders\Wallwork Wainwright\A104437 - Crown Street, Reading	
Revision:		
Date:	13 th December 2017	
Prepared by	Checked by	Signed off by
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 On behalf of our client, Wallwork Wainwright LLP, please find enclosed a full planning application for the redevelopment of a vacant car park area to the rear of 34-36 Crown Street to form one building comprising of 3 residential units. This is a re-submission of planning application 161473/FUL.

Submission Documents

- 1.2 The application is supported by the following documentation, submitted via the Planning Portal, reference **PP-06607067**:

- Application Form (Planning Portal);
 - CIL Additional Information Form (Planning Portal);
 - Plans provided by Lines & Squares:
 - P01 Location Plan;
 - P02 Proposed Site Plan;
 - P03 Proposed Floor Plans;
 - P04 Proposed Elevations;
 - P05 Proposed Sections;
 - P06 Proposed St Giles Close Street Scene;
 - Daylight and Sunlight Report (WYG);
 - This Supporting Planning Statement (WYG);
- Appendix A:** - Relevant Planning Policy excerpts.

2.0 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

Site and Surroundings

- 2.0 The site comprises a surface level tarmacked former car park to 34-36 Crown Street. The building itself is currently being converted to studio dwellings, under prior approval **160090/OPA**. The surrounding area comprises a mixture of commercial and residential uses, as associated within a town centre location. Immediately adjoining the site boundary is a 2-storey residential building, set on a plinth with the ground floor some 1m, above the ground level of the application site. The streetscene of St Giles Close, which the proposal fronts, comprises of a mixture of high density development, predominantly 2, 3 and 4 storey residential buildings which comprise of either flats or terraced housing. To the east of the site along St Giles Close at the end of the street is a large modern part 3, 4 and 5 storey residential building (Nelson Mews), which fronts directly onto St Giles Close.
- 2.1 The application site is highly sustainable, as demonstrated by good transport links via bus from the A4 London Road and is approximately 15m walk to Reading main train station, which in turn has good access to the national rail network, with the town centre services in-between, including the Oracle shopping centre and leisure facilities.
- 2.2 The site is located in Flood Zone 1 and is not a site known to have contamination risks, as confirmed by the prior approval confirmation. There are no listed buildings on or within close proximity to the site.

Proposal

- 2.3 The proposal is for the construction of a 2 storey property with accommodation in the roof space and basement, containing a mix of 2 no. studio apartments and one no. 3 bedroom dwellinghouse above, as well as associated landscaping and private amenity courtyard to the rear.

Relevant Site History

- 2.4 **161473/FUL** Construction of a two-storey residential property containing a mix of 1 no. 2 bedroom, 1 no. 1 bedroom and 3 no. studio apartments within the existing car park to the rear of 34-36 Crown Street. Refused. The scheme now applied for fully overcomes the reasons for refusal of this previous proposal, as demonstrated throughout this Planning Statement and other supporting documentation.
- 2.5 **160090/OPA** Change of use of building from Class B1 (a) (offices) to Class C3 (dwelling houses) to comprise of 14 studio dwellings. Prior Notification under Class O, Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015. Approved.



- 2.6 **150457/OPA** Change of use of existing building from Class B1(a) (offices) to C3 (dwellinghouses) to comprise 3 x 1-bed flats and 1 x 2- bed flat. Prior Notification under Class J, Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (as amended). Approved.

3.0 PLANNING POLICY

- 3.0 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 3.1 The Development Plan is made up of the Reading Borough Council Core Strategy 2008 and supporting documents. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the '*presumption in favour of sustainable development*'. The relevant planning policies are copied out in full within **Appendix A** to this statement, and are referenced where appropriate throughout.

4.0 CASE FOR PERMISSION

Principle

- 4.0 The proposal seeks permission to re-develop a vacant town centre site, which was formally used as a private car park for the office building 34-36 Crown Street. The office building has subsequently been converted under the prior approval process to residential uses. The site is within the urban area where the principle of residential development on vacant land is supported at local and national level, providing much needed additional housing within Reading. The principle of the development therefore accords with Local Plan policy and the principles of the NPPF, contributing to the supply of appropriate housing on vacant land. This is consistent with Planning Officers views, as set out on the previous scheme for the site.

Reasons for Refusal of 160090/OPA

- 4.1 The application was refused for the following 5 reasons, fully overcome by this revised scheme as demonstrated below and in the supporting documentation:
1. Excessive size in relation to its plot, the building would appear bulky in the streetscene, resulting in overdevelopment – This is addressed through a new comprehensive design and layout, including a reduced building width. Please see section 4.3-4.6 below for further details.
 2. Issues with detailed design, fails to take the opportunity for improving character and design – This is addressed, as above, through a comprehensive design as justified in section 4.3-4.6 below.
 3. The use of obscure glazing on habitable windows was considered unacceptable – This is addressed through ensuring that all principle habitable windows are forward facing (onto St Giles Close), with only bathrooms and stairwells obscured. This reason is therefore overcome.
 4. The proposed development would have a detrimental impact on 34-36 Crown Street – The applicant has provided a Daylight and Sunlight assessment of the proposed development demonstrating that it meets daylight and sunlight standards. The revised design and layout is also improved from the previous application. Please see section 4.7-4.11 below.
 5. Lack of legal agreement. Our Client is willing to enter into an appropriate legal agreement.
- 4.2 The below sections demonstrate that the reasons for refusal have been fully addressed and the scheme as now proposed will represent a high quality appropriate development, compliant with all relevant material considerations. Please see section 4.18-4.20 for further details of contributions.

Design/Impact upon character and appearance of the area

- 4.3 The application site is located to the southern side of St Giles Close which is an area of mixed character. This side of the road is formed mainly by what would once have been the rear gardens/yards of properties fronting Crown Street. St Giles Close is now a transition area, with properties fronting it, and no longer just consists of a service access road. There have been a number of more recent high density developments within St Giles Close, these include the site immediately to the west is occupied by a two storey residential building, with parking to the front (no. 26 St Giles Close). The ground floor of this building is set some 1m above ground level creating a structure that is more akin to a 3-storey building. A dense part 3, 4 and 5-storey building to the east (Nelson Mews) has also been completed which demonstrates the acceptability of high density developments within the Town Centre location. A street scene has been included within the submission documents (P06) that demonstrates that the proposed building is in keeping in terms of size and scale with other properties fronting St Giles Close.
- 4.4 The proposal comprises the erection of a building, largely the same height as the neighbouring property no. 26, and lower in height than that of 34-36 Crown Street. To further break the elevation up and reduce any perceived bulk, the front of the property will have a split elevation depth, which will also create a high-quality design nodal feature at the end of the north – south section of St Giles Close. The pitch of the roof has been addressed as per the previous Officer concerns to match that of the neighbouring building, no. 26. This proposal is reduced in width from the previous submission, and therefore more in keeping with No. 26, and provides suitable spacing to the boundary.
- 4.5 No dormers are proposed to this scheme, and the fenestration has been suitably addressed by a more holistic symmetrical design, with a variance in brick and render to break up any perceived bulk, resulting in a high quality design. Please see the below comparison for your further information.
- 4.6 As such, the proposed development has addressed the design concerns previously raised, through; a new holistic design, improved fenestration, roof pitch matching neighbours, siting of the building away from the boundary to the east and high-quality materials. As the development is now of an appropriate design it will contribute to improving the character of the surrounding area. The proposal therefore accords with Local Plan Policies CS7, CS15, DM4 and RC9 and the NPPF and overcomes reasons for refusal 1 and 2 of the previous submission.

Indicative comparison between refused and proposed scheme designs



Residential Amenity

- 4.7 Following the refusal of the previous application, a Daylight and Sunlight Assessment has been undertaken to demonstrate that the proposed building would not result in any adverse material impact upon the surrounding buildings with respect to loss of daylight or sunlight. This has taken careful consideration of the permitted development scheme currently under consideration, and the proposed building would not result in any material loss of light to the light well serving the basement on the existing building or any other window.
- 4.8 The proposed layout of the building has been designed with the stairwell to the rear, and all principle windows to the front, therefore retaining the privacy of 34-36 Crown Street and providing all habitable rooms with clear glazed windows and a good outlook along St Giles Street. This is a significant improvement on the refused scheme.
- 4.9 The proposed building will have two studio flats at basement level, as previously proposed. These will be served by windows front and rear, generous light wells are provided to the front and rear to ensure that adequate light would enter the basement, and the Daylight/Sunlight report confirms that this level of light, along with standard electric lighting associated with a residential property, will provide adequate lighting for the future occupiers of the studio units. Given the dual aspect nature of these dwellings, and the fact that windows facing toward the front would have a reasonable outlook, the quality of accommodation provided by these basement studio units was considered to be acceptable by Officers on the refused scheme, and we take the same view with this improved submission.
- 4.10 The site has limited opportunity for external amenity space. The proposal would include a high-quality courtyard area for the future occupiers of all 3 units, as well as private courtyards

within the light wells for the studio units. Although modest, this was considered to be acceptable within this town centre location by Officers on the previous scheme, and with the improvements made to this submission we concur with the Officer view. Public recreation space at Coley Recreation Ground is also available within a short walk, providing access to further amenity space for future occupants.

- 4.11 As such, the proposed development is considered to be acceptable with respect to residential amenity, both of existing neighbouring occupiers and the future residents of the proposed development. The proposed development therefore accords with Policies DM4, DM10, RC9 and the principles of the NPPF and overcomes reason for refusal 4.

Residential Mix

- 4.12 Policy RC9 states that *"all proposals for residential development within the central area will be required to contribute towards a mix of different sized units within the development. This will be measured by the number of bedrooms provided within individual units. Ideally, a mixture of one, two and three bedroom units should be provided."* The proposal will provide 2no. 1 bed units and 1 no. 3 bed unit. Therefore, the proposal should be looked upon favourably as providing 3 additional residential units within the town centre, of an appropriate mix. As such, this aspect of the proposal complies with local planning policy RC9 and the NPPF, chapter 6.

Highways and Transport

- 4.13 The site is located in Zone 2 'Primary Core Area' of the Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD. This zone directly surrounds the Central Core and extends to walking distances of 2 kilometres from the centre of Reading. This zone is well served by public transport, with buses continuing either into or out of the Central Core Area via this zone. In accordance with the adopted Parking SPD, the parking standards are maximums.
- 4.14 Plans submitted demonstrate that the proposed development would be offered as a car free development. We consider that this will be appropriate for the site, considering its close proximity to the town centre, a wide choice of public transport links, onsite provision of cycle storage facilities and the fact that vehicle traffic congestion is an issue within the town centre of Reading.
- 4.15 The surrounding road network has parking restrictions preventing on-street parking, therefore, any occupants wishing to use a car would be restricted by these. There are public car parks available within a 5min walk of the site (i.e. in the Oracle). The development site is located in an area designated as a Residents Parking Permit Area; Zone 10R. To further limit the parking pressure on this zone, a condition could be included on the consent to restrict future residents from gaining parking permits if considered necessary and fully justified to do so.

- 4.16 The proposal would result in the removal of an open car park. The removal of this will further restrict car usage within the town centre, contributing towards a reduction in congestion and air pollution.
- 4.17 As such, the development proposed would result in a car free development due to the highly sustainable town centre location. The development of the site will also remove a private car park from the town centre, providing a net reduction to traffic generation. The development therefore accords with policies CS24, DM12, the NPPF and the Parking Standards SPD.

Section 106 Agreement and CIL

- 4.18 The provision of affordable housing is required as part of the development in accordance with Local Plan Policy C16, which requests 10% of the value of schemes under 5 units. However, as the site is less than 10 units and less than 1000sq.m. in line with the Planning Practice Guidance, Reading Borough Council should not request an affordable housing contribution.
- 4.19 The development will be CIL liable and no further contributions are considered necessary due to the size of the scheme. The relevant CIL forms have been submitted with this application.
- 4.20 We wait to hear from the Case Officer with regards to any proposed contributions that may be sought and full justification for these.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.0 The proposed development is an appropriate re-use of a vacant private car park within Reading Town Centre. The development will be of a high design quality, resulting in a positive contribution to the character of St Giles Close. The development as now proposed has overcome all of the reasons for refusal and concerns raised on the previous planning submission, and therefore the development should be granted, providing 3 high quality and much needed residential units within Reading.
- 5.1 The proposed development has been assessed against the development plan, comprising of the Reading Borough Council Development Framework Core Strategy 2008, Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012, Reading Central Area Action Plan and the relevant supplementary planning documents and guidance. The development also accords with the principles of the NPPF and the National Planning Practice Guidance.
- 5.2 I trust you have all the information you require to suitably assess and approved this development. If you require any further information to assist you or you have any queries regarding this matter, please do not hesitate to contact Chris White on 01483 579098.

Land to the rear of 34-36 Crown Street Reading



Appendix A: Relevant Planning Policy Excerpts

National Planning Policy Framework

Part 4 – Promoting sustainable transport

Part 6 – Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes

Part 7 – Requiring good design

Reading Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2008)

CS7 (Design and the Public Realm)

All development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. The various components of development form, including:

- Layout: urban structure and urban grain;
- Landscape;
- Density and mix;
- Scale: height and massing; and
- Architectural detail and materials.

will be assessed to ensure that the development proposed makes a positive contribution to the following urban design objectives:

- Character - a place with its own identity and sense of place
- Continuity and enclosure
- Quality of the public realm
- Ease of movement and permeability
- Legibility - clear image and easy to understand
- Adaptability – capable of adaptation over time
- Diversity – meets a wide range of needs.

Developments will also be assessed to ensure that they:

- Respond positively to their local context and create or reinforce local character and distinctiveness, including protecting and enhancing the historic environment of the Borough and providing value to the public realm;
- Create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder or fear of crime does not undermine quality of life or community cohesion;
- Address the needs of all in society and are accessible, usable and easy to understand by them; and
- Are visually attractive as a result of good high quality built forms and spaces, the inclusion of public art and appropriate materials and landscaping.

Applications for major and minor developments should be accompanied by a design and access statement that deal with all the above matters.

CS15 (Location, Accessibility, Density and Housing Mix)

The appropriate density and mix of residential development within the Borough will be informed by:

- An assessment of the characteristics, including the mix of uses of the area in which it is located;
- Its current and future level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport, as defined in Policy CS4;
- The need to achieve high quality design in accordance with Policy CS7; and
- The need to minimise environmental impacts, including detrimental impacts on the amenities of adjoining occupiers.

Developments should provide an appropriate range of housing opportunities in terms of a mix of housing types, sizes and tenures, in accordance with the findings of a housing market assessment. The mix of dwellings should include an appropriate proportion of units designed to the Lifetime Homes standard.

Net densities of below 30 dwellings per hectare will not be acceptable. Indicative density ranges based on draft PPS3 are set out below:

Location			
Town Centre	Urban ¹	Accessible Suburban ²	Less Accessible Suburban ³
Above 70	40-75	35-55	30-50
Density Range (Dwellings per ha)			

CS16 (Affordable Housing)

All developments of 15 dwellings and above will provide 30% of the total number of dwellings in the form of affordable housing to meet the needs of the area, as defined in a housing needs assessment.

Affordable housing is subsidised housing that enables the asking price or rent to be substantially lower than the prevailing market prices or rents in the locality, and is subject to mechanisms that will ensure that the housing remains affordable for those who cannot afford market housing.

In all cases where proposals fall short of the policy target as a result of viability considerations, an open- book approach will be taken and the onus will be on the developer/ landowner to clearly demonstrate the circumstances justifying a lower affordable housing contribution.

CS24 (Car/Cycle Parking)

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.

Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012)

SD1 (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development)

A positive approach to considering development proposals will be taken that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. Where appropriate, the Council will work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area.

Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise⁹. Planning applications that accord with the policies in the development plan (including, where relevant, with policies in neighbourhood plans) will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Proposed development that conflicts with the development plan will be refused, unless other material considerations indicate otherwise.

Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision then permission will be granted unless material considerations indicate otherwise – taking into account whether:

- Any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole; or
- Specific policies in that Framework indicate that development should be restricted.

DM4 (Safeguarding Amenity)

Development will not cause a significant detrimental impact to the living environment of existing or new residential properties, in terms of:

- Privacy and overlooking;
- Access to sunlight and daylight;
- Visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development;
- Noise and disturbance;
- Artificial lighting;
- Vibration;
- Dust and fumes;
- Smell; or
- Crime and safety.

The position of habitable rooms, windows and outdoor living spaces will be particularly important. A back-to-back distance of 20 metres between dwellings is usually appropriate, although the circumstances on individual sites may enable dwellings to be closer without a detrimental effect on privacy.

As well as immediate impacts, other aspects to which this policy applies will include matters such as hours of operation of businesses, and effects of traffic movements, particularly of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs). Proposals which would generate regular movements of HGVs on residential roads will not be acceptable.

Where an otherwise acceptable development could change its character to a use that would have a greater impact on amenity without needing planning permission, conditions will be applied to restrict such changes.

DM6 (Affordable Housing)

On development sites of less than 15 dwellings, the following proportions of affordable housing provision will be provided:

- on sites of 10 – 14 dwellings 30% provision;
- on sites of 5 – 9 dwellings 20% provision; and
- on sites of 1 – 4 dwellings, a financial contribution will be made that will enable the equivalent of 10% of the housing to be provided as affordable housing elsewhere in the Borough.

For sites of more than 4 dwellings, provision should be made on site in the first instance with a financial contribution being negotiated to make up the full requirement as appropriate.

In all cases where proposals fall short of the policy targets as a result of viability considerations, an open-book approach will be taken and the onus will be on the developer/landowner to clearly demonstrate the circumstances justifying a lower affordable housing contribution.

In determining residential applications the Council will assess the site size, suitability and type of units to be delivered in relation to the current evidence of identified needs. The Council will seek an appropriate tenure mix of affordable housing to include social rented, affordable rent, intermediate rent and shared ownership affordable units.

Priority needs are for family sized housing, specialist accommodation for vulnerable people and extra care housing. The Council will regularly monitor and review the need for, and delivery of, affordable housing.

DM10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space)

Dwellings will be provided with functional private or communal open space that allows for suitable sitting-out areas, children's play areas, home food production, green waste composting, refuse storage, general outdoor storage and drying space. Houses will be provided with private outdoor space whereas flats may be provided with communal outdoor space, balconies and/or roof gardens.

The design of outdoor areas will respect the size and character of other similar spaces in the vicinity, clearly identify whether they are private or communal spaces, ensure that they are appropriately related to main entrances, enhance safety and the perception of safety for future residents and the general public, and not be compromised by the relationship of other buildings which may be detrimental in terms of overlooking, overbearing or overshadowing.

DM12 (Access, Traffic and Highway Related Matters)

In determining proposals involving a new or altered access onto the transport network, improvement works to the transport network, the creation of new transport infrastructure or the generation of additional trips on the transport network, consideration will be given to the effect on safety, congestion and the environment.

Development will only be permitted where:-

- Accesses and works to the highway comply with the adopted standards of the Transport Authority³⁷;
- The development would not have a material detrimental impact on the functioning of the transport network;
- The proposals would not be detrimental to the safety of users of the transport network, including pedestrians and cyclists;
- The proposal would not generate regular movement of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) on unsuitable roads, or on roads without easy access to the Classified Highway Network; and
- For non-residential uses, or new dwellings on classified roads, off-street servicing would be provided.

Proposals involving either the construction of a new site access, or a material increase in the use of an existing site access, directly onto the Classified Highway Network will not be acceptable if they would be likely to result in the encouragement of the use of the network for short local trips or compromise the safe movement and free flow of traffic on the network or the safe use of the road.

Reading Central Area Action Plan

RC9: Living in The Centre

Proposals for residential development within the central area will be assessed against the following criteria:

- I. All proposals for residential development within the central area will be required to contribute towards a mix of different sized units within the development. This will be measured by the number of bedrooms provided within individual units. Ideally, a mixture of one, two and three bedroom units should be provided. As a guide, in developments of 15 dwellings or more, a maximum of 40% of units should be 1bed, and a minimum of 5% of units should be at least 3-bed, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that this would render a development unviable.
- II. Proposals for new residential development within the central area will be required to demonstrate how the issue of potential noise disturbance from neighbouring land uses and other sources, and air quality implications of residential development, have been considered and if necessary, mitigated. New residential development should not be located next to existing town centre uses where those uses would give rise to unacceptable levels of noise and disturbance to the occupiers of the new scheme, unless this can be mitigated.
- III. Residential developments in the centre will contribute towards affordable housing in line with Policy CS16 of the Core Strategy. In the central area, an over-concentration of social renting for single persons will be avoided.
- IV. Development in the central area that would have an adverse impact in terms of increasing the need for additional community facilities will be required to provide mitigation measures in line with the scale of the impact.



- V. Where proposals for serviced apartments and apart-hotels fall outside the C3 use class, they will be located within the Central Core. Such proposals will not be permitted unless the duration of occupation of residents is restricted, to ensure the units are used on a short stay basis and not as residential flats, and information monitoring the implementation of this restriction is regularly supplied. Proposals within the C3 use class will be dealt with in the same way as any other residential proposal.

SPG/SPD

- Planning Obligations under Section 106
- Affordable Housing SPD
- Parking Standards and Design (Supplementary Planning Document).