



553 Oxford Road, Reading

Planning Statement

1.00 Introduction

CPL Architects have been appointed by The Trustees of 'The Gate', formerly Reading Community Church, to prepare a planning application for the land at 553 Oxford Road, known as The Gate Oxford Road Centre. This Planning Statement should be read in conjunction with all the submitted drawings and documents and with particular reference to the Design and Access Statement which expands upon aspects contained within this statement.

1.01 Recent Planning History

The applicant obtained planning consent on 8 April 2013 to redevelop the site (ref: 12/01577/FUL). The consented scheme proposed the demolition of the existing church buildings and construction of a new 3 storey church building to accommodate worship/meeting rooms, offices, cafe, and 2 retail shop units as well as residential accommodation, comprising 1x one bedroom flat, 1x two bedroom flat and 1x Studio flat.

Since obtaining the above consent, the leadership of the Gate has embarked on a strategic review of their buildings across several sites. The Gate now holds its Sunday services at 384 The Meadway, located approximately 2km west of 553 Oxford Road. The church's aim is that a central core facility is provided on the Meadway site and the design of a new church building is underway and will provide seating for a minimum of 400 together with meeting rooms, offices and ancillary accommodation. With such a sizable community building proposed for the Meadway site, the Oxford Road and Wilson Road sites can be redeveloped to retain community use space as well as creating much needed new residential development to help meet Reading's identified housing needs.

The Gate Oxford Rd Centre is currently used as a resource centre for hosting church groups and other events. The redevelopment of the Oxford Road site will help fund work at the Meadway site which will be a significant community asset in addition to the community asset which will remain at Oxford Road.

2.0 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

For the purposes of development control, national planning guidance as published in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in March 2012 would be considered a material consideration in that they encourage Local Planning Authorities to make decisions based on the following identified criteria:

Delivering Sustainable Development by:
Creating Strong Economies
Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment
Creating Healthy Communities



This Planning Statement addresses national policy but through the framework of Reading Borough Council's comprehensive set of local policy documents. Only policies considered pertinent to this application have been addressed and advice as to the relevant policy was received as part of a formal response to the pre-application enquiry submitted by CPL Chartered Architects to Reading Borough Council (council ref: 160296).

3.0 Reading Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy Document 2008 altered 2015.

Policy CS1 (Sustainable Construction and Design)

Reference should be made to MES Building Solutions Sustainability and Energy Statements submitted as part of this application and demonstrating compliance.

Policy CS3 (Social Inclusion and Diversity)

The proposed development's contribution in terms of access to housing and community space in a recognised district centre demonstrates commitment to Policy CS3. The multi-function spaces designed as part of the community space will enhance social inclusion through its availability to a range of groups and organisations. The nursery will provide education to 2-4 year olds in a high quality and sustainable new building. The provision of shared outdoor amenity space for residents will promote inclusion and a sense of community to future residents.

Policy CS4 (Accessibility and the Intensity of Development)

The development is easily accessible by pedestrians, public transport and vehicles being located on the Oxford Road, a major arterial route into Reading town Centre. There is a bus stop adjacent to the site and on street parking. The proposal site is on the edge of Reading town centre but located within the Oxford Road West District Centre.

Reference should be made to the Transport Statement by Glanville Group submitted as part of this application.

Policy CS7 (Design and the Public Realm)

Reference should be made to the Design and Access Statement submitted as part of this application which addresses and demonstrates compliance with Policy CS7.

Policy CS9 (Infrastructure, Services, Resources and Amenities)

Refer to separate section in this statement; Planning Obligations Under S106, April 2015

Policy CS14 (Provision of Housing)

The proposed development fits well in the context of policy CS14 in providing a major residential development '*located in areas of high accessibility*', with '*access to efficient and effective public transport*' and on brownfield land.

Policy CS15 (Location, Accessibility, Density and Housing Mix)

'...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...'



The site area measures 824m². In order to make sustainable and efficient use of the redeveloped site, the new proposal is mixed use (community and residential) and is arranged over four floors, providing a total gross internal floor area (GIA) of 1502m². This includes community use at ground floor level measuring 372m² internal area. The upper three floors comprise of residential accommodation in the form of twelve one and two bedroom apartments.

The Table contained under CS15 (p53) contains an indicative density of +70 dwelling/Ha for town centre sites. The proposal site is on the edge of Reading town centre but located within the Oxford Road West District Centre. As a result, and due to its good accessibility, a dense scheme is appropriate in making sustainable and efficient use of a well located and accessible site.

The net density of the proposed development is 146 dwellings/Ha.

'...While a high proportion of future need is for the accommodation for small households, developments should include provision for family accommodation...'

The proposed mix of one and two bedroom apartments addresses the need for accommodation for small households. It is acknowledged that houses are not always suitable for urban sites and in this instance would not meet the required density in the above cited table. However, with family housing in mind, the two bedroom apartments have been generously sized and benefit from good sized private outdoor amenity space as well as a communal outdoor terrace. Therefore the two bedroom apartments are suitable for couples and small families.

Policy CS20: (Implementation of Reading's Transport Strategy)

Refer to separate section in this statement; Planning Obligations under S106, April 2015

Policy CS24 (Car/Cycle Parking)

Reference should be made to the Transport Statement by Glanville Group submitted as part of this application. The proposed plans indicate the level of parking provided as well as facilities for storing cycles.

Policy CS31: (Additional and Existing Community Facilities)

'Proposals for new, extended or improved community facilities will be acceptable, particularly where this will involve co-location of facilities on a single site. Community facilities should be located where there is a choice of means of travel (including walking and cycling), and in existing centres where possible. Proposals involving the redevelopment of existing community facilities for non-community uses will not be permitted, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that there is no longer a need to retain that facility.'

The applicant has ambitious plans to develop its buildings across several sites to serve and transform the surrounding local communities. At the time of writing, design development is underway for their main church site (384 The Meadway) where the church now holds its Sunday services. The intention is to feature seating for a minimum of 400 together with meeting rooms, offices and ancillary accommodation.

The building at 553 Oxford Road is no longer required as a place of worship. However, 372m² of new community space is to be created as part of this development, nominally exceeding the current



provision of community floor space. The proposed development not only increases the floor area of community use space, it also provides valuable new residential accommodation.

The designs are therefore compliant with policy CS31 in that community space is not lost; it is re-provided in the form of a larger and more sustainable building in what is a well located accessible site.

Policy CS33 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment)

The above Policy has been considered but the provision of a high quality and sustainable mixed use development providing community space, a nursery and much needed new residential development outweighs protection of the existing building.

The existing buildings are not energy efficient and the roof is in a relatively poor state of repair. It would also be necessary to introduce an independent structural steel frame within the fabric to enable any major alterations to take place internally and to provide adequate structural support commensurate with the requirements of the Building Regulations for the introduction of additional floors. The proposed development makes more efficient use of the site area.

The chapel is not classified as Listed nor is the Applicant a Registered Denomination for the purposes of Ecclesiastical Exemption, so secular Planning rules apply.

Reference should be made to the Heritage Statement submitted as part of this application as well as to the appendices contained therein which include a more detailed assessment against this policy and a letter from English Heritage and their decision not to list the building. The conclusion by English Heritage was

'The Reading Community Church falls short of the threshold of national importance and shouldn't be designated...

The Reading Community church is not recommended for designation for the following principal reasons:

Its interior has been comprehensively remodelled and virtually all of its original fittings removed; While of local interest for its pleasing elevations the external architectural quality is not sufficiently high to outweigh the loss of the interior.'

Policy CS34 (Pollution and Water Resources)

'Development will only be permitted where it would not be damaging to the environment through air, land, noise or light pollution; where it would preserve or ideally enhance ground and surface water quality; and where existing water resources, sewerage and wastewater treatment infrastructure are adequate to support the proposed development.'

The site is within the vicinity of a workshop/small warehouse on Wilson Road which is listed on the council's online maps as known or suspected to be contaminated. As such, a Phase 1 Desktop Study has been submitted by a geotechnical specialist as part of this planning application in line with the council's validation checklist.



The development will not be damaging to the environment and the sustainable drainage solution, details of which are expected to be secured by planning condition with any approval, will ensure that the development reduces the load on the existing sewerage system.

Policy CS36 (Biodiversity and Geology)

There is very little biodiversity on the site as existing, as identified during the pre-application enquiry. Reference should be made to the bat survey accompanying this application.

4.0 Reading Borough Local Development Framework: Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012)

Policy 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.'

Reference should be made to MES Building Solutions Sustainability and Energy Statements submitted as part of this application which demonstrate the sustainability credentials of the design. The density of the scheme, making use of a prime brownfield and accessible site with good public transport links and access to local amenities, results in policy compliance in terms of creation of a technologically, environmentally and socially sustainable development.

Policy DM1 (Adaption to Climate Change)

'New buildings shall be orientated to maximise the opportunities for both natural heating and ventilation and reducing exposure to wind and other elements;

'Proposals involving both new and existing buildings shall demonstrate how they have been designed to maximise resistance and resilience to climate change for example by including measures such as solar shading, heating and ventilation of the building and appropriately coloured materials in areas exposed to direct sunlight, green and brown roofs, etc;

All development shall minimise the impact of surface water runoff from the development in the design of the drainage system.'

Reference should be made to the 'Layout' section of the Design and Access Statement accompanying this application which demonstrates how the layout of the building has been orientated to maximise opportunities for solar gain. Reference should also be made to the Sustainability Statement and Energy Statement by MES Building Solutions which demonstrate the design response to matters concerning climate change. Reference should be made to the 'Landscape' section of the Design and Access Statement accompanying this application which makes reference to the intended strategy for Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDs).

Policy DM3 (Infrastructure)

A Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Planning Application Additional Information Requirement form has been completed and submitted as part of this planning application. CIL covers contributions to infrastructure. It is requested that the Local Authority, in determining liable contributions for this development, gives due consideration to the nature of the applicant (a



registered charity), the considerable expense that the charity has expended and will expend in creating valuable community assets for the local area, and the provision of a 33% quota of affordable housing, above the council's 30% requirement for a development of this size. It should be noted that levy and S106 contribution rates could severely impact the financial viability of the scheme and the church's ability to procure the new building intended for the Meadway site.

Policy 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.'

Matters of Privacy and overlooking, Access to sunlight and daylight and Visual dominance / overbearing effects of a development have all been addressed in the 'Layout' and 'Scale' sections of the Design and Access Statement accompanying this application, demonstrating compliance with this policy.

As far as Noise and Disturbance is concerned, reference should be made to the Noise Impact Assessment accompanying this application.

Dust and Fumes will only be of relevance during construction and will be addressed through Construction Method Statements and good practice with due sensitivity to surrounding properties by the building contractor.

Policy DM6 (Affordable Housing)

Reference should be made to the Affordable Housing Statement submitted as part of this application.

Policy 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.'

Each dwelling has been provided with its own private balcony or terrace. Balconies and terraces are generously sized compared with typical modern residential developments and feature adequate space for sitting out, home food production and green waste composting as well as outdoor drying space. In addition, the apartments benefit from the provision of a communal roof terrace with south facing aspect and which is provided with storage for garden furniture. The provision of the communal roof terrace is a positive feature for young families with small children where there is benefit is access to safe and secure outdoor space which is larger than a balcony. In the current housing climate, it is common for families to live in apartments if they cannot find a



suitable/affordable house, and the provision of generous outdoor amenity space makes this development family friendly and thus encourages a diversity of inhabitants.

Policy DM12 (Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters)

Reference should be made to the Transport Statement by Glanville Group submitted as part of this application, demonstrating compliance.

Policy DM19: (Air Quality)

The site is located within the council's air quality management zone. Reference should be made to the Air Quality Assessment submitted as part of this application, demonstrating policy compliance.

5.0 Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents

Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)

Reference should be made to the Transport Statement by Glanville Group submitted as part of this application, demonstrating compliance.

Revised Sustainable Design and Construction (2011)

Reference should be made to MES Building Solutions Sustainability and Energy Statements submitted as part of this application, demonstrating compliance.

Affordable Housing SPD (2013)

Reference should be made to the Affordable Housing Statement submitted as part of this application.

Planning Obligations under S106, April 2015 and Employment, Skills and Training SPD (2013)

In the council's formal response to the pre-application enquiry (council ref: 160296) it was stated that there would be a requirement for financial contributions towards employment skills and training for construction, affordable housing and under Community Infrastructure Levy.

It is however requested that in determining the level of contribution required, the council considers the considerable community benefit that this development will provide through providing a revitalised community space and much needed high quality and sustainable residential accommodation.

In addition it is requested that the council is mindful that the applicant is a registered charity, and that one of the purposes of the redevelopment of the Oxford Road site is to help fund the intended development works at the Meadway site which will also be a significant community asset. Through its new buildings, the applicant hopes to continue to serve and bring benefit to Reading and the local community for years to come.