

62-79 ARMADALE COURT

READING

PLANNING, DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

**INCORPORATING SUSTAINABILITY, AIR QUALITY AND
SUSTIANABLE URBAN DRAINAGE PROPOSALS**

**EXTENSION OF EXISTING FLAT BLOCK WITH TWO
ADDITIONAL STOREYS TO ACCOMMODATE 12
NEW APARTMENTS AND PROVISION OF LIFT**
SEPTEMBER 2017

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The following statement has been prepared in support of our clients' application for planning permission for the 'extension of existing flat block with two additional storeys to accommodate 12 new apartments and provision of lift' at 62-79 Armadale Court, Reading, Berkshire.
- 1.2 62-79 Armadale Court is a modern three storey flat block located at the southern end of Armadale Court backing on to Bath Road.
- 1.3 In October 2010, planning permission was granted to extend the property with two additional storeys to provide eight additional apartments. The permission was then renewed in May 2014.
- 1.4 This application similarly proposes to extend the building with two additional storeys but containing twelve apartments. A small extension to the north elevation is also proposed to provide the flat block with a lift.
- 1.5 The proposals have been subject to a pre-application meeting which concluded support for the principle and design of the scheme.
- 1.6 Planning permission is therefore being formally sought for the development, and the purpose of this statement is to provide an analysis of relevant planning policy to demonstrate that consent should be granted.
- 1.7 This statement is set out as follows:

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Site Description

3.0 Planning History

4.0 Planning Policy

5.0 Planning Analysis

6.0 Design and Access Statement

7.0 Conclusions

Appendix 1 –Appeal Decision
APP/E0345/A/10/2128400

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.1. 62-79 Armadale Court is a modern 3 storey block of flats located at the southern end of Armadale Court, Reading. It is predominately a rectangular brick built building with a pitched roof containing eighteen 2-bed flats and three small projections on its northern elevation containing stairwells.
- 2.2. It sits towards the centre of a large rectangular plot which contains a parking court, 18 garages and a bin store at its northern end and grassed lawns elsewhere. There are thick and mature hedgerows and trees to all site boundaries.
- 2.3. To the north and east of the site are a series of large flat blocks located on Armadale Court. They are predominately three storeys in height and set within grassed grounds. Although also modern, these flat blocks appear to have been constructed at an earlier date than 62-79 Armadale Court.
- 2.4. To the west of the site are the rear of properties on the eastern side of Parkside Road (which effectively runs parallel to Armadale Court). These properties are all understood to be in residential use.
- 2.5. To the south of the site is the 'A4/Bath Road', which is one of the main roads to and from Reading town centre. On the opposite side of Bath Road is a recently developed block of flats which sits adjacent to other residential development.
- 2.6. 62-79 Armadale Road also has a pedestrian access gate onto Bath Road, with a bus stop approximately 50-60 metres away (adjacent/opposite Parkside Road). Given that Bath Road is a major access route into the town centre, this benefits from a highly frequent service from routes including '1 Jet Black' and 'Lime 2', 'Lime 2a' and 'Community Link 28'.
- 2.7. The site is also within walking distance of a variety of services and facilities including The Wren and Blessed Hugh Faringdon Schools and Prospect Park.

3.0 PLANNING HISTORY

3.1. A review of Reading Borough Council's planning register identifies that the following records are relevant to 62-79 Armadale Court:

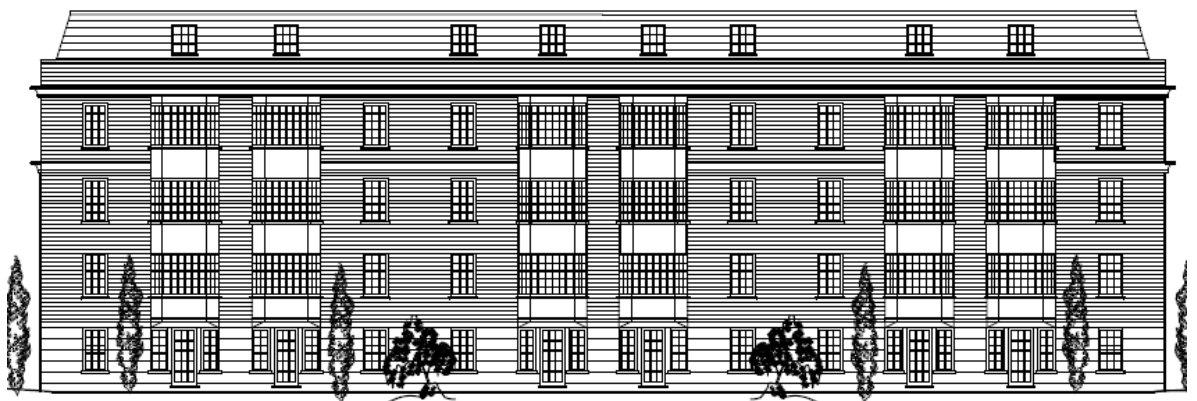
920116	Erection of single storey residential unit for 7 elderly mentally handicapped persons (Class C2) - Approved 13 June 1992
040596	Erection of four 2-bedroom penthouses on roof of existing building and extension of staircase tower to provide a lift- Approved 06 August 2004
040809	Erection of 10 town houses over 24 parking spaces; 8 further spaces; new landscaping of whole site- Refused 22 March 2005
050965	Erection of 4 no. 2-bed flats over existing garages; demolition of 1 garage- Refused 18 August 2005 Appeal Dismissed 06 March 2006 (APP/E0345/A/05/1184655)
080739	Erection of 4 flats over 26 parking spaces- Withdrawn 11 September 2008
091308	Erection of 6 x 2 bedroom flats and 2 x 3 bedroom flats above the existing building- Withdrawn 28 May 2009
100302	Erection of 6 x 2 bedroom flats and 2 x 3 bedroom flats above the existing building (RESUBMISSION of application 09/00491/FUL)- Refused 01 April 2010 Appeal Allowed 21 October 2010 (APP/E0345/A/10/2128400)
100201	Crown reduce and reshape one Wellingtonia- Approved 10 February 2010
131528	Erection of 6 x 2 bedroom flats and 2 x 3 bedroom flats above the existing building (Resubmission of application 09/00491/FUL)- Approved 06 May 2014
150944	Ash (T24) - Crown lift the canopy to 4m. Hornbeam (T8) Hornbeam (T9) Lime (T10) - Crown lift to 4m over the drive to prevent damage.

Lime (T16) Lime (T17) - Reduce back the canopy so that there is a 2m gap between the foliage and the Flats. Lime (T22) - Reduce back the canopy 1.5-2m so that it doesn't overhang the flats and prune back lower canopy to leave a clearance of 1-2m between the foliage and the flats. **Approved 15 June 2015**

- 3.2. As has been discussed, permission was allowed at appeal in October 2010 to extend the property with two additional storeys to accommodate eight flats (ref no 100302). The same permission was then renewed by the council in May 2014 (ref no. 131528.).



North Elevation -Approved October 2010 & May 2014



South Elevation -Approved October 2010 & May 2014

- 3.3. A copy of the appeal decision is attached at Appendix 1 and identifies that the key issues before the Inspector were the impact on character and appearance, the living conditions of neighbouring properties, highway safety and planning obligations.

- 3.4. In respect of character and appearance, the Inspector noted that nos. 62-79 'stands apart' from the other blocks of flats on Armadale Court and the provision of additional storeys to the property would be acceptable for its context. Furthermore, the design of the extension was found to be satisfactory in respect of the appearance of the building itself.
- 3.5. It was similarly concluded in regards to the living conditions of neighbours that the building is of sufficient distance and well screened and orientated away from other properties to ensure that there would be no harmful implications on their outlook or privacy.
- 3.6. In terms of highway safety, the council raised concerns that as part of the parking provision was in garages (but in total exceeded the required standard) there was potential for an increase on-street parking with the associated knock-on effect on the safe use of the highway. However, the Inspector noted that the property is in a sustainable location (due to being within walking/cycle distance of a range of services and facilities including public transport) and found there to be no evidence to suggest that proposal would result in harm.
- 3.7. Finally, in regards to planning obligations, the appellants committed to making financial contributions towards education, transport and leisure facilities in accordance with council policy. This has since been replaced with the Community Infrastructure Levy.
- 3.8. This current application is effectively for the same development albeit to a slightly differing design and accommodating twelve additional flats instead of eight.
- 3.9. A pre-application meeting with the council confirmed support for these proposals, and even indicated that the now proposed design is favoured over the consented scheme.

4.0 PLANNING POLICY

4.1. Nos. 62-79 Armadale Court is located within the 'settlement boundary' of Reading and within the 'Air Quality Management Area' as identified on the Reading Borough Council Proposals Map. Bath Road is also designated as an 'existing or proposed green link'

4.2. The following policies are therefore understood to be relevant to the proposal and site:

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

4.3. The National Planning Policy Framework published in March 2012 sets out central government policy and guidance on the matters of planning and development.

4.4. It identifies at paragraph 14 that there is to be a 'presumption in favour of sustainable development', and that this is defined in respect of planning applications as meaning:

- *Approving development proposals that accord with development plan without delay; and*
- *Where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, granting permission unless:*
 - *Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this framework taken as a whole; or*
 - *Specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted*

4.5. In regards to specific policies on the delivery of housing, section 6 of the framework is relevant.

- 4.6. It highlights at paragraph 47 that local authorities should be seeking to significantly boost the supply of housing whilst paragraph 49 identifies that application for residential development should be assessed in the '*...context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development*'.
- 4.7. Design and amenity is meanwhile discussed at section 7 of the framework.
- 4.8. It sets out a series of criteria at paragraph 58, which developments should be seeking to achieve:
- *Will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development*
 - *Establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work or visit*
 - *Optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development, create and sustain an appropriate mix of uses (including incorporation of green and other public space as part of developments) and support local facilities and transport networks*
 - *Respond to local character and history and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation*
 - *Create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion and*
 - *Are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping*
- 4.9. The matter of 'air quality' is briefly referenced at paragraph 124 and identifies that within 'Air Quality Management Areas', new development should be consistent with the 'local air quality action plan'.

LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

- 4.10. The development plan for Reading (in so far as it is relevant to the site) is comprised of the 'Core Strategy' adopted January 2008 and altered January 2015 and the 'Sites and Detailed Policies Document' adopted October 2012 also altered January 2015.
- 4.11. The council's strategic approach to housing is set out in chapter 6 of the Core Strategy and highlights that increasing the supply of housing in the borough is a key objective. Further to this, policy CS14 identifies that this is to be achieved through the allocation of housing sites as well as developments coming forward on 'windfall sites'.
- 4.12. The strategy is underpinned by the 'Site and Detailed Policies Document', which identifies the allocated sites and provides policy setting out how the strategy is to be delivered.
- 4.13. This includes setting the considerations which should be taken into account when proposing residential development.
- 4.14. In regards to this, there isn't a specific policy which relates to providing additional storeys to a block of flats, however the considerations set out under policies DM9 'House Extensions and Ancillary Accommodation' and DM11 'Development of Private Residential Gardens', provide a useful framework for assessing such a proposal.
- 4.15. In regards to extending a house, policy DM9 identifies that this will be acceptable where the proposal:
- *Respects the character of the house in terms of scale, location, materials and design*
 - *Respect the character and pattern of neighbouring properties and the street as a whole in terms of scale,*

location, materials and design, and any important existing building line; and

- *Does not present a large blank façade to public areas*

4.16. Policy DM11 meanwhile lists the following criteria for assessment when proposing to develop within the curtilage of 'private residential gardens':

1) *The proposal makes a positive contribution to the character of the area in terms of:*

- *The relationship of the existing built form and spaces around buildings within the surrounding area;*
- *A layout which integrates with the surrounding area with regard to the built up coverage of each plot, building line(s), rhythm of plot frontages, parking areas, and existing pattern of openings and boundary treatments on the site frontage*
- *Providing appropriate hard and soft landscaping, particularly at site boundaries. This includes features such as the variety of trees, hardstanding/lawns and hedges etc*
- *Compatibility with the general building height within the surrounding area*
- *The materials and elevational detail. These should be high quality, and where appropriate distinctive and/or complementary*
- *The arrangement of doors, windows and other principal architectural features and their rhythm between buildings*

2) *The application site provides a site of adequate size and dimension to accommodate the development proposed in terms of*

setting and spacing around, buildings, amenity space, landscaping and space for access roads and parking

- 3) *The proposal includes access, which meets appropriate highway standards*
- 4) *The proposal does not lead to unacceptable tandem development*
- 5) *The design and layout minimises exposure of existing private boundaries to public areas, and avoids the need for additional physical security measures*
- 6) *The proposal does not cause a significant detrimental impact to the amenity of adjacent and nearby occupants*
- 7) *The emphasis is on the provision of family sized housing*
- 8) *The development would not have an adverse impact on biodiversity in terms of fragmentation of blocks of gardens, which as a unit or in association with adjacent open space are deemed to make an important contribution to biodiversity and contribute to the green network; and*
- 9) *The proposal does not prejudice the satisfactory development of a wider area*

4.17. Further to these considerations, policies DM4 and DM10 provide further detail on the 'protection of amenity' and 'provision of outdoor space' respectively, whilst 'parking standards' are set out in the Supplementary Planning Document adopted October 2011.

4.18. In respect of protecting amenity, DM4 identifies that consideration should be given to 'privacy/overlooking', 'daylight/sunlight', 'visual dominance', 'noise/disturbance', 'artificial lighting', 'vibration', 'dust', 'odour' and 'crime'. Furthermore it advises that a 'back-to-back' distance of approximately 20 metres is recommended to maintain privacy.

- 4.19. Policy DM10 meanwhile highlights the need to provide outdoor space with residential development, and identifies that in relation to flats this can be as a 'communal space' or balconies/roof gardens.
- 4.20. In terms of parking standards, the site is located within the Primary Core Area (Zone 2), which requires 1 vehicle space and 0.5 cycle spaces per 1-2 bed flat and 1.5 vehicle spaces and 1 cycle space per 3+ bed flat and 1 space per 10 dwellings for visitors.
- 4.21. The Detailed Policies Document also contains a specific policy on Air Quality (DM19). It states that where 'sensitive uses' (such as residential) are proposed within an 'Air Quality Management Area', then careful consideration should be given to the potential implications and propose mitigation where necessary.

5.0 PLANNING ANALYSIS

5.1. The review of planning policy clearly identifies that the key considerations in the assessment of this application are as follows:

- Principle of Development
- Character and Appearance
- Amenity
- Highways and Parking
- Biodiversity and Trees
- Planning Obligations
- Air Quality
- Sustainable Urban Drainage

5.2. It is noted that these issues would all have been relevant to the assessment and consideration of the 2010 and 2014 approvals and it is considered that the same conclusions on the acceptability of the proposal should be reached in respect of this application. This is particularly clear that that the current policy framework is as per 2014 (albeit amendments to the relevant documents were not adopted until January 2015).

Principle of Development

5.3. As in 2010 and 2014, increasing the supply of housing is a fundamental objective of both national and local planning policy.

5.4. Further to this, the spatial strategy for Reading seeks to ensure that all new development is achieved within the existing built up area of the borough, as defined by the 'settlement boundary'.

- 5.5. Extending nos. 62-79 Armadale Road to provide twelve additional residential units is of course in keeping with this strategy, as it is located within the 'settlement boundary' in an existing residential area which is accessible to a wide variety of services and facilities.
- 5.6. In particular, it will be noted that the site is within walking/cycling distance of two schools, place of worship, restaurants, public open space and regular bus services to and from the town centre.

Character and Appearance

- 5.7. In regards to the matter of character and appearance, the Inspector in 2010 noted that Armadale Court was characterised by modern blocks of flats which generally have uniformity, however nos. 62-79 was located and orientated and in such a position where it was capable of accommodating change and that the increase in storeys would not appear incongruous (see appeal decision attached at appendix 1).
- 5.8. Furthermore, it was noted the proposal was considered of suitable form and appearance for the building and its wider context.
- 5.9. It is understood that there have been no changes to the context of the site since 2010, with the exception of the development of Priory Point (a tall block of flats) on the southern side of Bath Road opposite the site.
- 5.10. It is therefore clear that the addition of storeys to 62-79 Armadale Court can be accommodated and would not result in any disruption to the prevailing appearance and form of its vicinity.
- 5.11. In terms of the form and appearance of the additional storeys themselves, it will be noted that this is to a slightly different design to the 2010/2014 scheme and proposes two storeys with a pitched roof, as opposed to a mansard.

- 5.12. The now proposed storeys effectively replicate and repeat the fenestration of the existing storeys and provide symmetry to the building through cladding the top floor to mirror the ground floor.
- 5.13. Similarly, the stairwell extension to provide the lift has been carefully designed to ensure that is of a form a scale suitable for the proposal and building.
- 5.14. It is therefore considered that the proposal is appropriate in respect of the character and appearance of its context and the building itself.
- 5.15. Further to this, officers confirmed at the pre-application meeting, that this design was in fact actually preferred and considered a better proposal than the approvals granted in 2010/2014 as it better reflected the form of the existing building.

Amenity

- 5.16. The 2010 appeal found that the position, orientation, distance and screening of the existing building away from its neighbours would mean that its extension would not result in any harm to their amenity (e.g. in terms of an overbearing appearance or overlooking).
- 5.17. As discussed above, there have been no material change to the context of the site noted, and it continues to be surrounding by tall and mature planting, It is therefore clear that the same conclusions can be reached that the addition of two storeys at 62-79 Armadale Road would result in harm to the amenity of any neighbouring property.

Highways and Parking

- 5.18. The current parking standards adopted in 2011 seek the provision of 1 car parking space and 0.5 cycle parking spaces per 1-2 bed unit and 1 space per 10 dwellings for visitors.

- 5.19. The resulting development would accommodate four 1-bed flats and twenty six 2-bed flats, and therefore require the provision of 33 car parking spaces and 15 cycle spaces.
- 5.20. As will be noted, the existing parking forecourt accommodates 33 spaces (including 18 within garages) and a cycle store.
- 5.21. In respect of the 2010 appeal, the proposal exceeded the standard, whilst the council raised concerns that the garaging would be used for storage and not parking.
- 5.22. Whilst the Inspector acknowledged the council's concern, it was noted that the site was a sustainable location with access to a variety of services and facilities and that there would therefore unlikely result in an increase in off-site parking.
- 5.23. It is again considered that the same conclusion can be reached that the sustainability of the location means that this should not give rise to any parking issue.

Biodiversity and Trees

- 5.24. In respect of other potential site constraints, it will be noted that surveys undertaken to support the previous approvals have been updated to ensure that the findings continue to be relevant and that the proposal is acceptable in respect of these matters.
- 5.25. As will be noted, the tree survey continues to demonstrate that no trees require removal to enable the development and the updated Bat Survey confirms that the existing building is not accommodating bats and would therefore be unaffected by the extensions.
- 5.26. Notwithstanding this, it is nonetheless proposed to install two bat boxes within the site, and if possible incorporate a 'habitat bat brick' on the southern elevation of the building.

- 5.27. This will of course represent a biodiversity enhancement to the site in accordance with relevant policy.

Planning Obligations

- 5.28. As has been set out, Reading Borough Council adopted a Community Infrastructure Levy in 2015, and therefore the majority of contributions which were secured by section 106 agreements on the previous consents are now dealt with by this mechanism with the exception of affordable housing.
- 5.29. In regards to the matter of affordable housing, this proposals includes abnormal costs associated with the provision of additional storeys to this building, and a full viability report is to be supplied setting out any contribution which the development can provide. It is proposed that these would be negotiated as part of the determination process.

Air Quality

- 5.30. As has been discussed, the application site is located within the Air Quality Management Area which was confirmed in 2010.
- 5.31. No issues were raised at the 2010 appeal or 2014 consent regarding this designation, and there not known to be any material changes to the context of the site to alter this conclusion.
- 5.32. Further to this, it is noted that an Air Quality Assessment was undertaken in respect of the redevelopment of the Elvian School and provision of 118 dwellings at 61 Bath Road in 2015 (Ref no. 151175). This is approximately 150 metres away from the site, and highlighted that the existing and forecasted pollutant levels fall well below the targeted levels and that there was no need for the development to provide additional mitigation.
- 5.33. There does not appear to have been any material change to the context of locality to indicate that a different conclusion would be reached in respect of this proposed development. However, to ensure the protection of future occupiers

the applicant is proposing to use a whole dwelling mechanical ventilation system which will draw air in from the rear elevation away from Bath Road and therefore the air being used to ventilate the flats is not expected to be of poor quality or suffer from high levels of pollutants. Details of the ventilation system can be controlled by a standard condition.

Sustainable Urban Drainage

- 5.34. The proposal does not result in an increase in hard surfacing, either in the form of additional parking areas or roofscape, and therefore no additional surface water mitigation is proposed. The existing surface water system works well without any known incident of failure and therefore the proposed development will utilise the existing surface water drainage.

6.0 DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

- 6.1. In accordance with The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, a Design and Access Statement must accompany planning applications of this nature. Many of the points have already been covered in the preceding sections and therefore this element will seek to summarise those findings in the format advocated by the CABE best practice guidance:

USE

- 6.2. 62-79 Armadale Road is an existing block of residential flats. It currently accommodates eighteen 2-bed units, whilst the proposal will increase this to thirty units.

AMOUNT

- 6.3. The proposal will add two storeys to the existing building and a small extension to the northern elevation stairwell providing a lift.
- 6.4. The additional storeys will accommodate four 1-bed and eight 2-bed flats.

LAYOUT

- 6.5. The proposal is for two additional storeys and a small extension to provide a lift.
- 6.6. There is therefore no change to the site layout.

SCALE

- 6.7. The proposed building will have an overall height of approximately 16 metres.
- 6.8. As has been discussed, the site is orientated and positioned some distance from neighbouring properties which include the recently development block of flats, Priory Point on the southern side of Bath Road.

- 6.9. The scale of the proposal is therefore considered to be acceptable for the site context.

LANDSCAPING

- 6.10. The site is well screen by tall and mature trees and planting which are retained by this proposal.

APPEARANCE

- 6.11. The proposed storeys and extension have been carefully designed to ensure that they suitably address and is assimilated into the existing building.
- 6.12. As will be noted, the proposal is fenestrated with reference to the existing building, and symmetry is also provided from the use of cladding to the top floor mirroring the existing ground floor.

ACCESS

- 6.13. No changes to access are proposed through this development.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1. This application seeks planning permission for the 'extension of existing flat block with two additional storeys to accommodate 12 new apartments and provision of lift' at 62-79 Armadale Court, Reading, Berkshire.
- 7.2. In 2010 an appeal was granted for the provision of two storeys to accommodate eight additional units. This permission was renewed in 2014.
- 7.3. Notwithstanding that local planning policy was updated in 2015, it has been noted, that the general strategy has remained unchanged, and that the context of the site has not seen any material alteration, with the exception of the development of a Priory Point, a tall block of flats on the southern side of Bath Road.
- 7.4. The proposal is also to a slightly different, which pre-application discussions confirmed was considered preferable to the previous consents.
- 7.5. Given these position, it has been assessed that the application proposal should continue to be found acceptable when assessed against relevant planning policy, and the support of officers is therefore respectfully requested.

Appendix 1 –Appeal Decision APP/E0345/A/10/2128400



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 September 2010

by **Julie German BSc(Hons) BTP MRTPI**

**an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State
for Communities and Local Government**

The Planning Inspectorate
4/11 Eagle Wing
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Temple Quay
Bristol BS1 6PN

☎ 0117 372 6372
email: enquiries@pins.gsi.gov.uk

**Decision date:
21 October 2010**

Appeal Ref: APP/E0345/A/10/2128400

62-79 Armadale Court, Westcote Road, Reading RG30 2DF

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
- The appeal is made by Ulterra Limited against the decision of Reading Borough Council.
- The application Ref 10/00033/FUL, dated 11 January 2010, was refused by notice dated 1 April 2010.
- The development proposed is the addition of 8 flats on top of the existing 18 flats.

Application for Costs

1. An application for costs was made by Ulterra Ltd against Reading Borough Council. This application is the subject of a separate decision.

Decision

2. I allow the appeal, and grant planning permission for the addition of 8 flats on top of the existing 18 flats at 62-79 Armadale Court, Westcote Road, Reading RG30 2DF in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 10/00033/FUL, dated 11 January 2010, and the plans submitted with it, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 0019 P1 dated 12 February 2010, 0019 P2, 0019 P3, 0019 P4, 0019 P5, 0019 P6, 0019 P7, 0019 P8 and 0019 P9.
 - 3) No development shall take place until samples of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the flats hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
 - 4) No development shall take place until there has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority a scheme of landscaping, which shall include indications of all existing trees and hedgerows on the land, and details of any to be retained, together with measures for their protection in the course of development.
 - 5) Details of bicycle parking arrangements shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The flats hereby

approved shall not be occupied until the approved bicycle parking has been provided.

- 6) The flats shall achieve Level 3 of the Code for Sustainable Homes. No flat shall be occupied until a final Code Certificate has been issued for it certifying that Code Level 3 has been achieved.
- 7) No development shall take place, including any works of demolition, until a Construction Method Statement has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The approved Statement shall be adhered to throughout the construction period. The Statement shall provide for:
 - i) the parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors
 - ii) loading and unloading of plant and materials
 - iii) storage of plant and materials used in constructing the development
 - iv) the erection and maintenance of security hoarding
 - v) wheel washing facilities
 - vi) measures to control the emission of dust and dirt during construction
 - vii) a scheme for recycling/disposing of waste resulting from demolition and construction works
- 8) Demolition or construction works shall not take place outside 0800 hours to 1800 hours Mondays to Fridays and 0900 hours to 1300 hours on Saturdays and at no time on Sundays or Bank Holidays.

Main issues

3. I consider that there are four main issues:

- (i) the effect on the character and appearance of the area;
- (ii) whether the proposal would provide satisfactory living conditions for neighbouring occupiers, with particular reference to outlook;
- (iii) highway safety; and
- (iv) whether, having regard to advice in Circular 05/2005 *Planning Obligations*, a planning obligation is required to counterbalance the effect of the development on transport, education and leisure facilities.

Reasons

4. The appeal building is a three storey block of flats on the north side of Bath Road (A4). Lawns to the north and south provide a spacious foil to the mass of the building and tall vegetation along the boundaries to east and west provide visual separation from adjacent development. A garage and parking court occupies the northern part of the site. There is no vehicular access directly off the main road. Instead, access to the garage court is achieved from the north off Armadale Court.
5. It is proposed to construct an additional two floors on top of the existing building to accommodate eight flats, four on each floor. The new third floor would continue the design of the existing building upwards whereas the new

fourth floor would be accommodated within a mansard roof. It is also proposed to add a lift to the existing central stair tower on the north side of the building.

Character and appearance

6. Armadale Court gives access to a number of modern blocks of flats which have uniformity in their design, materials, mass and height. I consider that the appeal building stands apart from these flats due to its setting and the difference in its design. As a result, I believe that it can accommodate change without disrupting the prevailing form of development in Armadale Court. Further, I do not consider that it would be out of keeping with development in the wider area. Whilst there are family dwellings to the west in Parkside Road the area can be categorised as mixed, with flats, care homes, a hospital and a public house in the near vicinity. The proposal would not result in a building which was any taller or bigger than a number of these buildings and I do not consider that it would appear overbearing.
7. In my view, the design of the proposed addition is respectful of the modest and somewhat restrained design of the existing building and would not appear out of context with development in the surrounding area. I conclude on this issue that the proposal would maintain the character and appearance of the area. I therefore find no conflict with Policy CS7 of the Reading Borough Council Local Development Framework Core Strategy which concerns design and the public realm. It also complies with Reading Borough Local Plan Policy HSG 5 which sets out residential design standards, Policy HSG 9 which concerns the location of residential development and Policy CUD 14 on standards of design in development.

Living conditions

8. The nearest building to the south of the site is on the opposite side of the A4. To the north, the nearest building is a block of flats beyond the garage court. I do not consider that the impact of the proposal on the outlook from these buildings could reasonably be described as overbearing due to their distance from the site.
9. There is a block of flats to the east and a dwelling to the west. The existing building rises to three storeys and is therefore a significant presence as it stands, albeit that the views of it from the sides are filtered by tall trees along the boundaries. Due to the height of the two storeys proposed above the existing building relative to these properties I do not consider that any significant difference to their occupants' outlook would result.
10. I therefore conclude on this issue that the development would not cause unacceptable harm to the living conditions of neighbouring occupants in respect of outlook. In this respect it complies with Policy HSG 5 of the Local Plan which precludes development which would have a detrimental impact on adjoining properties.

Highway safety

11. Policy CS24 of the Core Strategy states that maximum car parking standards will be applied in relation to the accessibility of locations within the Borough to sustainable transport facilities, particularly public transport.

12. There would be eighteen garages and twelve parking spaces to serve the twenty-six flats which would result from the development. This level of provision exceeds the requirements of the Council's parking standards which allow a maximum provision of twenty-seven spaces in this location. The Council is nevertheless concerned that the eighteen garages in the garage court would be used for storage rather than parking and, as a result, on-street parking would occur to the detriment of the flow of traffic and road safety.
13. In my experience garages are often used for storage rather than parking. I can therefore understand the Council's reasoning on this point. However, it is a key objective of Government policy to reduce reliance on the private car in the interest of addressing climate change. It is recognised that the availability of car parking can influence travel choices and, accordingly, the Council's parking standards are expressed in terms of maximum provision. In this regard, the site is in a sustainable location within reasonable walking and cycling distance of a range of facilities and I saw that it is on a bus route. Further, Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 *Transport* states that local authorities should not require developers to provide more spaces than they themselves wish, other than in exceptional circumstances. I am not aware of any exceptional circumstances which could not be resolved through the introduction or enforcement of on-street parking controls and I have not been provided with any evidence to suggest that the level of traffic generation or parking provision would result in significant implications for highway safety. I note that the Council's Transport Strategy Department has raised no objection to the proposal. In that there would be overprovision for car parking to the extent of three spaces the proposal would conflict with local and national sustainability objectives. However, I do not consider that this matter is significant in the context of the wider availability of car parking in the area. Overall, I conclude on the issue of highway safety that no material harm would result from the development.

Planning obligation

14. The appellant has submitted a planning obligation committing the sums of £22439, £18000 and £16000 towards the provision of education, transport and leisure facilities, respectively.
15. I consider that it is reasonable to require the appellant to contribute towards mitigating the impact of the development in line with Council policy. In my view the proposed flats could accommodate small families and would therefore be likely to generate a need for school places. I have been advised that there is pressure on educational resources in the west area of Reading. I consider that it would also be likely to increase pressure on play facilities and open space provision. In addition, the development would be likely to place demands on the transport system, particularly public transport, given the sustainable location of the site. The requested sum in respect of transport would contribute to projects under the Reading Urban Area Package identified in the Council's Transport Plan.
16. On this issue I conclude that a planning obligation is required to counterbalance the effect of the development on transport, education and leisure facilities. The submitted obligation complies with Core Strategy Policy CS20, which relates to the implementation of the Reading Transport Strategy. It also complies with

Policy CS9, which concerns infrastructure, services, resources and amenities and with Policy CS29 which relates to the provision of open space.

Other matters

17. Due to their height and siting I do not consider that the proposed flats would result in any material impact on neighbours' light or privacy. I fully appreciate concerns about the impact of construction on the structural integrity of the building, but this is a legal, rather than a planning, matter. I have noted concern about the sewerage system but drainage is addressed under other legislation and is therefore not a matter which has been determinative in this appeal. Given my conclusion on highway safety I see no reason for access by emergency or refuse collection vehicles to be prejudiced.
18. The appellant has asked for my comments on an image of an alternative scheme which shows two fully expressed additional floors. I can say that its style appears to integrate well with the style of the existing building. However, I do not have full details of the scheme and would not wish to fetter the Council's assessment of a formal planning application, which would take a much wider range of considerations into account.

Conditions

19. The Council has suggested a number of conditions in the event that I allow this appeal. For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning I have attached a condition requiring the development to be carried out in accordance with the approved plans. I have attached a condition requiring the approval of materials to ensure that the flats harmonise with the existing building. I have also attached a condition to ensure that the flats achieve Level 3 of the Code for Sustainable Homes in line with Council policy. A condition has been attached to ensure that trees and hedgerows of amenity value are protected during the course of development and retained thereafter. However, I do not consider that the development demands a more general scheme of landscaping because the building already benefits from an attractive setting. A Construction Method Statement has also been required. Given the scale of construction I consider that it would be unreasonable to rely on other legislation to control matters such as the displacement of mud and the emission of dust and dirt. Whilst a certain amount of noise is inevitable during construction works I have limited the hours of working to minimise disturbance to neighbours, in particular, I have in mind the occupants of the flats below. A condition requiring bicycle parking has been attached in accordance with Government objectives in respect of sustainable modes of transport. I have not, however, attached a condition in respect of car parking having found no need for additional spaces to be provided. I have not attached a condition restricting the creation of additional windows because I consider it unlikely that they would impinge on neighbours' privacy or diminish the attractiveness of the building.

Conclusion

20. I have given careful consideration to the views of the Council, owners, occupiers, and Alok Sharma, Member of Parliament for Reading West, but I have found nothing to turn me away from my conclusion that the appeal should

succeed. For the reasons given above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

Julie German

INSPECTOR



Phillips Planning Services Ltd.
Town Planning and Development Consultants

62-79 ARMADALE COURT
READING

Phillips Planning Services Limited
Kingsbrook House
7 Kingsway
Bedford
MK42 9BA

Tel. 01234 272829
Email. info@phillips-planning.co.uk