

TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990
MR RICHARD TURNER
PLANNING, DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT
62-68 SILVER STREET
READING

Conversion and extension of existing building (two additional floors) to provide 6 no. two bed apartments with ground floor parking, cycle and bin storage

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This statement is submitted in support of a planning application by Mr Richard Turner to renovate and extend the existing building to provide 6No. two bed apartments with ground floor parking, cycle and bin storage.

1.2 The statement is divided into 4 main sections dealing with the following:

- Planning history
- Planning policy context
- The planning application and Design and Access Statement
- Summary and conclusions

1.3 The application site is located on the western side of Silver Street a short distance to the south of its junction with Crown Street. The existing building comprises of a two storey former engineering works with loading bay. The existing building extends over the entire site and contains a number of windows as well as painted yellow brick facades.

1.4 The surrounding area has a highly mixed context being comprised of various land uses and building styles. To the south of the site is a modern flatted development known as Hieatt Close (Mount Pleasant) which is of a three storey height with a steep pitched roof on top. To the north of the site is the former HSS Hire shop (no.40 Silver Street) which has planning permission for a new 4 storey building containing 14 flats (application ref:150885, granted 21st March 2016 – see street scene below). Beyond this building is Platinum Apartments which is a part three, part four storey development of flats. To the rear of the site are Hawk Cottages which comprise of a short row of Victorian terraced residential dwellings with no parking. The area immediately to the west of the site is an open amenity area. Hawk Cottages each have private gardens to their rear. The immediate street scene is

therefore one which is undergoing change with higher residential developments replacing lower single and two storey commercial uses.

Street scene following implementation of Ref.150885



- 1.5 The application site is located within a highly accessible and sustainable location. The site is only short distance to the south of The Oracle Shopping Centre and a short distance to the north of the Whitley Street shopping parade.

2 PLANNING HISTORY

- 2.1 The application site has a long planning history. Application ref. 04/01467/FUL (mixed office and residential use) was refused on 2nd February 2005. A revised proposal for a mixed use was submitted under ref. 06/00708/FUL and was approved on 19th August 2006. Both applications involved an additional floor of accommodation and conversion of the existing structure to an alternative use.
- 2.2 The most recent application (11/0917/FUL) was to renovate and extend the building to provide 17no. self-contained student rooms. This application was approved in 2012.

- 2.3 The site has been the subject of pre-application discussions with the Council (Daniel Murkin) for a residential development. Whilst no consultation response was ever produced by the Council, officers did not raise objections to the principle of extending the building and reusing the existing space for residential use.

3 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 Relevant planning policy guidance is contained within the Adopted Core Strategy; Sites and Detailed Policies Document; Car Parking Standards; and Government guidance in the form of the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Policy Guidance.

i) Adopted Core Strategy Document - January 2008 (Revised January 2015)

- 3.2 Policy CS11 (use of employment land for alternative uses): Where alternative uses are being proposed, the Council will consider the following
- Is access by a choice of means of transport, including the strategic road network poor and likely to remain poor?
 - Is continued use of the site for employment including potential for redevelopment viable?
 - Is there a surplus of a similar type of accommodation?
 - Would continued use of the site for employment detrimentally affect the amenity and character of a residential area?
 - Is the need for alternative uses stronger than the need for the retention of the employment land?

- Would the proposal result in a piecemeal loss of employment land where there is potential for a more comprehensive scheme?

3.3 Policy CS15 (Location, accessibility, density and housing mix): Recommends that within urban areas, a density of between 40-75 dph will be acceptable.

3.4 Policy CS18 (Residential conversions): States that proposals will be assessed against impact on the character and amenity of the area including loss of privacy, loss of amenity space, provision of car parking and treatment of bin storage areas.

ii) Sites and Detailed Policies Document – Adopted October 2012 (Revised January 2015)

3.5 Policy DM6 (Affordable Housing): States that on sites of between 5-9 dwellings, 20% provision will be required.

3.6 Policy DM8 (Residential conversions): Requires that 25% of the units have a minimum 2 bedrooms. This proposal is for a development comprising entirely of two bedroom properties.

3.7 Policy DM10 (Private and communal outdoor space): For flats outside central Reading, the supporting text states that 25sq.m per 1 and 2 bed flat is normally required for outdoor space.

iii) Car Parking Standards

3.8 The site lies within Zone 2 where the provision is normally for 1 space for one and two bed flats.

iv) Government Guidance

3.9 The guidance states at paragraph 14 that at the heart of the **National Planning Policy Framework** is a presumption in favour of sustainable development which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking. In this respect, development proposals that accord with the development plan should be approved without delay.

- 3.10 Paragraph 17 sets out the 12 principles that planning should seek to achieve. These include the encouragement to make *‘effective use of land by resisting land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided it is not of high environmental value.’* This is also reiterated at paragraph 111.
- 3.11 Paragraph 22 states that planning policies should avoid the long term protection of sites allocated for employment use where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for that purpose. Land allocations should be regularly reviewed. Where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for the allocated employment use, applications for alternative uses of land or buildings should be treated on their merits having regard to market signals and the relative need for different land uses to support sustainable local communities. This approach is further encouraged at paragraph 51.
- 3.12 **National Planning Policy Guidance:** Following the decision in the Court of Appeal on 2 March 2014, the previous provisions in relation to sites of 10 units or less and which have a maximum combined gross floorspace of no more than 1000sq.m now apply.
- 3.13 The NPPG provides an incentive for brownfield development on sites containing vacant buildings. Where a vacant building is brought back into lawful use or is demolished to be replaced by a new building, the developer should be offered a financial credit equivalent to the existing gross floorspace of relevant vacant buildings when the local planning authority calculates any affordable housing contribution which will be sought. Affordable housing contributions may be required for any increase in floorspace.

4 THE PLANNING APPLICATION (INCLUDING DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT)

- 4.1 The application is to re-use the existing ground and first floors and to erect two further floors of accommodation providing in total 6no. two bed apartments. The ground floor will be used for parking, bin and cycle storage and the main pedestrian and vehicular entrances into the building. The vehicular entrance already serves a loading bay.
- 4.2 The building is designed in a contemporary style reflecting the mixed context along this section of Silver Street. The use of modern materials and a recessed upper floor will help to minimise scale and bulk. Recent planning decision in the immediate vicinity of the site including the adjacent property to the north (no.40) will ensure that the scale and height of the proposed new building will blend into its surroundings and the urban grain.
- 4.3 The site has already been the subject of pre-application discussions with the Council. The main comment of officers was that the change of use from commercial to residential would need to be assessed against Policy CS11. This is assessed below together with the other main considerations which include:
- Loss of employment (Policy CS11);
 - Impact on amenity of adjacent occupants;
 - Standard of accommodation (noise, dwelling size, amenity space etc);
 - Parking and cycle provision;
 - Dwelling mix;
 - Affordable housing (see separate statement)
 - Design and Access Statement

i) Loss of employment (Policy CS11)

- 4.4 Policy CS11 is the main policy under which applications for alternative uses of employment land will be considered against. Each criterion is listed below together with a response demonstrating that this proposal is in complete compliance:

Is access by a choice of means of transport, including access to the strategic road network, poor, and likely to remain poor? Access to the strategic road network is poor. The site is adjacent to a one-way street which leads towards the Whitley Street shopping parade further south. The surrounding area can get congested at peak hours and throughout the weekend as shoppers access The Oracle.

Is the continued use of the site for employment, including the potential for redevelopment for employment uses, viable? The building is outdated and is not constructed or fitted out the modern-day requirements. Continued use is therefore not viable. The site is considered to be too small to justify a redevelopment for employment use. Most new office developments in Reading are large scale redevelopments located within the commercial core.

Is there a surplus of a similar size and type of accommodation in Reading? The online 'Property Link' to the Estates Gazette currently identifies a total of 71 small industrial and commercial premises available for rental in Reading. These are in the main more modern and in locations on defined commercial parks with better access to the strategic road network.

Would continued employment use of the site detrimentally affect the amenity and character of a residential area? Following the grant of planning permission at no.66, the site is effectively surrounded on all sides by residential development either that has been built or is the subject of an extant permission for residential use. Should the lawful workshop use be continued, this would affect the amenities of both adjacent properties particularly as the walls are not fitted with a modern form of noise insulation. The loading bay is also adjacent to the building recently approved at no.66 for residential use.

Is the need for alternative uses stronger than the need for the retention of employment land? The proposal provides for a type of accommodation (2 bed flats) for which there is a defined need. The location of the site is highly sustainable and ultimately is a highly suitable site for residential use. The Estates Gazette on line search indicates that there is a wide availability of alternative commercial properties within modern buildings. Whilst it is accepted that the Council can demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply, there is a national need for more housing particularly small units of accommodation.

Would the proposal result in a piecemeal loss of employment land where there is potential for a more comprehensive scheme? Following the Council's decision to approve the redevelopment of no.66 Silver Street, there is no potential for a more comprehensive scheme.

ii) Impact on amenity of adjacent occupiers

- 4.5 The proposal will not adversely affect the amenity of neighbouring properties. Existing and proposed flank windows on the south elevation will face the side of the neighbouring property. There are no habitable windows proposed on the buildings northern elevation. To the rear, proposed and existing windows will overlook a communal garden area and not private garden space.

iii) Standard of accommodation

- 4.6 All of the new flats meet the minimum gross internal floor areas set out within the nationally prescribed 'Technical Housing Standards' for 2 bed, one storey properties (i.e. 61sq.m). All of the apartments are dual frontage ensuring that all main habitable windows have an open aspect and access to daylight and sunlight. Three of the apartments would have a habitable window on the side elevation but this would only be serving the second bedroom. Given that the existing building has a very high footprint coverage, the main amenity area will be in the form of a roof garden, accessed via the main stairwell. The submitted noise report confirms that ambient noise ingress does not pose a material constraint to the proposed residential development.

iv) Parking and cycle provision

- 4.7 The proposal provides for 4no. on-site parking spaces with on-site turning space together with a bike store designed to accommodate 6no. cycles. The site is located in Zone 2 and the proposal will be two spaces short of the required six spaces. However, the site is located within an a highly accessible area and therefore the minor shortfall is considered to be acceptable. The existing workshop only has one parking bay and this required reversing onto the highway. The proposal therefore provides a safer means of access and egressing the site.

v) Dwelling mix

- 4.8 The proposal provides for a development comprised entirely of two bedroom flats which meets the objectives of Policy DM8 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document.

vi) Design and Access Statement

- 4.9 The Process: The application site is located within the defined town centre inset plan. Buildings in the immediate vicinity reflect this central and accessible location and development has generally been to a high density. Almost without exception, new development in the area has been for residential uses such as the recently approved redevelopment at no.40 Silver Street or the modern student accommodation redevelopment at the junction of London Street and Crown Street.
- 4.10 The existing building on the application site presents a series of poor facades to the main street frontage along Silver Street. The building has, over a number of years been poorly maintained and its current appearance detracts from the character of the existing streetscene. This will become even more apparent when the redevelopment of no.40 is initiated. The site is almost entirely covered by buildings with the only part that is open along the street frontage (i.e. the loading bay) being laid out as hardsurfacing. The sites redevelopment therefore offers an opportunity to significantly enhance the area.

- 4.11 The policies that have been assessed and that have guided the form of development are set out below:

Site and Detailed Policies Document

DM6 – Affordable Housing

DM8 – Residential Conversions

DM10 – Private and communal outdoor space

Core Strategy

CS11 – Use of Employment Land for Alternative Uses

CS15 – Location, accessibility, density and housing mix

CS18 – Residential Conversions

CS20 – Transport Strategy

CS24 – Car / Cycle Standards

Government Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework

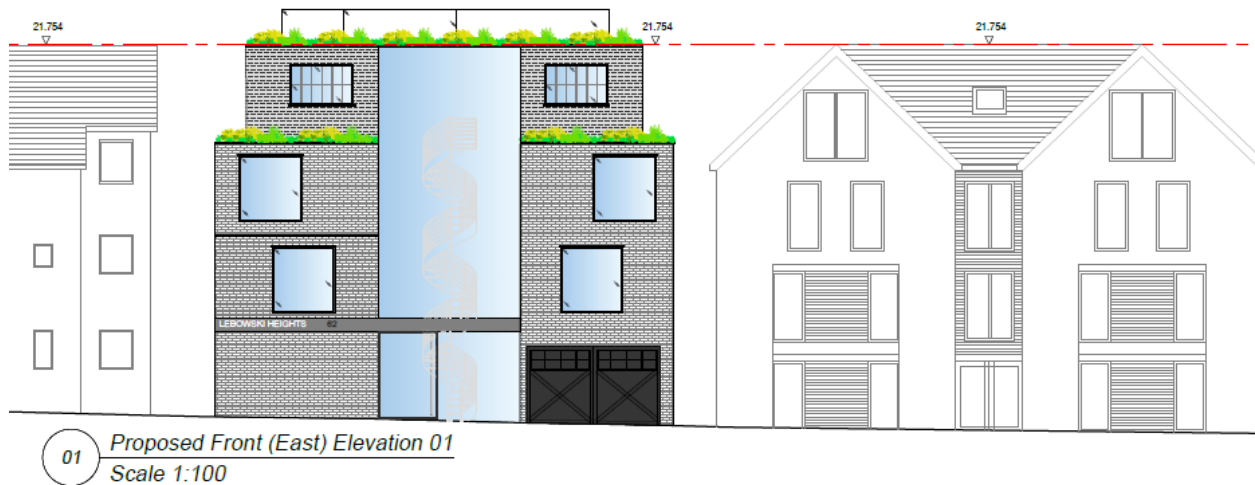
Planning Policy Guidance

- 4.12 The site itself is not designated for employment use and is located within an area that is primarily characterised by residential properties. Its loss for residential use has never been disputed by the Council in past applications or in the pre-application discussions that took place in 2016 subject to an analysis of Policy CS11. The site is also located within a highly accessible location being within walking distance of bus services, local facilities, the town centre/other shopping parades and employment opportunities. In terms of building heights, the surrounding area is highly varied and includes single to 4 storey developments. The neighbouring building to the south is

three storey whilst the building immediately to the north (i.e. the former hire shop) has planning permission for 4 storey development along the street frontage.

- 4.13 Use: The existing building was last used for light industrial purposes. The proposal is to introduce residential usage throughout the site which will be more compatible with neighbouring uses on either side. The proposal is considered to be in full compliance with Policy CS11 of the Core Strategy. The building has not been occupied for 15 years due in part to its poor condition and general physical constraints. The site is also isolated and surrounded on two sides by residential development limiting the potential uses for the building and site. There is also the prospect that an industrial use could adversely affect the amenity of these neighbouring properties through noise, activities or smells. Finally, the redevelopment of this site would not result in a piecemeal loss of employment land where there is potential for a more comprehensive scheme. With the exception of the site immediately to the north (which has planning permission for residential re-use), neighbouring land uses are residential. The redevelopment of the site would therefore not conflict with Policy CS11.
- 4.14 Amount: The application proposal is for 6no. two bedroom flats.
- 4.15 Layout: The layout has been designed as frontage facing development with the main entrance door and vehicular entrance into the ground floor parking area being from Silver Street. By adopting this approach there will be a clear definition between the public and private realm. Communal parking for cycles, cars and bin storage is provided on the ground floor.
- 4.16 Scale: The proposal has been designed to be in keeping with neighbouring building heights including the consented development at no.40 Silver Street. The additional two floors of accommodation will ensure that the building will not be materially higher than neighbouring development, either built or pending (see proposed street scene below). The footprint of the building will be unchanged.

Proposed Street Scene



- 4.17 Landscaping: The site is currently devoid of any planting or soft landscaping. Given the restricted nature of the site and the fact that the proposal will be re-using the existing built footprint there is no scope to provide any new planting at ground level.
- 4.18 Appearance: The proposed extension and renovation of the building will provide a significant visual enhancement of the site and the streetscene in general. The central glazed staircase feature will extend across all of the existing and proposed new floors of accommodation and will contribute towards the buildings contemporary appearance. The varied nature of the street scene means that the use of modern materials can be easily incorporated into the development and this building will make an exciting new addition to Silver Street by adding new visual interest to a tired former workshop.
- 4.19 Other Matters: The application is accompanied by a noise report confirming that noise would not be an issue for future occupants.
- 4.20 Access, vehicle and transport links: The application proposal provides for pedestrian access from Silver Street with a new front entrance housed within a glazed stairwell.

The existing access will be reused and will provide for 4 parking spaces at ground floor level with turning in accordance with highway standards. A total of 6 cycle spaces are provided within a dedicated and secure store. The number of spaces is two below the standards in a Zone 2 area. However, It should be noted that the site is located in a highly sustainable location and also in an area where there is restricted parking.

5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 The application proposal is for the renovation and extension of the existing building to provide 6no. two-bedroom apartments with ground floor parking and cycle and bin storage. The application should be supported for the following reasons:

- i) The proposal has been designed to a high standard to reflect its position along a main thoroughfare. The renovated and extended building which will have a contemporary appearance will make a significant visual enhancement of the site and the street scene. Building height will reflect neighbouring properties including the approved redevelopment at no.40.
- ii) The application proposal is located within the defined town centre inset and is within walking distance of buses, shops, employment opportunities and local facilities. Its redevelopment at the density proposed will ensure that the development meets one of the key aims of Government policy (i.e. to make efficient use of land that has been 'previously developed') in an accessible location.
- iii) The proposal is in compliance with Policy CS11. The site has poor access to the strategic road network and continued employment use is not viable. There are numerous more modern and suitable alternatives available within Reading of this type of accommodation. Continued use as a workshop would have the potential to impact on neighbouring properties. Since the approval of

the development at no.40 there is now no prospect of a more comprehensive commercial redevelopment.

- iv) Parking and cycle facilities reflects the site's sustainable location. Each apartment meets the National standards for dwelling size and will have open aspects to the front and rear of the building providing natural sunlight and daylight to habitable spaces.