

**51 CRESSINGHAM ROAD**

**READING**

**RG2 7RX**

**PLANNING SUPPORTING STATEMENT**

**JULY 2017**

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**1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This Statement accompanies our full application for a scheme to redevelop the site at 51 Cressingham Road, Reading, as shown on the submitted proposed plans.
- 1.2 The site has been subject to pre-application discussions together with 2 previously refused planning applications referenced 152016 & 160820, with both subsequent appeals dismissed.
- 1.3 The main reasons for the refusal of those applications were that the schemes were considered to represent an overdevelopment of the site in terms of plot coverage and visual dominance thereby failing to maintain the character of the area, which was considered to consist of more modest dwellings, with the application site and No 47 Cressingham Road opposite considered to provide “*an attractive, open and spacious entrance to Birdhill Avenue*”. There were also concerns over the impact of the development on the amenities of the occupiers of adjacent properties, though the Inspector determining the most recent appeal did not share those concerns.
- 1.4 Following the dismissal of the latest appeal we revised the scheme and on advice from the officer, Mr Stephen Vigar, submitted those drawings for informal pre-application advice. The subsequent advice received was encouraging, suggesting that the scheme could be worked up to a detailed application and advising that a high quality scheme of landscaping would be essential.
- 1.5 This current application puts forward the scheme previously subject to informal advice and includes a detailed scheme of landscaping. The application is submitted with a bat survey report and viability statement having regard to local plan policy DM6.

## **2. THE SITE:**

- 2.1 The site is located on the southern side of Cressingham Road at the corner with Birdhill Avenue and approximately equidistant to Shinfield Road to the east and Northumberland Avenue to the west. There are good public transport links to Reading town centre on both roads and the University is within walking distance. The site is within the urban settlement and the surrounding area comprises a mixture of building styles and sizes including post war detached and semi-detached 2 storey dwellings with bungalows and more recent infill developments of primarily two storey scale. To the east of the site at 45 Cressingham Road is a building that appears to have been extended significantly over time and that now occupies almost the entire width of its plot.
- 2.2 The site is generally rectangular although with a somewhat angled frontage of just over 26m and an area of approximately 0.15ha. The site topography falls slightly from the south to the north and from east to west along Cressingham Road. The existing house is set above the level of the road and a number of trees across the site have recently been removed. There is a mature Scots Pine to the south east corner of the site which is the subject of a Tree Preservation Order (TPO).
- 2.3 The site is close to local centres and within Zone 3, Secondary Core Area, of the Councils Revised Parking Standards and Design SPG 2011 which characterizes this area as containing a variety of land uses, within 400m walk of high frequency bus services.
- 2.4 In correspondence from Mr Vigar pursuant to previous applications it was put that the *“immediate area is characterised by detached buildings in reasonably spaced plots”* and that *“the corner of Birdhill Avenue is particularly spacious with the large corner plots of 47 and 51 Cressingham Road appearing relatively undeveloped and characterised by outdoor space and vegetation”*.
- 2.5 This notion has tended to be upheld by the appeal Inspectors and the scheme now put forward takes full account of that character description.

### **3 THE PROPOSAL**

- 3.1 Having reconsidered the scheme in light of previous comments from Mr Vigar and the reasons set out for refusing the previous applications, we are now proposing 2 modest buildings presenting to the street as single dwellings but accommodating 6 x 1-bed flats with informal provision for 6 parking spaces and cycle and bin storage.
- 3.2 The buildings would be set into the ground to reflect the topography of the site and the ridge heights would stagger down along the Cressingham Road frontage with the ridge of Plot 1 set at the same height as the existing ridge and Plot 2 set between that and the ridge at no. 53, which seems a logical transition. The roof and eaves design now show the buildings in a more defined 'chalet' style bungalow manner with Arts and Crafts features and with the dormers reflective of the dormers in the existing roof. We have also added chimneys as suggested by officers and think the houses now look quite attractive and well proportioned in relation to the plot and surrounding development.
- 3.3 The siting of the buildings and plot coverage allows for appropriate setbacks to the side boundaries and between the buildings themselves with a substantial area of amenity space to the rear. The plot coverage allows for significant new tree and hedge planting together with the retention of existing trees, including the protected tree to the south eastern corner of the site around which the land would remain untouched.
- 3.4 Given the topography of the site and the need to set the buildings into the ground there will be an element of cut and fill with the use of retaining walls as set out on the submitted plans, and with those walls and terraces forming an integral part of the detailed scheme of landscaping prepared by ACD Environmental and submitted with the application.
- 3.5 Materials to be used would be appropriate to the local context and we believe the buildings would sit comfortably in the streetscene in terms of heights and scale with appropriate setbacks to side boundaries and an area of open frontage similar to other properties in the area. It is considered that the scheme proposed represents a high quality of design that would fit comfortably on the plot and would make a positive contribution to the visual character of the area whilst making far more efficient use of the land in a sustainable location. However, having set out the site context and proposals it is now necessary to consider the proposal against the development plan for the area.

## **4 Development Plan**

- 4.1 An assessment of the development plan context for the area would indicate the following policies are relevant:

### **4.2 National Policy Guidance**

- 4.2.1 With the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) on 27 March 2012 all principle PPS's have been replaced. The NPPF identifies a presumption in favour of sustainable development as a "golden thread " running through plan-making and decision-taking and at paragraph 49 states that housing applications "should be considered in that context".
- 4.2.2 The Framework document also says that "Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning and should contribute positively to making places better for people". The Framework recognises that planning supports strong, vibrant and healthy communities by supplying the housing needed for present and future generations and advises that development "that is sustainable should go ahead, without delay".

### **4.3 Reading Borough Core Strategy Document and the Sites and Detailed Policies Document**

- 4.3.1 Policy CS4 (Accessibility and the Intensity of Development) states, inter alia, that the scale and density of development within the Borough will be related to its level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport to a range of services and facilities.
- 4.3.2 Policy CS7 (Design and the Public Realm) seeks to ensure that all development is of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located.
- 4.3.3 Policy DM4 (Safeguarding Amenity) seeks to ensure that development does not cause a significant detrimental impact to the living environment of existing or new residential properties in terms of, inter alia, privacy, access to sunlight and daylight and visual dominance.

- 4.3.4 Policy DM6 (Affordable Housing) requires that, subject to viability, developments of 5 - 9 dwellings provide a contribution that will enable the equivalent of 20% of the housing to be provided as affordable housing elsewhere in the Borough.
- 4.3.5 Policy DM10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space) states that developments are provided with appropriate levels of outdoor space which allows for sitting-out areas, children's play areas, home food production, green waste composting, refuse storage, general outdoor storage and drying space.
- 4.3.6 Policy DM11 (Development of Private Residential Gardens) allows for development on private residential gardens subject to a number of criteria including the relationship of the existing built form and spaces around buildings within the surrounding area, plot coverage and impacts on neighbouring amenity.

#### **4.4 Policy appraisal**

- 4.4.1 Having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework and the “golden thread” of the presumption in favour of sustainable development it is considered that the proposal makes far more efficient use of land than the existing situation and where the property is situated in close proximity to frequent bus services and the town centre this is considered to be a site quite capable of taking development at a higher density where this would be consistent with principles of sustainable development. Certainly the design is considered to be of a standard that would make a positive contribution to the streetscene and the character of the area and with regard, therefore, to the aims of the NPPF, this is considered to be a sustainable development that “should go ahead, without delay”.
- 4.4.2 Local Plan policies considered relevant to this application largely make the aspirations of the national policy framework more local.
- 4.4.3 With regard to Policy CS4 the proposal would seem to be well located for taking a higher housing density where the site is clearly large enough to accommodate the buildings proposed with appropriate amenity areas and breathing space around the building. With a site area of approximately 0.15ha the density proposed would be 40dph which is considered wholly appropriate with regard to location of the site in proximity to local facilities, the University and transport links and having regard to Policy CS15.

- 4.4.4 Policy CS7 reiterates, to a large extent, the guidance contained in the old Policy CUD14 and it is considered here that the scheme complies with that guidance. Certainly there is a lot of space around the proposed buildings to allow for an appropriate level of landscaping where the vegetated character of the site was considered previously to have been an important part of the character of the area, and the size and form of the buildings are reflective of others in the area.
- 4.4.5 Whilst the character of the existing building has been remarked on previously, its architectural detail is not considered sufficient to warrant its retention where this would effectively sterilise the site given its siting on the plot. We are effectively proposing 2 buildings in a chalet bungalow style that would present to the street as two single dwellinghouses with detail that adds interest to the streetscene and which maintains good separation distances to the boundaries and to adjacent houses.
- 4.4.6 We consider there to be sufficient distance to the adjacent house to the west so as not to appear overbearing to the occupiers of that house and given the orientation of the building on the plot there are not considered to be any impacts on light to adjacent properties. Given the separation distances to adjoining properties together with intervening tree and plant screening there are not considered to be any concerns with overlooking and this was a matter discussed by previous appeal Inspectors.
- 4.4.7 The proposal incorporates levels of communal amenity space for future occupiers which is south facing and would allow for sitting-out areas, drying space, refuse storage and where parts could be used for green waste composting or food production. There is also sufficient space on site for vehicle parking and cycle storage appropriate to the form of development proposed and the access and sight lines onto the highway have previously been found to be acceptable.
- 4.4.8 Whilst the scheme proposes only 1-bed units, this is the most financially viable scheme given the reductions we have made to the size of the buildings. However, it is also considered reasonable to suggest that the vast majority of housing stock in the area is family sized 2, 3 or 4-bed units and that the proposal would add to that mix and offer more

diverse accommodation. It is also considered of relevance that the site is located close to the university where there is demand for smaller units of accommodation.

4.4.9 Notwithstanding that, it is put here that the proposal as now submitted takes full account of the characteristics of the area whilst making more efficient use of the land and provides the opportunity to enhance the character of the area whilst providing a high quality living environment for future occupiers of the development. As noted above, there have been a number of schemes proposed over this site but following most recent discussions with Mr Vigar we are encouraged that this current scheme can be considered acceptable.

4.4.10 The site is within a sustainable location and this is a well-considered scheme proposal that takes full account of the established characteristics of the area. Given the sites location in close proximity to local facilities and access to the town centre through good public transport connections it is considered that higher density development is acceptable particularly where the overall design is considered to be acceptable in the context of development in the area and where the relationship between the proposed and existing houses is also considered acceptable. Given this we consider that the proposal complies with the development plan for the area and therefore where this is considered to be a sustainable form of development, it “should go ahead, without delay”.

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