

LAND R/O 86 SOUTHAMPTON STREET

READING

RG1 2QR

PLANNING AND HERITAGE STATEMENT

1 SUMMARY:

- 1.1 This statement accompanies the application for planning and listed building consent to convert an existing building to a 1-bed unit and the erection of a new two storey building comprising 2 x 1-bed units on land to the R/O 86 Southampton Street, Reading.
- 1.2 86 Southampton Street is a Grade II listed building with the continuing terraces to the north (78 – 84) being listed at Grade II*.
- 1.3 The site is on the west side of Southampton Street on the corner with Pell Street with the land currently in use as an architectural salvage yard. The site is within the settlement boundary and falls within an accessible location on a brown field site.
- 1.4 A scheme similar to that under consideration here was the subject of a request for pre-application advice, referenced 152044/PRE, which concluded that the principle of a residential use in the general form proposed would be acceptable and that subject to appropriate detailing, the impact of the new two storey building on adjacent listed buildings would be acceptable. This current application proposes no changes to the listed building
- 1.5 The application is considered to propose an appropriate addition to the housing stock in the borough that would be suitable for a range of occupiers in a sustainable location. For the purposes of this statement however it is now important to set out the development context.

2 DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

- 2.1 The site is on the west side of Southampton Street on the corner with Pell Street with the land and buildings currently in use as an architectural salvage yard. The site is within the settlement boundary and falls within an accessible location on a brown field site.
- 2.2 The character of the local area is predominantly residential in nature, particularly to the east along Pell Street with a small number of office, retail and sui generis uses along Crown Street and Southampton Street to the west. The row of terraces adjacent to the site along Southampton Street are Grade II and Grade II* listed and whilst the Listing Text for 86 Southampton Street does not refer to the single storey building to the rear this may be considered to be covered by a curtilage listing.
- 2.3 The site is identified in the Councils adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD as being within Zone 2, the primary core area but on the periphery of the central core area and is within 2 minutes walk of the Oracle shopping centre and 10 minutes walk to the train station. The site is therefore considered to be in a highly sustainable location.
- 2.4 It is noted from the Councils online planning records that planning permission was granted recently on land to the rear of 92 Southampton Street, on the opposite side of Pell Street to the application site, for a three storey building containing 7 dwellings (Application 160571 refers) and including the removal of a length of listed wall to provide access.
- 2.5 Materials used in the area generally reflect the ages of the buildings and the era of Readings renown for brick making, being predominantly old red bricks with some grey and decorative banding and window surrounds with slate roofs.
- 2.6 This is an established residential area within the settlement boundary and within walking distance of the town centre and main train station. The site is previously developed land and it is considered that the proposal is wholly appropriate to the area.

3. PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 There have been a number of planning applications on the site over the years but mostly relating to the commercial use. However, as noted above, pre-application advice was sought for a scheme similar to that now proposed under reference 152044/PRE, dated July 2016.
- 3.2 The principle of the residential use was established through the response to that request, subject to addressing a number of issues including transport, neighbour impacts and the impact on listed buildings.

4 PROPOSALS

- 4.1 The main change to this current scheme over that submitted for pre-application advice is that there are now no works proposed to the main listed building along Southampton Street.
- 4.2 It is proposed to demolish the later single storey section to the rear of the curtilage building and to erect a two storey hipped roof building containing 2 x 1-bed flats together with the conversion of the existing outbuilding to a 1 x 1-bed flat. Parking for three vehicles off-street, cycle and bin storage and an area of amenity space are proposed together with a new 1.5m high brick boundary wall along Pell Street.
- 4.3 Window openings have been designed to minimise any overlooking impacts to adjacent properties with ground floor windows on the north east and north west elevations being high level to avoid overlooking to the rear of properties along Southampton Street and a high level window on the south west elevation is also proposed where we are aware of a window in the flank elevation of 83 Pell Street. First floor windows on the north west elevation serve bathrooms and would be obscure glazed. Windows serving the living rooms and bedrooms in the new building look out over the public realm and are standard size to afford outlook.
- 4.4 Existing openings on the curtilage building would generally be retained with existing windows overhauled, though the two double doors would be replaced with glazed French doors within the existing openings. There is one window on the south west elevation that is proposed to be blocked up but this is currently covered by the existing single storey element to be demolished and not therefore visible.

- 4.5 Materials to be used would include facing brick to match the existing brick as closely as possible, natural slate tiles to match the existing and timber joinery also to match the existing.
- 4.6 We are confident that the scheme proposed can sit comfortably within the local context and bring about environmental improvements by tidying up the site. This is a brownfield site within a sustainable location where the principle of the development should be considered acceptable subject to compliance with development plan policies.

5. POLICY CONTEXT

- 5.1 The Development Plan for the area is made up of national planning guidance and the documents adopted as part of the Local Development Framework particularly, in this case, the Core Strategy document and the Sites and Detailed Policies document.
- 5.2 One of the main principles of national policy is to concentrate development in sustainable locations and the provision of housing to meet the needs of a sustainable and buoyant economy is also a principle theme.
- 5.3 In terms of the Local Plan context the following policies are considered relevant to this application:
- 5.4 **Policy CS1 (Sustainable Construction and Design)** states that proposals for new development, including the construction of new buildings and the redevelopment and refurbishment of existing building stock will be acceptable where the design of buildings and site layouts use energy, water, minerals, materials and other natural resources appropriately, efficiently and with care and take account of climate change.
- 5.5 **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.
- 5.6 **Policy CS5 (Inclusive Access)** states that all buildings should be located, sited and designed to provide suitable access to, into and within, its facilities, for all potential users, including disabled people, so that they can use them safely and easily.

- 5.7 **Policy CS7 (Design and the Public Realm)** requires that all development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located.
- 5.8 **Policy CS11 (Use of Employment Land for Alternative Uses)** notes that outside the Core Employment Areas the loss of employment land for other uses will need to be balanced against a number of factors including the effect of continuing the existing use on the amenity and character of a residential area and the need for alternative uses over the retention of the existing use.
- 5.9 **Policy CS15 (Location, Accessibility, Density and Housing Mix)** states that the appropriate density and mix of residential development within the Borough will be informed by: -
- An assessment of the characteristics, including the mix of uses of the area in which it is located;
 - Its current and future level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport, as defined in Policy CS4;
 - The need to achieve high quality design in accordance with Policy CS7; and
 - The need to minimise environmental impacts, including detrimental impacts on the amenities of adjoining occupiers.
- 5.10 **CS24 (Car/Cycle Parking)** requires new development to provide car parking and cycle storage in accordance with the standards set out in the adopted Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD or to provide justification for a lower limit.
- 5.11 **Policy DM4 (Safeguarding Amenity)** seeks to ensure that development does not have a significant detrimental impact on the living environment of existing or new residential properties, in terms of, among other things:
- Privacy and overlooking;
 - Access to sunlight and daylight;
 - Visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development.
- 5.12 **Policy DM6 (Affordable Housing)** requires the provision of 10% affordable housing on sites of 1 - 4 dwellings, subject to viability.

- 5.13 **Policy CS33 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment)** states among other things that planning consent will only be granted where development has no adverse impact on historic assets and their settings.

6 POLICY APPRAISAL

- 6.1 Where the proposal has the potential to affect heritage assets, this should be the starting point when assessing the proposal where Policy CS33 states that planning consent will only be granted where development has no adverse impact on historic assets and their settings.
- 6.2 In that regard, as noted previously, pre-application advice was given for a scheme similar to that the subject of this application with the Councils Historic Buildings Consultant commenting that the proposal would be subordinate to the three storey listed buildings along Southampton Street and that the proposed new building would be sufficiently distant from the rear of those buildings to reduce any visual impact.
- 6.3 Impacts on longer distance views to the Grade II listed St Giles Church were also considered by the Councils Historic Buildings Consultant who concluded that it would not be significant in this location.
- 6.4 The window proportions for the new building are considered appropriate in relation to the listed buildings and materials to be used would be high quality and would match the existing materials as closely as possible. Further to this, existing window openings on the curtilage building would be retained and it is considered that the redevelopment of the site would actually enhance the setting of the listed buildings.
- 6.5 The development would be constructed to high environmental standards as required by **Policy CS1** and the current Building Regulations but with the 2015 Deregulation bill having received Royal Assent in March 2015 new planning consents from that date can no longer include a condition to comply with the Code for Sustainable Homes.
- 6.6 With regard to **Policy CS4** the proposal would seem to be well located for new residential development in terms of the sites accessibility to a range of services and facilities by means other than the private motor car and would be wholly appropriate with regard to the prevailing density in the area.

- 6.7 The development would conform to Part M of the Building Regulations with respect to disabled access and it is considered that the proposal is acceptable with respect to **Policy CS5**.
- 6.8 **Policy CS7** reiterates, to a large extent, the guidance contained in the old Policy CUD14 and it is considered here that the proposal complies with that guidance in that the form, scale and proportions of the building would be appropriate in this location and the redevelopment of the site would enhance the character of the area over the existing situation.
- 6.9 The site is not located within a Core Employment Area and the established use is not one that sits particularly comfortably within a predominantly residential area. There is certainly an identified need for smaller housing in the borough and the loss of the existing use would not result in a piecemeal loss of employment uses. On balance, it is considered that the proposal represents a better use for the site in a sustainable location and would comply with **Policy CS11**.
- 6.10 The proposal is also considered to comply with **Policy CS24** where 3 car parking spaces are proposed together with sufficient space for cycle storage.
- 6.11 The internal layout and fenestration detail has been arranged to prevent opportunities for overlooking to other properties and where the form and scale of the new building and its relative positioning to other properties would not appear as overbearing or result in a loss of light the proposal is considered to comply with **Policy DM4**.
- 6.12 **Policy DM4** also refers to amenity levels within new residential development and matters arising from the pre-application response included noise and air quality. We fully acknowledge that the site is located close to a busy road where air quality and noise can be health issues but there are measures that can be put in place with new developments to limit those impacts on future occupiers and the applicant would be happy for conditions to be placed on a consent requiring such details to be agreed and approved by the Council prior to works commencing. Certainly, this appears to have been the case with the recently approved development to the rear of 92 Southampton Street and where the impacts must be similar it is considered reasonable that it could be the case here.

- 6.13 **Policy DM6** seeks to secure affordable housing contributions for new development in the borough but following the order of the Court of Appeal dated 13 May 2016, the provisions set out in the Written Ministerial Statement of 28 November 2014 are reinstated. That Statement set out that contributions should not be sought from developments of 10-units or less, and which have a maximum combined gross floorspace of no more than 1000sqm – under which thresholds this application fits. It is therefore no longer considered lawful to secure affordable housing contributions under Policy DM6 and it is hoped that the Council acts in the correct spirit.
- 6.14 Notwithstanding that, this is thought to be a well-considered scheme proposal and one that takes full account of the established characteristics of the area. Given the sites location in close proximity to the town centre and local services and facilities with good public transport connections it is considered that a residential development is acceptable.
- 6.15 The overall design is considered to be acceptable and in the context of development in the area the relationship between the proposed and existing houses, including the listed buildings, is also considered acceptable. Given this we consider that the proposal complies with the development plan context for the area and where this is considered to be a sustainable form of development it is hoped it will have the support of the local planning authority.

November 2016