
1-3 CASTLE CRESCENT, READING

Planning Statement

October 2015

1-3 Castle Crescent, Reading

Planning Statement

**Prepared on behalf of
Mr. R. Brown**

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APPENDICES

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Barton Willmore LLP on behalf of Mr. R. Brown in support of an application for full planning permission and Listed Building Consent which has been submitted to Reading Borough Council (RBC) for the following development at 1-3 Castle Crescent, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 6AQ. The application proposes the following development:

“Refurbishment of 3 Castle Crescent to provide 5 residential dwellings including internal and external alterations. Demolition of existing outbuildings including existing coach house and garages. Development of 8 residential dwellings along the eastern boundary of the site. All associated works include vehicular and pedestrian access, parking, landscaping and bin store provision”

- 1.2 This Statement explains the purpose of the planning application and analyses its compliance with planning policy. It should be read in conjunction with the following suite of technical documentation and drawings which comprises the remained of the application:

- Application Forms and Certificates;
- Design and Access Statement, prepared by Barton Willmore LLP;
- Heritage Statement, prepared by Barton Willmore LLP;
- Ecology Survey, prepared by EPR;
- Tree Survey prepared by Fresh Aspect;
- Transport Statement prepared by Glanville;
- Sustainability Statement prepared by Carbon Green Consulting;
- Structural Statement prepared by Glanville;
- Desk-based Chalk-mine Survey prepared by Listers
- Viability Appraisal, prepared by Fairweathers;
- Drainage Strategy prepared by ACPE
- Application Plans and Drawings, prepared by Barton Willmore LLP.

Overview of the proposals

- 1.3 The proposals seek to regenerate a site in close proximity to Reading town centre to provide much needed residential accommodation which is sensitive to the surrounding area.

- 1.4 The main building on-site, 3 Castle Crescent, is Grade II Listed although has been vacant for many years and is currently uninhabitable. The proposals will refurbish the building both internally and externally to provide 5 dwellings with the demolition of the eastern wing to enhance the setting of the listed building and optimise the use of the building.
- 1.5 At present, the wider site includes a derelict outbuilding which has been the subject of severe fire damage and is structurally unsound, and a row of garages which are dilapidated. It is proposed that these buildings be demolished to allow for the provision of 8 new dwellings designed in 'L shaped' mews development along the eastern and southern boundaries of the site.
- 1.6 It is proposed to utilise the existing vehicular access to the site and providing on-site car parking through allocated parking spaces or garages. The site will incorporate sufficient landscaping to protect the amenity of neighbouring residents whilst providing sufficient communal space on site for new residents.
- 1.7 The planning application proposes 13 residential dwellings and includes the following mix of units:

Type of Dwelling	No. of dwellings
1 bed flat	6
2 bed flat	5
3 bed flat	2

- 1.8 The design and layout of the site has been configured so that it respects the setting of the listed building and preserves and enhances the character of the Conservation Area especially with regard to building design and materials. It further seeks to respect the building form and materials reflected within the local vicinity and provide a well-considered high quality development.

Pre-application Advice

- 1.9 These proposals has evolved following pre-application advice received from Reading Borough Council prior to the submission of this application.
- 1.10 A meeting was held with Planning Officer, Ben Pratley, and the Conservation Officer, Anne-Marie Pagano, on site on 18th February 2015 with a formal pre-application responses received on 6th October 2014 enclosed at **Appendix 1**.

- 1.11 The pre-application advice considered that the proposal had an acceptable impact on the character, appearance and setting of the listed building although noted a number issues that needed to be addressed prior to submission of the planning application.

Public Consultation

- 1.12 As part of the pre-application process, a public consultation was held on 25th April 2015 to inform the local community of the proposals for the site. The event provided the community an opportunity to leave comments on the proposals through feedback forms. The event was publicised through invitation letters being sent to local residents around the site and posters placed on surrounding streets.
- 1.13 The consultation received a positive response from local residents with many welcoming the proposals (in particular the proposal to regenerate the site) although raising concerns regarding transport and amenity. Through the design evolution process, the comments received have been addressed as far as possible as documented within the Design and Access Statement.

Format of the Planning Statement

- 1.14 The remainder of this Statement is structured as follows:
- Section 2 discusses the site context and planning history, detailing the physical characteristics of the site and its immediate surroundings. It further discusses the planning history of the site and recent planning permissions adjacent to the site.
 - Section 3 (The Proposed Development) provides details of the proposed development and other associated considerations
 - Section 4 (Planning Policy Framework) makes reference to the relevant references within the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Policy Guidance at a National Level. It further discusses the relevant policies within the WBC Development Plan including the Core Strategy and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan and other Supplementary Planning Documents.
 - Section 5 (Key Planning Considerations) provides a response to the Development Plan policies, which directly relate to the site and the development proposals. The chapter emphasises that the proposal is in accordance with national and local planning policies.
 - Section 6 (Conclusions) states that the application should be approved on the grounds that the proposals for the site accords with both National Planning Guidance and the RBC Local Development Plan.

2.0 SITE CONTEXT AND PLANNING HISTORY

Site Description

- 2.1 The application site, totalling approximately 0.26 hectares, is situated 2 kilometres to the west of Reading and to the south of Castle Hill. The site itself is located in a dominant position at the junction between Castle Crescent and Garnet Hill.
- 2.2 The site currently comprises of a number of unoccupied and derelict buildings, with 3 Castle Crescent being Grade II Listed and is the main building on site. The associated out buildings include a former coach house building along the eastern boundary which was the subject of fire damage and is structurally unsound and a row of modern garages to the south of the main building which are dilapidated and in a poor state of repair.
- 2.3 The site is a short walk from Reading Town centre which provides a range of bus services to surroundings towns and regular train services into London and Oxford, and other wider destinations across the South East.

Planning Policy Designations

- 2.4 The Application Site is designated as being within the Russell Street / Castle Hill Conservation Area.
- 2.5 The main building on site, 3 Castle Crescent is Grade II Listed.

Planning History

- 2.6 The site has been subject of several applications for planning permission. These are described below:

Application Number	Description of Development	Decision Date	Decision
071563	Conversion and modification to no. 3 Castle Crescent to form 5 residential flats; and the demolition of	Refused	07/03/2008

	outbuildings and construction of 3 residential buildings comprising 9 dwellings, forming 14 dwelling units overall.		
970033	Conservation Area Consent for the demolition of 16 garages	Permitted	26 June 1997
960367	Erection of 2 storey building to contain 4 flats and conversion of 3 Castle Crescent from 11 bedsits to 5 flats	Permitted	26 June 1997
960368	Conversion of 3 Castle Crescent from 11 bedsits to 5 flats	Permitted	11 December 1996

3.0 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1 The following section provides a brief summary of the main components of the scheme. However a more detailed analysis can be found in the accompanying Design and Access Statement and the supporting technical report/ plans.

Description of Development

- 3.2 The application is for full planning permission and Listed Building Consent for the following development:

“Refurbishment of 3 Castle Crescent to provide 5 residential dwellings including internal and external alterations. Demolition of existing outbuildings including existing coach house and garages. Development of 8 residential dwellings along the eastern boundary of the site. All associated works include vehicular and pedestrian access, parking, landscaping and bin store provision”

- 3.3 The proposals involve the refurbishment and internal re-arrangement of 3 Castle Crescent, the main house, to provide 5 residential dwellings. The creation of the residential dwellings will involve the demolition of a small element of the building on the eastern side which will assist in delivering a high quality scheme and contribute to the efficient use of land. In addition, it is proposed that the building be restored externally to enhance its visual appearance both within the site and within the Conservation Area.
- 3.4 The proposals involve the demolition of the derelict coach house along the eastern boundary which has significant fire damage and is structurally unsound along with the disused garages to the rear of the site. In its place, a new L-shaped mews building is proposed along the eastern boundary and part of the southern boundary that will accommodate 8 new dwellings.
- 3.5 Across the wider site it is proposed that the majority of trees be retained especially along the boundaries of the site, with a comprehensive landscape strategy proposed to enhance the setting of the site and provide amenity space to the residential dwellings. In addition, a well-considered parking area is proposed to the front of the site with additional parking in the form of garages integrated into the new build element of the proposals.

- 3.6 The existing western-most vehicular access along the northern boundary will be retained as existing. The existing eastern access will be converted to provide a solely pedestrian and cycle access into the site with appropriate landscaping.

Housing Mix

- 3.7 The development will provide a mix of dwellings in terms of size ranging from 1 to 3 bedroom units. The scheme provides 13 residential dwellings within both the existing Listed Building and the new build element of the proposals. The mix is as follows:

Existing Listed Building	
No. of beds	No. of units provided
1 bed	4
2 bed	1
New build	
1 bed	2
2 bed	4
3 bed	2

Density

- 3.8 The proposed density of the site is 52dph which is considered acceptable given its sustainable location.

Design Considerations

- 3.9 3 Castle Crescent is Grade II listed and by virtue of its heritage designations, the curtilage is also Grade II Listed. As such due consideration has been giving to restoring and enhancing 3 Castle Crescent whilst ensuring that any new build accommodation preserves the setting of the building and enhances the conservation area.
- 3.10 The internal re-arrangement of 3 Castle Crescent has been sensitively considered to ensure as much of the original room layouts are retained whilst also creating an efficient floorplate for each unit. A small area of demolition is proposed on the eastern wing which appears incongruous from the main building and does not allow for the efficient use of space across the wider site. This works have been considered in more detail within the supporting Heritage Assessment.

- 3.11 The new building element is positioned along the eastern edge of the site replacing the former coach house building that is proposed for demolition to ensure that the historic built form is incorporated into the proposals. The new built element will be designed in a mews type arrangement with undercroft garage parking. This element will be two storey towards the front of the site and reduce to one and half storey building towards the south of the site which respects the building heights and amenity areas of surrounding properties.
- 3.12 The submitted Design and Access Statement provides further information on the design evolution of the site and how the proposed building design is reflective of the surrounding buildings within the Conservation Area. Consideration has been given to the comments received during the pre-application discussions to ensure that an appropriate design solution is adopted.

Affordable Housing

- 3.13 No affordable housing is proposed on-site given the financial outlay required to fully refurbish the Grade II listed building. This position is supported through the supporting Cost Analysis and Viability Assessment.

Accessibility and Car Parking/ Bicycle Provision

- 3.14 The existing access points along the northern boundary of the site will be retained. There will be a main vehicle access for entering and leaving the site, with a further access for pedestrian and cycle use only to the north east of the site.
- 3.15 There will be provision of 16 car parking spaces through both private garages incorporated into the new build element and parking spaces to the front of the development.
- 3.16 Additionally, the proposal will provide cycle parking internally within the listed building and within a designate cycle store / garage storage to serve the new build element.

Landscaping, Open Space and Trees

- 3.17 The proposals include the retention of trees along the west and southern boundaries of the site with additional planting proposed to reinforce the boundaries and retain the privacy of neighbouring properties. There are three low category trees proposed for removal to allow for the new build element. In addition, a landscape strategy has been

submitted to support the application to provide a well-designed and interactive area of communal amenity space to serve new residents as well as enhancing the overall quality of the site.

Sustainability

- 3.18 The proposals will incorporate photovoltaic tiles to the roof of the new build residential. In addition, the high fabric energy efficiency measures will be incorporated into the design to reduce the energy requirement of the units.

4.0 PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 4.1 This Section outlines the key planning policy considerations relevant to the proposed development at both a local and national level.
- 4.2 It follows Section 54(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act (1990), as amended by Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, which states that Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) should determine planning applications in accordance with the Development Plan unless other material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.3 At a national level, relevant policy and guidance is set out within the National Planning Policy Framework ('the NPPF') published in 2012 and the Planning Practice Guidance ('the PPG').
- 4.4 The Development Plan for Reading Borough Council (insofar as it is relevant to this site) comprises:
- The adopted Core Strategy Development Plan Document (January 2008 'the CS'); and
 - The adopted Sites and Detailed Policies (October 2012) ('the SDP').
- 4.5 The relevant Supplementary Planning Documents of relevance are as follows:
- The adopted Affordable Housing SPD (July 2013);
 - Revised Parking Standards and Design Supplementary Planning Document (October 2011);
 - Planning Obligations under Section 106 SPD (April 2015);
 - Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (July 2011);
- 4.6 Both the CS and SDP are accompanied by the adopted Proposals Map which indicates the spatial extent of the policies set out within the documents.

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

- 4.7 The NPPF sets out the Government's economic, environmental and social planning policies for England and requires the planning system to "...play an active role in guiding development to sustainable solutions" (para.8). The NPPF covers a wide range of land use issues including housing, transport, infrastructure, sustainable communities, climate change and the natural and historic environment.

- 4.8 The NPPF places a strong presumption in favour of sustainable development with the social role of the planning system being to provide *'the supply of housing required to meet the needs of the present and future generations'* and *'widening the choice of high quality homes'* (para 9 of the NPPF).

Achieving sustainable development

- 4.9 There are three dimensions to sustainable development (para 7 of the NPPF):

- **An economic role-** contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy.
- **A social role-** supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities.
- **An environmental role-** contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment.

- 4.10 The NPPF advises that these elements should not be considered in isolation, because they are mutually dependent. Economic growth can secure higher social and environmental standards, and well-designed buildings and places can improve the lives of people and communities. The planning system should play an active role in guiding development to sustainable solutions (paragraph 8 of the NPPF).

- 4.11 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. For decision-taking this means (paragraph 14):

- approving development proposals that accord with the 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.

- 4.12 This approach is reinforced at paragraph 187 where Local planning authorities are advised that they *'should look for solutions rather than problems, and decision-takers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.'*

Core land-use planning principles

4.13 In addition to its presumption in favour of sustainable development, the NPPF identifies 12 core planning principles, at paragraph 17, which require planning to:

- Not simply be about scrutiny, but instead be a creative exercise in finding ways to enhance and improve the places in which people live their lives.
- Proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs. Plans should take account of market signals, such as land prices and housing affordability.
- Secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings.
- Take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of main urban areas.
- Contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution.
- Promote mixed use developments, and encourage multiple benefits from the use of land in urban and rural areas.
- Encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value.
- Conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance.
- Actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling.

4.14 The principal planning consideration in relation to this planning application relate to:

- Build a strong, competitive economy (Chapter 1 of the NPPF);
- Sustainable Transport (Chapter 4 of the NPPF);
- Delivery a wide choice of high quality homes (Chapter 6 of the NPPF);
- Requiring good design (Chapter 7 of the NPPF);
- Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change (Chapter 10 of the NPPF); and
- Conserving and enhancing the historic environment (Chapter 12 of the NPPF).

4.15 In light of the above, the following extracts from the NPPF are considered of relevance to the proposed development:

- Paragraph 22 discusses the loss of employment sites and states that *'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'*.
- Paragraph 34 requires *'developments that generate significant movement are located where the need to travel will be minimised and the use of sustainable transport modes can be maximised'*;
- Paragraph 47 requires that in order to significantly increase the supply of housing, local planning authorities are advised at paragraph 47 that they should:
 - Use their evidence base to ensure that their Local Plan meets the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area.
 - Identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years' worth of housing against their housing requirements with an additional buffer of 5% or 20% to ensure choice and competition in the market for land.
 - Identify a supply of specific, developable sites or broad locations for growth, for years 6-10 and, where possible, for years 11-15.
 - Set out their own approach to housing density to reflect local circumstances.
- Paragraph 49 discusses that *'Housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development'*.
- Paragraph 51 supports the change of use of commercial buildings, in B1 use, to residential where there is an identified need for additional housing in the area.
- In respect to Design, Paragraph 58 advises that the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments:
 - will function well and add to the overall quality of the area;
 - establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit;
 - optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development;
 - respond to local character and history;
 - create safe and accessible environments; and

- are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.
- Paragraph 60 discusses that planning policies and decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes and they should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or styles.
- Paragraph 94 requires that local planning authorities are advised to adopt proactive strategies to mitigate and adapt to climate change, taking full account of flood risk, coastal change and water supply and demand considerations.
- Paragraph 100 aims at minimising pollution and other adverse effects on the local and natural environment.
- In relation to the historic environment, Paragraph 126 requires that , local planning authorities should take account of (paragraph 126):
 - the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
 - the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;
 - the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and
 - opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.
- Paragraph 131 requires that local planning authorities take account of:
- The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- The positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.
- Paragraph 132 considers that the more important the asset, the greater the weight to be given to the assets conservation. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification.
- Paragraph 134 of the NPPF requires that where development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposals, including securing its optimum viable use.

- Paragraph 173 discusses the importance of ensuring viability of developments through ensuring that when considering the costs of any requirements likely to be applied to the development, there are competitive returns to a willing land owner and willing developer to enable the development to be deliverable.

Planning Policy Guidance

- 4.16 The National Planning Policy Guidance was published on 6 March 2014 and is supplementary to the National Planning Policy Framework. The guidance should be read in conjunction with the Framework and is also a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.
- 4.17 Of particular relevance, is PPG (Design) which focuses on new development delivery a high quality of design and requires that good design responds to both the function and identity of a place. Paragraph 002 requires that good design enhances the quality of the buildings and spaces including form and function. Paragraph 007 promotes character in the townscape and reinforcing locally distinctive patterns of development with views into and out sites being carefully considered as part of the design process. Paragraph 004 considers that local planning authorities should give great weight to outstanding or innovative designs and the proposal's 'economic, social and environmental benefits'.
- 4.18 In addition, PPG (Conserving and enhancing the historic environment) Paragraph 018 requires an appraisal to be submitted with planning applications to identify the constraints and opportunities arising from a heritage asset.
- 4.19 Furthermore, PPG (Viability) discusses that sites should not be subject to scale of obligations and policy burdens that threatens the viability of the development. Where the viability of a development is in question, local planning authorities should look to be flexible in applying policy requirements where possible. Paragraph 007 discusses that viability assessment in decision-taking should be based on current costs and values. Paragraph 026 sets out that local planning authorities should encourage the effective use of land by re-using previously development land and should take a flexible approach in seeking levels of planning obligations and other contributions to ensure that the combined total impact does not make a site unviable.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENTS

- 4.20 The Development Plan contains numerous policies which are of relevance to the consideration of this application. This section focuses on those policies which relate to

the principle of the development in terms of its residential use. Other policies of relevance to the application are considered below, and the compliance of the proposals with the policies are discussed at Appendix 5.

Reading Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy Policies – adopted January 2008 ('the CS')

- 4.21 Policy CS 1 (Sustainable Construction and Design) requires that all new development maximize the use of energy efficiency and seek to provide on-site ene4rgy generation to off-set at least 20% of predicted carbon dioxide emissions. In addition, new development need to take sustainable urban drainage facilities into consideration.
- 4.22 Policy CS 3 (Social Inclusion and Diversity) requires that new housing developments will be co-located with a range of accessible facilities and public involvement with the planning process will be encouraged.
- 4.23 Policy CS4 (Accessibility and the Intensity of Development) prioritizes the locations that can be accessed by a choice of modes of transport. The scale and locations for new developments will be assessed against its accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport.
- 4.24 Policy CS5 (Inclusive Access) sets out the requirement for all new buildings to be located and designed to meet the needs of all potential users.
- 4.25 Policy CS6 (Settlement boundary) discusses that no development will be permitted outside the settlement boundary.
- 4.26 Policy CS7 (Design and the Public Realm) requires all developments to achieve a high design quality that is in respect with the character of the area of Reading including:
- Layout;
 - Landscape;
 - Density and mix;
 - Scale: height and massing; and
 - Architectural detail and materials.

New development needs to ensure that it achieves the following:

- Responds to the local context and reinforces local character and distinctiveness, including enhancing the historic environment; and

- Visually attractive through high quality built form and appropriate materials and landscaping.
- 4.27 All developments should be accompanied by a design and access statements that deal with all of the design matters.
- 4.28 Policy CS9 (Infrastructure, Services, Resources and Amenities) aims to compensate pressure from new development on infrastructure, services, resources, amenities and other assets by requiring appropriate contribution to impacted assets.
- 4.29 Policy CS14 (Provision of Housing) seeks to provide for at least 521 dwellings per annum with some development coming forward through small previously developed windfall sites including changes of use and conversions.
- 4.30 Policy CS15 (Location, Accessibility, Density and Housing Mix) discusses that new developments must be in accordance with the Lifetime Homes standard and reflect market demand for a range of housing opportunities in terms of a mix of housing types, sizes and tenures. An appropriate density of the site is 40-75 dwellings per ha given its urban location.
- 4.31 RBC has adopted an alteration to the affordable housing policies of the adopted Development Plan. The effect of this alteration is to amend Policy CS16 of the Core Strategy to require that developments of 15 dwellings and above provide 30% affordable housing. Policy CS16 as altered continues RBC's approach of acknowledging that where proposals fall short of the policy target as a result of viability considerations, an open book approach will be taken, with the onus on the developer/landowner to clearly demonstrate the circumstances justifying a lower affordable housing contribution.
- 4.32 Policy CS24 (Car/Cycle Parking) requires appropriate car parking and cycle parking provision in accordance with Supplementary Planning Document on Parking Standards.
- 4.33 Policy CS29 (Provision of Open Space) provides details on the open space requirements for new developments and where less than 50 units are proposed, provision/improvements/ enhancements will be sought through appropriate contributions.
- 4.34 Policy CS33 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment) states that planning permission will only be granted where development has no adverse impact on historic assets and their settings. New development will need to protect and where appropriate enhance the character and appearance of the area.

- 4.35 Policy CS36 (Biodiversity and Geology) sets out that how development should protect biodiversity and geological interest found on the proposed site.
- 4.36 Policy CS38 (Trees, Hedges and Woodlands) protects individual trees, groups of trees, hedges and woodlands from damage.

Sites and Detailed Policies Document – adopted (October 2012) ('the SDP')

- 4.37 Policy SD1 (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development) seeks to support sustainable development by approving planning applications that accord with the policies in the development plan without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Where there are no relevant policies or policies are out of date at the time of making the decision, permission will be granted unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.38 Policy DM1 (Adaption to Climate Change) discusses the need for new development to incorporate appropriate measures including building orientation, appropriate landscape schemes and minimizing the impact of surface run-off.
- 4.39 Policy DM4 (Safeguarding Amenity) aims to protect existing residential properties from loss of amenity resulted from the proposal. Policy requires a back-to-back distance of 20 metres between dwellings, but this would depend on individual circumstances. Proposal impact on living environment of other residents will be assessed against:
- Privacy and overlooking;
 - Access to sunlight and daylight;
 - Visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development;
 - Noise and disturbance;
 - Artificial lighting;
 - Vibration;
 - Dust and fumes;
 - Smell; or
 - Crime and safety.
- 4.40 There is a requirement for all new developments for 10 or more dwellings outside of the central area to ensure that 50% of dwellings will be of 3 bedrooms or more as set out in Policy DM5 (Housing Mix). The policy requires that the majority of dwellings is in form of housing rather than flats.

- 4.41 Policy DM6 (Affordable Housing) sets out the requirements for affordable contributions to be provided, in respect of the scale of development:
- On sites of 10 – 14 dwellings 30% provision;
 - On sites of 5 – 9 dwellings 20% provision; and
 - On sites of 1 – 4 dwellings, a financial contribution will be made that will enable the equivalent of 10% of the housing to be provided as affordable housing elsewhere in the Borough.
- 4.42 In all cases where proposals fall short of the policy targets as a result of viability considerations, an open-book approach will be taken and the onus will be on the developer/landowner to clearly demonstrate the circumstances justifying a lower affordable housing contribution.
- 4.43 In determining residential applications the Council will assess the site size, suitability and type of units to be delivered in relation to the current evidence of identified needs.
- 4.44 Appropriate level of community space should to be provided to support sustainable growth and overall Sustainable Community Strategy by improving quality of life and providing a high level of design quality as set out in Policy DM10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space).
- 4.45 Policy DM12 (Access, Traffic and Highway Related Matters) states that planning permission will be granted only where any works to the highway is in accordance with the Transport Authority standards; development would not cause material impact on the functioning of the transport network and would not be harmful to the safety of other transport network users.
- 4.46 DM18 (Tree Planting) requires that new development should seek to improve the tree coverage within the Borough and enhance the character and appearance of the area.

Supplementary Planning Documents

- 4.47 The Development Plan is supported by a range of detailed guidance documents on specific issues. Whilst they do not form part of the Development Plan, they are useful in helping to inform and shape the proposals that come forward, and those relevant to the consideration of this scheme are summarised below:
- **Section 106 Planning Obligations SPD (April 2015):** the document provides guidance to the Council's planning obligation policies following the

implementation of CIL and the level of additional contributions that may be required these include:

- Enhancement and management of local outdoor recreation and open space;
 - Site related highways works; and
 - Affordable housing.
- **Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (October 2011):** The document sets out guidance on the level of car parking required as part of the development. The site lies within Zone 2, Primary Core Area, where parking requirements are: 1 space per 1 or 2-bedroom unit and 1.5 spaces per 3-bedroom unit; 1 additional visitor space per 10 dwellings should be provided.

Community Infrastructure Levy (January 2015)

- 4.48 RBC adopted CIL in January 2015 and the supporting document sets out the contributions required on new developments to support infrastructure provision across the Borough. The rate for new residential development is £120/sqm.

5.0 KEY PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 As set out earlier, Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that development proposals are considered against the relevant provisions of the development plan and other material considerations and that applications are determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

5.2 The appraisal of the proposed development set out in this section follows this approach, under the following headings:

- Principle of development
- Principle of residential development
- Heritage Consideration
- Design Considerations
 - Design Approach
 - Housing Mix and Density
 - Character of the surrounding area
 - Character of 3 Castle Crescent
 - Amenity of neighbouring residential properties
 - Landscaping strategy
- Highways Considerations
 - Impact on the existing highways network
 - Parking and cycle provision
 - Access
- Ecology Considerations
- Trees
- Drainage and Sustainability
- Affordable Housing and Viability
 - Affordable Housing
 - Abnormal Cost associated with the development
- Section 106 and CIL Considerations

Principle of Development

Principle of Residential

- 5.3 The NPPF promotes the delivery of sustainable development and seeks to ensure that there is a provision of housing to meet the needs of present and future generations (paragraph 7 of the NPPF) with paragraph 17 of the NPPF further encouraging the effective use of brownfield land to deliver new development.
- 5.4 In addition, there is strong focus of ensuring that development contributes to both protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment (paragraph 7 of the NPPF) which could not be more relevant in the case of the redevelopment of 1-3 Castle Crescent given both the nature of the site and the opportunities to enhance the historic and built environment within this area.
- 5.5 This approach is supported with the Core Strategy which recognises that whilst there is a number of major developments within Borough that will come forward over the plan period, smaller scale housing developments can make a contribution to housing delivery and make an efficient use of land especially within Reading's urban context. The Core Strategy seeks to deliver 521 dwellings per annum between 2016-2026 and supports residential development coming forward on small previously development windfall sites at Policy CS14. The site itself falls within the settlement boundary as discussed at Policy CS6 and as such development is acceptable within this location.
- 5.6 1-3 Castle Crescent has been used as a residential property for many years. The existing layout lends itself to providing 8 bedsits although the building itself has been vacant for a considerable period of time. Prior to this, the building was occupied as residential flats and historically an individual dwellinghouse. The site itself is within a residential area with the existing outbuildings on site providing storage areas within the fire-damaged coach house and a row of garages, of which only the shells currently remain. As such the principle of residential is already established.
- 5.7 With regard to the location of the site, the development would be within 2 km of Reading town centre with strong transport links to surrounding employment locations and retail areas. The Core Strategy is supportive of new development within locations that have good access to the Central Area and in fact seeks to optimise development within these locations. Further details relating to the heritage and design considerations are discussed later in this statement.

- 5.8 In summary, it is considered the redevelopment of the site to provide additional residential accommodation through the regeneration of a brownfield site within a sustainable location to provide 13 residential dwellings will be acceptable in line with Policies CS6 and CS14 of the current adopted Development Plan.

Heritage Consideration

- 5.9 The heritage context of the site has been a key factor in the evolution of the proposals and ensuring that the most appropriate design strategy is taken with regard to restoring 3 Castle Crescent and providing additional residential development within the site. Paragraph 126 of the NPPF recognises that heritage assets are 'an irreplaceable resource' and as such need to be conserved 'in a manner appropriate to their significance'.
- 5.10 3 Castle Crescent is a Grade II listed building within the Russell Street and Castle Hill Conservation Area. For many years the site has remained vacant with 3 Castle Crescent being at risk of falling into further disrepair unless a proposal for its restoration and redevelopment of the wider site comes forward. The building in its current form detracts from the setting of the conservation area and requires extensive work to restore many of the historic features of the site. The current proposals provide an opportunity to provide social, cultural and environmental benefits from enhancing the historic environment whilst further ensuring that the overarching proposal contribute to the setting of the building.
- 5.11 A key consideration when putting forward this proposal for the site has been to enhance the significance of 3 Castle Crescent and to deliver a viable use for the site which will contribute to the local character and distinctiveness as required under paragraph 131 of the NPPF. The NPPF discusses at paragraph 134 that where a 'development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including securing its optimum viable use'. In this instance, the site in its current state is in desperate need of regeneration with the redevelopment of the site supported by local residents through the public consultation. The opportunity to restore the listed building in isolation would not be viable given the high associated building costs and as such additional development is proposed which reflects the historic building layout of the site. The introduction of a new build element to the proposals will ensure the sustainable and viable long-term use of the building.

- 5.12 A Heritage Statement prepared by Barton Willmore has been submitted with this application and sets out the extensive research and analysis that has been undertaken to ensure that the proposal reflect and respect the architectural and historic qualities of the site and the wider area. The statement sets out that the main detached house and outbuilding are broadly contemporaneous with one another, with the garages being a late 20th century addition. The outbuilding and garages are severely dilapidated and structurally unsound, with the outbuilding having suffered from extensive fire damage in recent years.
- 5.13 In this regard, Core Strategy Policy CS33 requires that historic features and areas of historic importance including their settings will be protected and enhanced where appropriate and this is principle objective of these proposals. Given the neglected state of 3 Castle Crescent, the proposal will seek to restore the character and integrity of the listed building and ensure that new development is sympathetic to its setting. Since the main house is an advanced stage of dilapidation with areas of the building being currently structurally unsound, it is evitable that areas of the building will need to be removed, replaced and upgraded to bring it back to being a viable building worthy of its listed status. An existing condition survey supports this application which identifies the proposed works that will be undertaken to restore the building, all of which have informed the Costings Report and Viability Assessment further supporting this application.
- 5.14 Furthermore, the proposals include the demolition of three elements of the site, the outbuilding, modern garages and a small section of the southwest wing of the main house. The demolition of the outbuilding and modern garages will enhance the setting of the building, whilst the demolition of the ad-hoc addition to the east side of the building will both improve the appearance of the building whilst offering far more practical/useable residential accommodation.
- 5.15 With regard to the new build element, the NPPF at paragraph 126 focusses on the 'desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness' which has been a consideration given the style and setting of 3 Castle Crescent and the site's positioning within the Russell Street and Castle Hill Conservation Area. The overall design of the site has drawn on the wider historic context of the conservation and sought to create a sense of character on a dominant site within the conservation area. At paragraph 7.4 of the Heritage Statement reference is made to the proposed palette of materials being reflective of this area of the conservation area especially with regard to the red brickwork, sash style windows and pitched hipped slated roofs. As such, the new build element will contribute positively to the special character of the area without compromising the significance of the listed building.

- 5.16 In summary, the Heritage Statement concludes that proposal will not cause harm to any of the nearby heritage assets and that the impact will be slight or moderate beneficial and thus fulfil the objectives of the NPPF by sustaining and enhancing the affected heritage assets and meet the requirements of Core Strategy Policy CS33.

Design Considerations

- 5.17 The NPPF encourages the creation of a high quality built environment that both protects and enhances the natural, built and historic environment (paragraph 7 of the NPPF). There is a specific focus on 'replacing poor design with better design' (paragraph 9 of the NPPF) and ensuring high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants.
- 5.18 The above has been intrinsic in understanding the opportunities for the site through understanding the character of the area with regard to the Russell Street / Castle Hill Conservation Area and replacing this underutilised site which has been left in a poor condition for many years into a high quality residential environment worthy of its heritage setting.
- 5.19 In addition, the NPPF focusses at paragraph 58 on optimising the potential of the site and responding to local character, history and distinctiveness, which have been an important factor in the evolution of the design given the Grade II Listed Status of 3 Castle Crescent and the positioning of the site on a dominant corner of the Russell Street/ Castle Hill Conservation Area discussed above. A key objective of the proposals has been to ensure that the site will add to the overall quality of the area of which it has neglected to achieve for many years.

- Design approach

- 5.20 Core Strategy Policy CS7 requires that all development is of a high quality that enhances the character and appearance of the area in which it is located. There are various components within the Russell Street/ Castle Hill Conservation Area Appraisal (CAA) which have informed the design approach. Reference is made within the CAA at paragraph 5.1 to the 'late 19th century houses in leafy gardens' of which characterises 3 Castle Crescent with the trees in the garden to the south-west of the building being of special note. 3 Castle Crescent is considered to be an important focal point at paragraph 5.6 although is considered a negative feature at present given its poor state of repair.

- 5.21 In light of the above, the proposal for 3 Castle Crescent includes the demolition of the eastern wing which is considered to assist in delivering a more efficient use of the main house and will optimise the potential of the site without comprising its heritage value. The opportunity to create five apartments through restoring the existing building and retaining the distinctive style and appearance of this 19th century villa has been the principle design objective. The wider proposal have sought to retain the south-west trees and reinforce the leafy nature of the site through the landscape strategy discussed in more detail with the Design and Access Statement.
- 5.22 In addition, the opportunity to create a mews style development which reinforces the former coach-house design in the same positioning seeks to deliver similarities to the historic layout of the site and respond to historic characteristics. Through this approach there have been opportunities to enhance the vista through providing a new development that is reflective of the palette of material used through the conservation area. In addition, to reflect the presence of front gardens along Coley Avenue, the proposals seek to continue this design approach along Garnet Hill and to provide landscaping to soften the streetscene. This will provide on-street access to the dwelling to contribute to the vitality of the street scene and create a stronger building frontage within this location.
- 5.23 Furthermore, the opportunity to reinforce the curvature of the entrance area into the site has been optimised to create a sense of arrival to 3 Castle Crescent reinforcing the historic form. The existing boundary walls are proposed to be retained and will be repaired as necessary to contribute to the sense of enclosure of the site and to reinforce its historic character.
- 5.24 As such, it is considered that the refurbishment 3 Castle Crescent will reinforce the historic distinctiveness of the site with the mews type development being a sensitive addition responding to the historic characteristics and respecting its location within the Conservation through reinforcing local character and delivering high quality residential development as required under Core Strategy Policy CS7.

- **Height and massing**

- 5.25 The height and massing of the new 'L shaped' mews development has been designed in line with the massing of the existing coach house and considered to be an appropriate replacement following its demolition. The two storey element of the building will be to the north east of the site which will fall to 1.5 storeys along the eastern boundary where the site abuts 47 Garnet Hill. The height of 1.5 storeys will continue along the southern boundary to protect the amenity of residents along Mansfield Road. Overall this approach

is considered the most appropriate solution given the constraints of the site and accords with the approach within Core Strategy Policy CS7.

- Housing Mix and Density

5.26 The overall housing mix and density of the site has been guided by Reading's policy requirements whilst also considering the site constraints and what could reasonably be accommodated on site. Core Strategy Policy CS15 supports higher density development within urban locations of a range between 40 – 75 dwellings per hectare. Consideration has been given to the setting of the listed building and the relationship of the site to neighbouring residential dwellings. Whilst the site is within a highly accessible location, the opportunity to deliver a proposal which respects the former positioning of the coach-house whilst retaining the area of amenity space to the south and west of 3 Castle Crescent was considered to be the most appropriate design solution. As such, a development towards the lower end of the density scale has been proposed although this still meets policy requirements.

5.27 With regard to housing mix, it is considered that given the sustainable urban locations flats are the most appropriate dwelling type and would be in character with the immediate area. The proposed housing mix is as follows:

Existing Building	Beds
APT01	1 bed
APT02	1 bed
APT03	1 bed
APT04	1 bed
APT05	2 bed
New mews development	
Plot 1	3 bed
Plot 2	1 bed
Plot 3	2 bed
Plot 4	1 bed
Plot 5	2 bed
Plot 6	2 bed
Plot 7	2 bed
Plot 8	3 bed

- 5.28 The ability for the site to deliver 50% 3 bedroom dwellings as required in SDPD Policy DM5 would not result in an efficient use of land and would result in a considerably lower density which would not be in accordance with other development plan policies. A key consideration which is referenced throughout this statement is the need to ensure that any development is appropriate to the setting of 3 Castle Crescent and as such the mix proposed is considered to be the most appropriate given the constraints for the site.

- **Character of 3 Castle Crescent**

- 5.29 The refurbishment of 3 Castle Crescent has sought to revert as far as reasonable the building into its original internal layout and provide an efficient use of the internal space to provide 5 residential dwellings. Due consideration has been given to the historic internal layout of the building and to restore the key features of the building subject to viability. In addition, considerable work is proposed to the exterior of the building and the restoration of the roof to enhance the external appearance of the building and the contribution it makes to the character of the conservation area. 3 Castle Crescent is a key feature of the site and the development has sought to respect its setting whilst delivering high quality and appropriate residential accommodation.

- **Character of the surrounding area**

- 5.30 The design has sought to consider the special architectural interest of the site and take reference from the character of the conservation area to guide the design approach to the new-build element of the proposals as required under paragraph 127 of the NPPF. In addition, ensuring that the new mews building will make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness has guided the proposals and was a welcomed approach through the public consultation.

- **Amenity of neighbouring residential properties**

- 5.31 As the site is within a residential area, the site abuts residential properties to the east, south and west and as such due consideration has been given to ensuring that the proposals would not cause a significant detrimental impact on the living environment of the residents. SDPD policy DM4 provides the principle considerations for assessing the impact on amenity all of which have sought to be mitigated through the proposal.
- 5.32 With regard to privacy and overlooking, the proposals have sought to incorporate specific design features to minimise any impact on neighbouring properties. The eastern boundary of the site abuts the garden of 47 Garnet Hill and the proposals have sought

to minimise any overlooking and visual dominance arising from the new mews development by reducing the building height to 1.5 storeys and ensuring that dormer windows are proposed along this elevation.

5.33 With regard to the residential properties along the southern boundary, there would be limited impact arising from the development given the distance between the new mews development and the rear of these properties. An element of the new mews development will run 9-10 metres from the boundary of the site and an additional 13 metres from the rear of the properties on Mansfield Road. However to ensure the amenity of the rear gardens is protected, dormer windows are proposed at roof level to ensure no direct overlooking with the existing landscaping along the southern boundary further enhanced. A key consideration from local residents through the public consultation was for the existing Lawson Cypress trees to be retained and as such these are not proposed for removal through these proposals.

5.34 The proposals will have a minimal impact on the property adjacent to the site to the west given this area of the site will remain as a landscaped area. There are a number of TPO trees in this location which will be retained and this boundary will be further enhanced by additional planting which not only will protect the amenity of this neighbouring property but further enhance the 'leafy' characteristics of the site.

- **Landscaping**

5.35 The application is supported by a landscape proposals prepared Barton Willmore which provide a landscape strategy for the site which has built upon the existing layout of the site. The landscaping seeks to retain the verdant nature of the site with the open space positioned in the south-west area of the site. The strategy seeks to retain the majority of boundary trees on site and reinforce these boundaries with further tree planting.

5.36 The proposals for an apartment-led scheme has resulted in a high quality communal area being created within the south west corner of the site including a free standing seating area and footpaths around the edge of the site. In addition, additional planting is proposed along Garnet Hill where pedestrian access is proposed to two residential dwellings. Further detail is contained within the detailed planting plans supporting this application.

5.37 The landscaping works will ensure that a functional and high quality communal open space is provided for use by new residents and will be sufficiently overlooked by 3 Castle

Crescent. As such, it is considered that the level of communal outdoor space meets the requirements of SDPD Policy DM10.

Highways considerations

- 5.38 The NPPF promotes sustainable transport and emphasises the role it can play in delivering sustainable development. Paragraph 35 focusses on optimising opportunities for sustainable modes of transport ensure that development should be located and design to prioritise pedestrian and cycles movement whilst being within proximity to public transport facilities.
- 5.39 This approach is further supported within Core Strategy Policies CS4 and CS15 which seek to ensure that the scale and density of proposed development is appropriate to the level of accessibility to local facilities by walking, cycling and public transport.
- 5.40 Given the proximity of the site to Reading town centre which is approximately 2km to the east and can be accessed either by walking or cycling and the ability to access surroundings towns by a number of strategic bus routes within 200-400m metres of the site, emphasises the sustainable nature of the site and the compliance with Core Strategy policy CS4 and Policy CS15.

Impact on Existing Highways Network

- 5.41 Core Strategy Policy CS22 requires that all new development demonstrates that the level of accessibility to all modes of transport particular public transport as part of a planning application. The proposal will increase the number of residential dwellings on the site although a supporting Transport Statement prepared by Glanville's demonstrates that the development will not have a material detrimental impact on the functioning of the transport network as required under SDPD Policy DM12 as there will be only a very modest increase in traffic during peak hours given the accessible location of the site.

Access

- 5.42 The existing site provides two vehicular access along the northern boundary of the site. It is proposed as part of the proposal to retain the north western opening as a vehicular access, and to convert the north western access solely for pedestrian/ cycle access to provide a more pedestrian led development and reduce the impact of the development on the road network along Castle Crescent. SDPD Policy DM12 discusses that development will only be permitted where access and works comply with the adopted

Transport Authority standards and where the proposals will not be detrimental to the safety of other users. Given the proposals will reduce the number of vehicle access this will provide a safer movement of traffic in and out of the site.

- 5.43 The supporting Transport Statement discusses that the continued use of the north-west access is unlikely to raise any significant concerns given that the vehicle activity is unlikely to increase significantly post-development. As such it considered that the access to the site is compliant with SDPD Policy DM12.

Parking and Cycle provision

- 5.44 There is provision for parking and cycle storage as part of the proposals which has been developed in line with the adopted development plan. Core Strategy Policy CS24 requires that the maximum parking cycle standards be applied to new development.
- 5.45 The residential parking provision set out within the Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD has guided the proposals. The site falls within Zone 2 of the SPD and as such, 16 parking spaces are proposed including six garage spaces. The parking arrangement is considered to meet the minimum turning requirements and as such meets the requirements of Policy CS24.
- 5.46 With regard to cycle provision, the development will provide secure cycle storage in the form a cycle store or within garages. The development would provide a total of 8 cycle spaces in accordance with policy PS24.

Ecology

- 5.47 In line with the paragraph 109 of the NPPF which requires that new development result in minimal impacts on biodiversity and Core Strategy Policy CS36 which discusses the need to retain, protect and incorporate features of biodiversity interest, we have submitted a Phase 1 and Phase 2 Ecology Assessment prepared by EPR.
- 5.48 The ecology assessment discusses the potential for bats and reptiles on site and as such the appropriate surveys have been undertaken to support this application. There was evidence of bats on site and as such table 5.1 of the supporting Ecology Statement sets out the proposed recommendations to mitigate any negative impacts on roosting bats on site. In addition, whilst no reptiles were noted on site mitigation is proposed in the form of suitable planting and vegetation to support reptile activity.

- 5.49 Furthermore, given the presence of stag beetles on site it is proposed to retain the dead beech tree along the western boundary to retain a suitable habitat as part of the proposals. Additional, ecology enhancements are proposed which are set out at table 6.2 of the Ecology Assessment Phase 2.
- 5.50 As such it is considered that the successful implementation of the mitigation set out within the Ecology Assessment along with any such enhancement considerations within the landscape proposals will be sufficient to protect and enhance the ecological interest of the site in line with Core Strategy Policy CS36.

Trees

- 5.51 Core Strategy Policy CS38 seeks to protect individual trees and tree groups from removal and will seek through new development to extend vegetation cover within the Borough. This application is supported by a Tree Statement prepared by Fresh Aspect considers the opportunities for tree retention on site and the opportunities for ensuring that the tree protection areas of existing trees are retained.
- 5.52 The supporting Arboricultural Impact Assessment discusses that there are 3 Tree Preservation Orders on site which are located along the western boundary of the site, all of which are to be retained. The only trees proposed for removal are three category C trees which will facilitate development and the appropriateness of their removal has been considered within the Tree Survey.
- 5.53 In addition, a landscape strategy supports this application which provides a detailed planting plan of the additional landscaping proposed across the site to enhance the tree coverage along the boundaries of the site and increase the vegetation coverage across the site.

Drainage and sustainability

- 5.54 The NPPF seeks to ensure that new development reduces the impact on climate change by supporting energy efficient improvements to a site and ensure new development minimises energy consumption (paragraph 93 of the NPPF). This is supported at SDPD Policy DM1 which requires that proposals incorporate measures to adapt to climate change.

Drainage

- 5.55 With regard to drainage, a Drainage Strategy prepared by Abley Letchford Partnership supports this application and discusses that the site is within Flood Zone 1 and as such the site has a low probability of flooding. The strategy further details how surface-water can be attenuated through permeable paving or cellular storage in the car park and access area with the route flow into the Thames Water sewers in Castle Crescent.
- 5.56 As such it is considered the proposed development minimises the impact of surface water run-off and accords with SDPD Policy DM1.

Sustainability

- 5.57 With regard sustainability, the proposed development has sought as far as possible to incorporate sustainability measures without compromise the historic setting of the site. In this regard, there are limited opportunities at 3 Castle Crescent given the objective of protecting the internal and external historic features of the building and as such opportunities to reduce the energy requirements will be incorporated where possible into the building fabric.
- 5.58 With regard to the mews development, there will be high levels of insulation in all elements to minimise energy requirements with the orientation and layout of the building seek to reduce the heating and cooling requirements of the development. The design has sought to align all living areas to be south facing as far as possible to optimise solar gain. In addition, it is proposed to include photovoltaic tiles on the new building given the orientation of the building. As such the new development will accord with SDPD Policy DM1.

Affordable Housing and Viability

- 5.59 There is a requirement under SDPD policy DM6 for sites providing between 10-14 dwellings will be required to provide 30% affordable housing provision. Where the proposal would fall short of this requirement, a viability appraisal much be submitted to justify a lower affordable housing contribution.
- 5.60 With regard to the existing site, 3 Castle Crescent is a Grade II listed building and in a poor state of repair and will require extensive works to restore the building both to its original historic form and to provide high quality residential accommodation. A Cost

Survey has been undertaken by Ridge which supports this application demonstrating the associated costs with the proposed development.

- 5.61 The Cost survey has informed a Viability assessment prepared by Fairweathers which demonstrates that there are substantial abnormal costs associated with the restoration of the listed building.
- 5.62 As such, it is concluded that the site is unable to provide any affordable housing on-site as given the exceptionally high costs of undertaking remedial repairs to the period property and the cost of construction, any significant Section 106 or CIL contributions which is charged may render the development non-viable. As such, the supporting evidence supports the requirements of SDPC policy DM6.

Section 106 and CIL Considerations

- 5.63 There may be a number of Section 106 contributions required associated with the proposed development of which will be discussed through the determination process between the applicant and officers as discussed within SDPD Policy DM3. Such obligations should only be applied where the tests of Regulations 122 and 123 of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 are met.

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The proposed development complies with relevant policies of the adopted Development Plan, the NPPF and is consistent with the objectives of the adopted Core Strategy and Managing Development DPD.
- 6.2 There are no other material consideration which indicate that planning permission should not be granted. Accordingly, the applicant respectfully respects that this application is granted.
- 6.3 As set out within this Planning Statement there are a number of key reasons why this development should be approved, namely the proposals:
- Refurbish a currently dilapidated Grade II Listed building, 3 Castle Crescent, by delivery 5 residential flats that restores the architectural and historic qualities of the building and ensures the long term sustainability and viability of the site.
 - Respect the local character and setting of the Russell Street and Castle Hill Conservation Area through a mews-type development that is reflective of the scale and materials of surrounding residential development and is appropriate.
 - Mitigates any associated impacts on highways, ecology, trees to ensure that the development is compliant with adopted policy requirements.
 - Optimise the use of previously development land through delivery much needed high quality housing in a sustainable location close to Reading town centre.
- 6.4 The overall development is considered to be a sensitive addition to the Conservation Area which respects the historic distinctiveness of the site and will deliver a high quality landscaped residential development that would be a welcomed improvement to the built environment within the local area.
- 6.5 This proposal accords with the development plan and as such the NPPF requires through paragraph 14 that the development should be approved without delay.

Appendix 1

Pre-application Response

RESPONSE TO A REQUEST FOR PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE

OFFICER REPORT May 2015

Planning Case Officer: Ben Pratley

Ward: Minster

Pre-app Ref No.: 150080

Address: 1-3 Castle Crescent

Proposal: Pre-application enquiry relating to the refurbishment and conversion of the existing listed building and redevelopment of part of the site to provide residential accommodation.

Pre-applicant/Agent : Barton Willmore

Major/Minor/Other Development Category: Major

Level of Pre-Application Response Requested : Level 2

PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE SUMMARY

The proposal is considered to have an acceptable impact on the character, appearance and setting of the listed building.

However, there are a number of unresolved issues, including the impact on neighbours.

Please see report below for a full appraisal of the pre-application submission.

1. PROPOSAL

The proposal involves the demolition of an existing side wing to the listed building and its replacement with a more modest structure. The applicant also wishes to demolish the existing outbuilding on the corner of Castle Crescent and Garnett Hill and replace it with an L-shaped terrace. The proposal is for 13 residential units (6 x 1 bed, 5 x 2 bed and 2 x 3 bed) and 14 car parking spaces.

2. PLANNING HISTORY

- 9822/33711. Nine garages. Granted. 17.08.1967
- 18208/44703. 12 garages. Granted. 29.01.1971
- 96/00811/FUL. Erection of 2 storey building to contain 4 flats and conversion of 3 Castle Crescent from 11 bedsits to 5 flats. Granted. 26.06.1997
- 071563. Conversion and modification to no. 3 Castle Crescent to form 5 residential flats; and the demolition of outbuildings and construction of 3 residential buildings comprising 9 dwellings, forming 14 dwelling units overall. Refused. March 2008.

3. CONSULTATIONS

All consultation responses have been forwarded to the applicant's agent.

- The Council's Ecologist has confirmed that the bat surveys noted in the ecological report should be submitted.
- The Council's Natural Environment Officer has noted a number of documents that should be submitted with an application.
- The Council's Transport Strategy Section have provided the following response to the amended plans:

In accordance with the adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD, the development would be required to provide a parking provision of 1 space per 1 or 2-bedroom unit and 1.5 spaces per 3-bedroom unit. In addition, 1 space per 10 dwellings should be provided for visitor parking. Based on the proposed mix of dwellings, the development would be required to provide 11 parking spaces for the 11no. 1 and 2 bedroom units and 3 parking spaces for the 2no. 3-bedroom units plus 2 spaces for the visitor parking.

14 parking spaces are proposed which is 2 spaces short of the requirement. The internal dimensions of a single garage should be 7000mm long x 3000mm wide in order to be counted within the parking provision but I am unable to check the dimensions on the pre-app plan submitted.

4. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

National Planning Policy Framework

Part 4 – Promoting sustainable transport

Part 6 – Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes

Part 7 – Requiring good design

Part 11 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Part 12 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Reading Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2008)

CS4 (Accessibility and the Intensity of Development)

CS7 (Design and the Public Realm)

CS9 (Infrastructure, Services, Resources and Amenities)

CS15 (Location, Accessibility, Density and Housing Mix)

CS16 (Affordable Housing)

CS18 (Residential Conversions)

CS24 (Car/Cycle Parking)

CS33 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment)

CS36 (Biodiversity and Geology)

CS38 (Trees, Hedges and Woodlands)

Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012)

SD1 (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development)

DM4 (Safeguarding Amenity)

DM5 (Housing Mix)

DM6 (Affordable Housing)

DM8 (Residential Conversions)

DM10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space)

DM11 (Development of Private Residential Gardens)

DM12 (Access, Traffic and Highway Related Matters)

SPG/SPD

- Revised Section 106 Planning Obligations SPD (November 2013)
- Affordable Housing SPD
- Residential Conversions SPD (November 2013).
- Parking Standards and Design (Supplementary Planning Document).

5. APPRAISAL

Main considerations:

The main considerations are:

- (i) Design and setting of the listed building
- (ii) Impact on the fabric and layout of the listed building
- (iii) Housing mix
- (iv) Impact on neighbours
- (v) Residential amenity

Design of the proposal and setting of the listed building

3 Castle Crescent is a large detached listed building that is believed to date from the 1840s or early 1850s. It has been vacant for at least 10 years and is in a poor state of repair.

The proposal involves the demolition of an existing outbuilding on the corner of Castle Crescent and Garnett Hill, and its replacement with new dwellings. Officers expressed concerns about the detailed design of these new dwellings, and suggested that they should be more reflective of a mews/stable style development. Amended plans were subsequently submitted to address this issue. The Council's Conservation Officer has expressed concern that the amendments do not go far enough to overcome her concerns. However, whilst recognising these concerns officers are satisfied, on balance, that the amended proposal has an acceptable impact on the setting of the listed building and the conservation area.

The following paragraph was included within the committee report for the previous proposal (071563):

Vehicular and pedestrian access to the site is currently available via existing east and west accesses. The list description mentions a 'carriageway sweep' in front of the main building. However, the plans originally submitted by the applicant involved closing the eastern access to vehicles, with much of the area of the carriageway sweep taken up with vehicle parking, bin and cycle storage and part of the rear garden of unit one. Following concerns raised by officers and English Heritage about the loss of this important feature, the applicant has submitted amended plans reinstating the swept carriageway. However, this has resulted in a rather random arrangement of parking spaces, with a number very close to the main building. When cars are parked in these spaces it is considered that the frontage of the site would have a cluttered appearance, to the detriment of the setting of the listed building.

The current proposal involves closing the eastern access. The carriageway sweep is, however, discernible in the pedestrian path leading from this access. The Conservation Officer has confirmed that, subject to a number of minor amendments, the carriageway sweep is sufficiently distinguishable in the current layout.

With regard to the reason for refusal relating the harmful effects of the amount and layout of parking, the level of parking has been reduced as part of this proposal and with appropriate conditions to maintain the carriageway sweep this reason is considered to have been overcome.

Impact on the fabric and layout of the listed building

The proposal involves the demolition of the east wing of the building, with the erection of a more modest extension in its place. In the absence of information relating to its age the Conservation Officer suggested that this wing might be older than the main part of the house. Further research was undertaken by the agent which demonstrated that the wing is contemporary with the main house.

The east wing is in two parts, a modest hipped roof structure toward the front and a taller, wider structure to the rear of this. This wing, in terms of the excessive width of the rear element (8.4 metres) and the jumble of roofs, is considered to detract from the appearance of the building. Its demolition and replacement with a narrower structure will enable a meaningful amount of space to be provided between the main building and the new dwellings. The proposed extension is considered to complement the appearance and proportions of the listed building.

The works to the main body of the building include a number of alterations to the layout to enable it to be converted to four flats. The proposal was initially for 2 x 2 bedroom units and 2 x 1 bedroom units. However, concerns were expressed by the Conservation Officer that the layout appeared quite cramped and would harm the character of the building. Amended plans have been submitted with 4 x 1 bedroom units proposed. The Conservation Officer is content that this layout is acceptable.

Housing mix

Policy DM5 states, "On new developments for 10 or more dwellings outside the central area and defined district and local centres, planning decisions will ensure that over 50% of dwellings will be of 3 bedrooms or more, and the majority of dwellings will be in the form of houses rather than flats, having regard to all other material considerations". The proposal is for 13 flats, two of which will have 3 bedrooms.

It is recognised that the need to retain and respect the setting of the listed building places constraints on the type of development that could be accommodated on this site. It is also recognised that the cost of repairing the building is likely to be significant. Nonetheless, in order to justify a departure from local planning policy the proposal should be treated as enabling development. It is recommended that the application is submitted in accordance with the requirements of the English Heritage document 'Enabling development and the conservation of significant places' (2008). Historic England confirm that the guidance in this document still stands, and is compliant with the NPPF.

Impact on neighbours

Numbers 45 and 47 Garnet Hill abut directly the eastern boundary of the site, with small yards of 1.6 metres in depth, and 2 metres in width. There is at present only a small dwarf wall between the forecourt of the garages on the pre-application site and these yards and, with a significant difference in height between these dwellings and the application site, privacy within these yards is minimal.

As part of application 071563 the then applicant proposed to convert part of the site into gardens for these dwellings, providing them with a more meaningful area of amenity space. This was considered to be an improvement on the existing situation. Some overlooking of this amenity space would have been possible from the rear of one of the proposed units, although this would have been at an acute angle. Nonetheless, given the benefit to the occupants of these dwellings arising from the increase in amenity space, this was not considered to be of significant concern.

With regard to the present proposal, floor plans of the proposed flats have not been provided, and therefore the presence of windows overlooking this space cannot be determined. However, without the benefits to the amenity of the occupants of these dwellings that the enlarged gardens represented, any loss of privacy could be of greater concern.

A window in number 45 currently overlooks the small yard. This window would be located approximately 8.5 metres from the rear elevation of the proposed dwellings. It is not clear what room is served by this window, or where windows in the rear elevation of the new block would be located. Therefore at this time it is not possible to confirm whether there would be an unacceptable loss of privacy within the room served by this window.

Officers raised concerns regarding the overlooking of an area of private amenity space to the north of 47 Garnet Hill. The removal of windows within the side wall of the nearest proposed dwellings is considered to have overcome this issue.

It has not been possible to scale accurately from the Sketch Layout (SL-02). Nonetheless it is understood that the rear elevation of the new flats will be at least 10 metres from the rear boundary of the site. These dwellings will also be over 20 metres from the rear elevations of 2a – 2c Mansfield Close. This relationship is considered to be acceptable.

Residential amenity within the site

The proposed layout would result in an intervening distance of 13-14 metres between windows in the main building and north facing windows in the new block. This is less than the 20 metres recommended in Council policy and could result in unacceptably compromised levels of privacy.

The stacking of units in the principle building, and the sizes of rooms, is considered to be acceptable.

6. TYPE OF APPLICATION AND TIMESCALE

The application will be in the Major category with a decision made by Committee. The target timescale for determining this application will normally be 13 weeks.

7. ADVICE ON SUPPORTING INFORMATION REQUIRED FOR A PLANNING APPLICATION

Please see our Planning Application Validation Checklist for full details.

NB: This advice is given on a without-prejudice basis and in good faith and will not over-ride the formal consideration of a planning application by the Council. The target timing for a decision on a formal application is based on the Government's Best Value performance targets, but will depend on the complexity and quality of the application and whether the Council decides to seek amendments to the proposal before a decision is made. The responses received from consultees may also affect the decision period if matters are raised which were not addressed at pre-application stage or require consideration before a decision is made.

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