

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Address: Application No: 160961/FUL

Proposals: Change of use at basement and part ground floor level from retail (Class A1) to office (Class B1a)

Applicant: NSL Services Group

Date received: 22/05/16 / Valid from 28/06/16

Target Decision date: 23/08/2016

Case officer: Jonathan Markwell

1. Site Description and Surrounding Area

- i. The application site is located on the south side of Oxford Road, between the junctions of Weylan Street (to the west) and Zinzan Street (to the east). The building, known as Russell House, is mid-terrace on the Oxford Road frontage and two-storey and basement in height. The front elevation incorporates rooflights in the roofspace to create a second floor (third floor of accommodation), with two existing rear dormers and a rooflight on the rear roofslope of the main building. To the rear there is a large existing part-one, part-two storey later rear addition, which incorporates an undercroft ground floor external parking area on the boundary with No. 121 Oxford Road. The two-storey rear addition incorporates windows on the first floor west (side) and south (rear) elevation, with a door providing access via an external staircase on the rear elevation. The east elevation of the rear addition consists of a blank brickwork façade predominantly, with rooflights set into the roofscape and an inset roof terrace at the junction with the rear elevation of the original building at first floor level, to retain outlook from remaining windows of the original rear elevation at this point (although a roof has been added to the terrace).
- ii. Vehicular and pedestrian access is possible in the southern part of the site from an existing access point off Zinzan Street (the applicant has right of way to this rear yard and accessing Zinzan Street). The site has until recently been occupied at ground floor level by an optician, under a Class A1 permission granted in 1993 (see relevant history below). At the time of a previous officer site visit on 18/05/15, the first floor was seen to be occupied by NSL (part of the NCP group of parking attendants, who work on behalf of Reading Borough Council), with this being the office and base for parking attendants. During the officer site visit on 18/05/15, it was witnessed that the second floor was partly in use as a surveyor's office. Since this point in time a separate office prior approval has been granted to change the use of the upper floors of the building to residential use. The ground floor optician has relocated to the town centre.
- iii. There are a variety of building types and uses surrounding the application site on Oxford Road at this point. For example, to the south-west is the Church of Pentecost UK building, which is also under the ownership of the same site owner (not the applicant), but is not part of this application proposal. To the immediate west of the application site No. 121 is in residential use, comprising a number of self-contained flats (by virtue of permission 061412 at this site). Oxford Road is a busy shopping street and a major route into and out of Reading town centre for vehicles and pedestrians alike.
- iv. Although not listed, the application site is located within Russell Street / Castle Hill Conservation Area. In addition, the site is also within the designated Reading Central Area and an air quality management area.

2. The Proposal

- i. Full Planning Permission is sought for the change of use at basement and part ground floor level from retail (Class A1) to office (Class B1a). Based on the plans submitted, this amounts to c. 250sqm of floorspace (c. 170sqm at ground floor level and c. 80sqm at basement floor level).
- ii. The applicant for this application is NSL Services Group, with it therefore being fair to assume that the intention is for the existing first floor occupier to relocate to the ground floor of the building. This is given the application form specifies the Class B1a use to be “an office and deployment base for the Civil Enforcement Officers”, and in light of the office prior approval granted for the conversion of the upper floors for residential use, as granted in 2015 (see relevant history above).

3. Public Consultation

- i. Neighbour Consultation
A total of 3 neighbour letters were sent as part of this application on 30/06/16. No responses have been received.
- ii. Site Notice
A site notice was erected on 11/07/16, expiring on 01/08/16. No responses have been received.

4. Consultations

- i. Transport: The proposal consists of a change of use from class A1 to class B1a. The property is currently used as an opticians and the proposed change of use is to an office and deployment base for the Civil Enforcement Officers.
- ii. The site is located within the Reading Central Area and within Reading’s primary shopping area. The site is located within Zone 1 of the adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD which is an area at the very heart of Reading Borough, consisting primarily of retail and commercial office developments, with limited residential.
- iii. This area is well served by rail and bus links and also contains the largest proportion of public car parking spaces. In accordance with the adopted SPD, the development would be required to provide a parking provision based upon the Gross Floor Area. No dimensions have been provided on the plans. However the Design and Access Statement states that that there is no change to the existing parking arrangements and 4 spaces will be available on private land to the rear of the site. This area is accessed via Zinzan St and services the retail units fronting Oxford Road.
- iv. Oxford Road and the surrounding roads are heavily regulated and are part of Reading Borough Councils Resident Parking Scheme therefore controls are in place to manage and regulate on street parking in the area.
- v. Transports have no objections to this development.

5. Plans Considered

- i. The Council, in reaching its recommendation, has taken into consideration the following documents:

Location Plan, Issue 1, as received 27/06/16

Existing & Proposed Basement Floor Plan, Issue 1, as received 27/06/16

Existing & Proposed Ground Level Floor Plan, Issue 1, as received 27/06/16

Design & Access Statement by Emmerson Barnett, as received 22/05/16

Email from Emmerson Barnett 'Re: 117-119 Oxford Road, Reading (160961)', dated & received 27/06/16

6. Relevant Planning History

Application site

- i. 930643 - Change of use from office (Class B1) to opticians (Class A1). Granted 2/7/1993.
- ii. 121793 - Change of use from the extant D2 use to D1 use (place of worship). Granted 04/02/13. [This relates to land to the rear of the site]
- iii. 140236 - Application for removal or variation of a condition following grant of planning permission. (12/01719/FUL). Withdrawn 29/04/14. [This relates to land to the rear of the site]
- iv. 140805/PREAPP - Proposed conversion and alterations of existing offices to form 5 no residential units (3x3 bed and 2x2 bed) and ancillary works. Pre-application advice issued 19/12/14.
- v. 150535 - Erection of second floor rear extension and various alterations associated with change of use of upper floors from Class B1 offices to 6 (5x2 & 1x3-bed) residential dwellings. Refused 22/6/15.
- vi. 151133 - Change of use of first & second floors from Class B1(a) offices to C3 (dwelling houses) to comprise 4 residential flats. Prior Notification under Class O, Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015. Approved 24/08/15
- vii. 151676 - Proposed change of use and extension and alterations of B1 office to form 1No. 3 bed and 3No. 2 bed dwelling units. Withdrawn

Nearby site - 113 Oxford Road

- viii. 141670 - Change of use from A1 retail use to sui generis beauty salon (amended description). Granted 15/12/14.

7. Equality Act 2010:

In determining this application the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. However, there is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application. Therefore in terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

8. Relevant Planning Guidance

- i. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan for Reading relevant to the application site comprises the Reading Local Development Framework '*Core Strategy*' 2008 (Altered 2015), '*Sites and Detailed Policies Document*' 2012 (Altered 2015) and the Reading Centre Area Action Plan 2009.
- ii. Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority in the exercise of its functions to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

The '*National Planning Policy framework*' ('NPPF') 2012 states clearly that its content is to be a material consideration in the determination of applications. The 'NPPF' states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the Local Development Framework (LDF) (Core Strategy and Sites and Detailed Policies Document) according to their degree of consistency with the 'NPPF' (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the 'NPPF', the greater the weight that may be given). Accordingly, the 'NPPF' and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

9. Relevant Policies

- i. The application has been assessed against the following policies:

National

National Planning Policy Framework

National Planning Policy Guidance

RBC Local Development Framework

Core Strategy 2008 (Altered 2015)

CS1	Sustainable Construction and Design
CS2	Waste Minimisation
CS4	Accessibility and the Intensity of Development
CS5	Inclusive Access
CS10	Location of Employment Development
CS20	Implementation of the Reading Transport Strategy
CS24	Car/ Cycle Parking
CS26	Network and Hierarchy of Centres
CS27	Maintaining the Retail Character of Centres
CS33	Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
CS34	Pollution and Water Resources

Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012 (Altered 2015)

SD1	Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
DM1	Adaptation to Climate Change
DM4	Safeguarding Amenity
DM12	Access, Traffic and Highway Related Matters
DM19	Air Quality

Reading Centre Area Action Plan 2009

RC6	Definition of the Centre
-----	--------------------------

RBC Supplementary Planning Documents

Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011)

Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2011)

Other relevant documentation

Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area Appraisal (2004)

10. Appraisal

- i. The main planning considerations relevant to the determination of this application are:

- Land use
- Design, heritage assets and impact on the setting / character of the surrounding area
- Amenity
- Transport
- Other matters

- ii. Land use

Although the site is located within the boundary of the Reading Central Area Action Plan (the 'regional centre' within policy CS26), it is situated outside of the primary shopping area, the central core, the office core, any active frontage, or district/major-local/local centre. Given this context and also mindful of policies CS27 & RC6 and the relatively small floorspace involved in this instance, it is not considered that the loss of a Class A1 use at this point would harm the vitality and viability of the regional centre; put another way, the vitality and viability of the regional centre would be maintained. As to whether the proposal would enhance the regional centre, as policy CS26 outlines should be the case, it is noted that the unit is presently vacant. Furthermore, within this parade of shops the unit at 113 has been granted change of use from Class A1 in 2014 (see relevant history above). This parade consists of: 109 - a betting office (Sui Generis); 111 - estate agents (Class A2); 113 - beauty salon (Sui Generis); 115 - vacant; 117-119 vacant (application site). When these factors are combined, it is concluded that the loss of the existing Class A1 raises no in-principle land use issues. The proposed Class B1 use

No alterations to the shopfront or advertisements are sought within this application. Informatives will clarify that further permissions/consents may be required for this.

iii. Design, heritage assets and impact on the setting / character of the surrounding area

The change of use of this part of the building is not considered to raise any design issues, nor impact negatively on the character of the conservation area or the setting of nearby heritage assets (such as listed buildings).

iv. Amenity

The change of use is not in itself anticipated to result in any significantly harmful amenity impacts to any nearby occupiers. It is noted that the application form specifies that the number of employees at this part of the site is to increase from 6 to 24. This raises no specific concerns, owing to the use classes involved. Transport officers raise no objections to the proposals and, given that in practice it is likely that existing operations at first floor level will transfer to the ground floor, such activities have not resulted in any enforcement enquiries relating to amenity impacts. Moreover, with any Class B1a use in mind, no significant noise or disturbance (for example) would be likely to be created as a result of the change of use proposed.

For future occupiers the basement and ground floor of the building would provide a suitable standard of accommodation for future occupiers.

v. Transport

As detailed above in section 4i of this report, from purely a transport perspective the proposals are considered to be satisfactory.

vi. Other matters

Air Quality

An office use is not identified as a sensitive use in terms of air quality and therefore no details are required in relation to DM19, despite the site being location within an air quality management area.

Sustainability

Although no specific sustainability based information has been submitted with the proposals, the change of use nature of the proposals and the existing site context means that it is considered difficult for sustainability opportunities to be realised on these specific proposals. As such, primarily owing to the limited scale of the proposals, it is considered in this instance not to be appropriate to secure further sustainability details via condition.

CIL

The applicant has duly completed the CIL liability form and, given the use proposed in this location, the proposals will not be CIL liable.

11. Conclusion

- i. Having regard to the material considerations and all matters raised, the Local Planning Authority considers that the balance of considerations therefore weigh in favour of granting planning permission, subject to a single condition.

Recommendation

Grant Planning Permission subject to a single condition

12. Conditions

1. The development to which this permission relates must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date on which the permission was granted.

Reason: To prevent an accumulation of unimplemented planning permissions, and in accordance with section 91 of the Town & Country Planning Act as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

Informatives:

1. The Council has taken into account the following plans in determining this application:

Location Plan, Issue 1, as received 27/06/16

Existing & Proposed Basement Floor Plan, Issue 1, as received 27/06/16

Existing & Proposed Ground Level Floor Plan, Issue 1, as received 27/06/16

2. Your attention is drawn to the terms and conditions of this permission. Any development which is carried out but differs materially from the approved plans and details, or does not comply with the condition attached to the permission may result in the Council taking action to remedy the breach of planning control. If you are in any doubt please contact the council.
3. The determination of this planning application required no issues to be resolved subsequent to the registration of the application, so officers have worked positively and proactively to provide a recommendation for approval to be made within the target timescale.
4. For the avoidance of doubt, any future proposed signage may require separate advertisement consent. No signage is approved as part of this application. No alterations to the shopfront are approved either, which again may require separate permission if required in the future.