Site address: 24 Zinzan Street, Reading
Application no: 02/01524/FUL
Proposal: 2 storey rear extension & change of use to form 4 no.1 bed self-contained flats

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INTRODUCTION

The application site forms a terrace of four storey residential properties (including a basement). The property is situated on the western side of Zinzan Street, within the Russell Street/Castle Hill conservation area where all development is expected to either *preserve or enhance* the existing character of development. The property has a rear garden area. Zinzan Street is wholly residential in character containing a mixture of single family dwelling houses and a number of recent flat conversions.

PROPOSAL

Permission is sought to convert the existing residential unit into four flats. It is proposed to convert each level into one no. 1 bedroom flat. A two-storey rear extension is proposed. No on-site car parking is proposed and the existing rear garden area is available to prospective occupants of all units via a proposed external staircase.

POLICY GUIDANCE

The proposal falls to be determined against the following policies of the adopted Reading Borough Local Plan:- CEN 2 (Housing in the Town Centre), HSG 6 (Residential Conversions), CUD 7 (New Development in Conservation Areas), TRN5 (Cycle Parking), TRN 11A (Development and Traffic) and TRN 12 (Car Parking).

SITE HISTORY

None of relevance

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS

Site Notice displayed 19th December 2002
The following addresses were consulted by letter:
20 & 22 Howard Street, 13-37(o) & 14-38(e) Zinzan Street
2 letters of objection received (from 26 Zinzan Street)
Issues raised include:

- Overdevelopment;
- Impact on existing services;
- Excessive traffic generated;
- Lack of bin storage;
- Impact on conservation area (additional overhead wiring & other paraphernalia);
- Lack of family accommodation provided;
- Request assurances that the two-storey rear extension will not impinge on privacy.

Councillor Page has raised strong objections to this application
Issues raised include:

- Loss of amenity space and access to it for prospective residents
- Room sizes ('glorified bedsits')

RBC Environmental Health have raised no objection. Room sizes acceptable.
RBC Transport Strategy have raised an objection to the scheme and recommend refusal.
RBC Building Control advise that, as submitted, the scheme would fail building regulations

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS WITH APPLICANT

Letter sent to applicant to resolve issues (dated 7th January)
Reply received 9th January but did not address issues satisfactorily.

ASSESSMENT

The proposal will result in a net increase of 3 residential units in the town centre and is therefore acceptable, in principle, in line with policy CEN 2.

25 Zinzan Street is a four storey mid terraced property (including a basement). It is of a size which is in excess of the minimum size for conversions, as laid down in Policy HSG6. The character of both Zinzan Street and surrounding roads is a mix of single residential units and properties converted to flats. As such, the proposed conversion is not considered to be out of keeping with the general pattern of development in the area. A number of adjoining properties have also been converted into flats and subject to adequate noise attenuation being provided, the scheme should not give rise to any significant increase in noise and disturbance to adjoining properties.

The property has a rear garden, which is fully accessible and usable by prospective residents of the ground floor unit. The amount of garden area provided with the development accords with the adopted Local Plan Guidelines for amenity space for new flats and given the position of the site in close proximity to the town centre, and the fact that the need and availability of usable private amenity space is different in such central locations, in contrast to other parts of the Borough, it is considered that the level of amenity space is acceptable in this particular case. This stance is supported by PPG3 (paragraph 41 refers).

There is no provision or potential for off-road parking within the site. None of the surrounding properties have on-site parking. Zinzan Street and the surrounding roads are subject to either a resident parking scheme or limited waiting restrictions. However considering the location of the site within walking distance of the town centre and main bus routes on Oxford Road it is considered that the proposal will not give rise to any significant highway problems. Were the scheme to be recommended favourably an informative would have been attached which explains that no parking permits would be issued for the residents of the new units.

Although there is an area of hardstanding to the front of the property no bin storage (apart from a small area in the basement at the base of a set of steps) or secure cycle parking has been identified. As such the application fails the tests of adopted RBLP policies HSG6 (House Conversions) and TRN5 (Cycle Parking).

With regard to the proposal's impact on the character of the conservation area, external alterations to the property comprise the addition of two-storey rear extension. From the information submitted, which includes an inaccurate rear elevation and a letter from the applicant which describes a non-existent sunken rear patio, it is unclear how this application will affect *either* the conservation area *or* neighbouring residential amenity. Before such a judgement can be made (and the neighbour can be re-assured) it will be necessary to be in receipt of accurate plans.

RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE for the following reasons:

1. On the basis of the inaccurate information submitted to the Local Planning Authority it is not considered that the proposed development would be undertaken in a satisfactory manner.
2. On the basis of the inaccurate information submitted to the Local Planning Authority it is not possible for the Local Planning Authority to make an informed judgement as to whether the proposed two-storey extension and external staircase will have a detrimental impact on existing neighbouring residential amenity.
3. The submitted application fails to make suitable provision for adequate bin and cycle storage and, therefore, fails the tests set by adopted RBLP policies HSG6 (House