

TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

WIDBROOK PROPERTY DEVELOPMENTS

PLANNING AND HERITAGE STATEMENT

**FLATS 1 & 3
92 ALBERT ROAD
CAVERSHAM
RG4 7PL**

Extension and alterations to flats 1 & 3 to create one additional apartment

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Planning and Heritage Statement is submitted in support of a full application by Widbrook Property Developments for extensions and alterations to existing building to create one additional apartment.

1.2 The remainder of this statement is divided into 4 main sections dealing with the following issues:

- Site and Surrounding Area
- Planning History
- Planning Policy Context
- The Application Proposal
- Summary and Conclusions

1.3 This statement will confirm that the proposal would not be contrary to national or local policy guidance. In particular, it will be demonstrated that the proposal will respect the character and appearance of the surrounding area and that of the existing building which the Council consider to be a non-designated heritage asset. The statement will demonstrate that the proposal will safeguard the amenity of neighbouring occupiers and that it is acceptable in terms of highways and parking and on its effect on trees and ecology. Furthermore, the submission is sustainable and will make a small contribution towards the Council's windfall site provision.

1.4 The application site was the subject of a previous application for the erection of 4no. dwellings following the demolition of existing buildings (LPA ref. 231265). This application was refused for various reasons, including the total loss of the non-designated heritage asset. The current proposal is therefore for a different form of development which ensures the retention of the existing building, whilst extending it

to enable the formation of an additional flat. This meets the aims of paragraph 124 of the NPPF (i.e. supporting the development of under-utilised land and buildings etc).

1.5 The application is accompanied by the following supporting consultant reports:

- i) Planning and Heritage Statement (Davis Planning Ltd) – see below
- ii) Ecological Survey Report (Bats) (Urban Tree Experts)
- iii) Arboricultural Impact Assessment (Urban Tree Experts)

2 THE SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

- 2.1 The application site lies on the eastern side of Albert Road, immediately to the north of its junction with Chelford Way. The site comprises of a large unkempt 2½ storey detached building which was most recently in use as three flats. These are now unoccupied, and the site is closed off from the public domain by hoarding to prevent vandalism. The building is located in a large plot which has a frontage onto both Albert Road and Chelford Way. There is a detached, flat roof double garage to the front of the site, accessed from Albert Road as well as an unsightly flat roof w.c. and storage rooms. The site also benefits from an access from Chelford Way, which leads to further driveway parking. The Council consider the building to be a non-designated heritage asset.

Existing building from Chelford Way



- 2.2 Whilst the frontage of the site is relatively open, trees along or adjacent to the northern and eastern boundaries of the site provide good screening.
- 2.3 To the north of the site are several detached 2 ½ storey dwellings which front onto Albert Road and are located within large, well screened plots. To the south of the site are three detached dwellings sited in more modest plots. These dwellings are located perpendicular to Albert Road, with their main front elevations facing Chelford Way. To the north of the site are dwellings in Orwell Close which are generally located within fairly shallow plots.
- 2.4 The surrounding area is therefore predominantly residential, and is highly mixed in character and appearance, comprising of mainly detached, or semi-detached two storey dwellings of varying ages and architectural styles.
- 2.5 The site lies within the defined urban area of Caversham (Reading) in a sustainable location close to a range of services and transport links including bus services 22, 81, 82 and 145C which provides regular services to destinations such as Reading, Caversham Heights, Sonning Common and Henley on Thames.

3 PLANNING HISTORY

3.1 The planning history of the site is set out below:

231265 – Erection of 4no. dwellings following the demolition of existing buildings.
Refused 05/03/2024 for the following reasons:

- i) Demolition of a non-designated heritage asset;
- ii) Out of keeping with the character and appearance of the area;
- iii) Harm to the amenity of future occupiers;
- iv) Unacceptable overlooking of neighbouring gardens;
- v) Biodiversity Net Gain;
- vi) Impact on trees;
- vii) Pressure to prune trees;
- viii) Affordable housing.

920010 – Conversion of existing building (used as three flats) into five flats incorporating new dormers, and parking area with new crossover. Approved 02/07/1993.

920133 – Two storey extension and conversion of existing building (used as three flats) into seven flats incorporating new dormers, and parking area with new crossover. Refused 26/06/1992.

4 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

i) Government Guidance - National Planning Policy Framework 2023

- 4.1 The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies and how these should be applied. It confirms that applications should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise (paragraph 2). The NPPF must be taken into account in the preparation of the development plan and is a material consideration in planning decisions.
- 4.2 Paragraph 7 of the NPPF states that the purpose of the planning system is to achieve sustainable development. There are three overarching objectives to sustainable development which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways: economic, social and environmental objectives. The environmental objective includes the need to make efficient use of land and to improve biodiversity. So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 10).
- 4.3 Paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF states that "where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:
- i) The application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed, or
 - ii) 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."
- 4.4 Paragraph 38 states that Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way and that decision makers at

every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

- 4.5 Chapter 11 is concerned with making effective use of land. Paragraph 123 states that planning policies and decision should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions. Indent (d) of para.124 states that planning decisions should:

‘Promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings, especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing where land is constrained and available sites could be used more effectively...’

- 4.6 Paragraph 128 states that planning policies and decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land, taking into account:

- The identified need for different types of housing and other forms of development, and the availability of land suitable for accommodating it;
- Local market conditions and viability;
- The availability and capacity of infrastructure and services – both existing and proposed – as well as their potential for further improvement and the scope to promote sustainable travel modes that limit future car use;
- The desirability of maintaining an area’s prevailing character and setting (including residential gardens), or of promoting regeneration and change; and
- The importance of securing well-designed, attractive and healthy places.

- 4.7 Paragraph 124 states that policies and decisions should, amongst other requirements achieve the following:

- Give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs;

- Promote and support the development of underutilised land and buildings, especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing where land supply is constrained and available sites could be used more effectively.

4.8 Paragraphs 131 - 141 are concerned with design. It states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. Paragraph 135 states that planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments:

- Will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- Establish a strong sense of place;
- Optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development;
- Sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting;
- Are visually attractive as a result of good architecture layout and appropriate and effective landscaping.
- Create safe and accessible environments which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

4.9 Chapter 12 relates to conserving and enhancing the historic environment. Paragraph 209 states that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing up applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a 'balanced judgement' will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the asset.

ii) Reading Borough Local Plan 2019

- a. Policy CC1 - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development. States that a positive approach to considering development proposals will be taken that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. Where appropriate, the Council will work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions which means that proposals can be approved wherever possible.
- 4.2 Policy CC5 – Waste Minimisation and Storage. States that development should demonstrate measures to minimise the generation of waste in construction, use and life of buildings and promote more sustainable approaches to waste management, including the reuse and recycling of construction waste and the promotion of layouts and designs that provide adequate, well-designed space to facilitate waste storage, reuse, recycling and composition.
- 4.3 Policy CC7 – Design and the Public Realm. States that all development must be of a high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. The various components of development form include: layout; landscape; density and mix; scale (height and massing); and architectural details and materials. These will be assessed to ensure that the development makes a positive contribution to the following urban design objectives: Character; Continuity and enclosure; Quality of the public realm and provision of green infrastructure and landscaping; Ease of movement and permeability; Legibility; Adaptability; Diversity.
- 4.4 Developments will be assessed to ensure that they, amongst other matters:
 - Respond positively to their local context and create or reinforce local character and distinctiveness, including protecting and enhancing the historic environment of the Borough and providing value to the public realm;

- Are visually attractive as a result of good high quality built forms and spaces, the inclusion of public art and appropriate materials and landscaping.
- 4.5 Policy CC8 – Safeguarding Amenity. Requires that development does not result in a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties in terms of: Privacy and overlooking; Access to sunlight and daylight; Visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development; Harm to outlook; Noise and disturbance; Artificial lighting; Vibration; Dust and fumes; Smell; Crime and safety. The position of habitable rooms, windows and outdoor living spaces will be particularly important. A back-to-back distance of 20 metres between dwellings is usually appropriate.
- 4.6 Policy H1 – Provision of Housing. Confirms that provision will be made for at least 15,847 homes (averaging 689 homes per annum) in Reading Borough for the period 2012 to 2036. Of the 689 homes per annum, small scale unidentified sites (i.e. <10 units) are expected to contribute 127 homes per annum (18.5% of the annual requirement).
- 4.7 Policy H2 – Density and mix. States that the appropriate density of residential development will be informed by:
- The character and mix of uses of the area in which it is located, including the housing mix, and including consideration of any nearby heritage assets or important landscape or townscape areas;
 - Its current and future level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport;
 - The need to achieve high quality design;
 - The need to maximise the efficiency of land use; and
 - The need to minimise environmental impacts, including detrimental impacts on the amenities of adjoining occupiers.

- 4.8 Indicative densities are set out in figure 4.5. The site has a suburban context and therefore the density range is 30-60 dwellings per hectare. Wherever possible, residential development should contribute towards meeting the needs for the mix of housing set out in figure 4.6. For market housing, this confirms that 29.6% should be two bed properties and 41.5% should be 3 bed properties.
- 4.9 Policy H3 – Affordable housing. 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. 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 applicant to demonstrate the circumstances justifying a lower affordable housing contribution.
- 4.10 Policy H5 – Standards for New Housing. States that new built housing should be built to the following standards, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that this would render a development unviable:
- a. All new build housing outside the Central Area as defined on the Proposals Map will comply with the nationally-described space standard.
 - b. All new build housing will be built to the higher water efficiency standard under Regulation 36(3) of the Building Regulations;
 - c. All major new-build residential development should be designed to achieve zero carbon homes.
 - d. All other new build housing will achieve at a minimum a 19% improvement in the dwelling emission rate over the target emission rate, as defined in the 2013 Building Regulations.
 - e. All new build housing will be accessible and adaptable in line with M4(2) of the Building Regulations, unless it is built in line with M4(3).
 - f. On development of 20 or more new build dwellings, at least 5% of dwellings will be wheelchair user dwellings in line with M4(3) of the Building Regulations.

- 4.11 Policy H10 – Private and Communal Open Space. States that dwellings will be provided with functional private or communal open space, including green space wherever possible, that allows for suitable sitting-out areas, children’s play areas, home food production, green waste composting, refuse storage, general outdoor storage and drying space. Houses will be provided with outdoor private space. The design of outdoor areas will respect the size and character of other similar spaces in the vicinity and should not be compromised by the relationship of other buildings which may be detrimental in terms of overlooking, overbearing or overshadowing.
- 4.12 Policy EN12 – Biodiversity and the Green Network. States that the identified Green Network shall be maintained, protected, consolidated, extended and enhanced. On all sites, development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity and geodiversity and should provide a net gain for biodiversity wherever possible.

5 THE APPLICATION PROPOSAL

5.1 The proposal provides for extension and alterations to flats 1 and 3 and the creation of one additional apartment.

5.2 The key considerations are therefore considered to be as follows:

- The principle of development;
- Design, character and appearance, including its effect on the existing building, a non-designated heritage asset;
- Housing density, type and mix;
- Amenity of adjoining occupiers and new occupants;
- Access and parking provision;
- Trees and ecology;

i) **Principle of development**

5.3 The application site is located within an existing defined urban area, in a location which is free from environmental or designated heritage assets (e.g. Flooding, Green Belt, conservation areas, statutory listed buildings). The site is within a sustainable location close to a range of services and transport links including bus services 22, 81, 82 and 145C which provides regular services to destinations such as Reading, Caversham Heights, Sonning Common and Henley on Thames

5.4 There is therefore no objection in principle to the provision of an additional residential unit on the site which would be supported by Policies CC1 and H1 of the LP and by the National Planning Policy Framework (i.e. making more efficient use of sites). It should be noted in particular that this proposal meets indent (d) of paragraph 124 of the NPPF which states that planning decisions should '*promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings*'. The proposal is

also consistent with Policy CC6 which seeks to relate scale and density to accessibility.

ii) Design, Character and Appearance, including the effect of the proposal on the existing building, a non-designated heritage asset

- 5.5 The proposal is to remove an existing ground floor element of the building and to replace this with a new extension with accommodation over 3 floors (i.e. ground, first and roof space). This will allow for the provision of an additional flat at ground floor level. In the case of flat 3, this will be enlarged through the use of the two upper floors of the proposed extension.
- 5.6 The existing property is set further southwards than the closest property on Albert Road (No.94). The proposed extension would sit in between the existing main front wall of the host property and the existing double garage which is proposed to be retained. The extended building will still be considerably short of the front building line on Albert Road thereby ensuring that it will not be read as a feature that will be overdominant.
- 5.7 The design of the proposed extension reflects the established features of the host building including the roof design (with distinctive half hips), eaves and ridge height, fenestration detailing (including the proposed dormer windows) and materials. The ground floor of the elevation facing Albert Road will be entirely obscured from view by the retained garage block and as a result no windows are proposed at ground floor level (south elevation).
- 5.8 The existing access, hard surfaced areas and garaging will be re-used. A minor extension to the hard surfaced area adjacent to Chelford Way is proposed.
- 5.9 Paragraph 209 states that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing up applications that directly or indirectly affect non designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the asset. In respect to this

proposal, the extension is clearly in keeping with the host property and in allowing for its full retention there is not considered to be any conflict with paragraph 209 of the NPPF or Policy EN4 of the Local Plan.

- 5.10 In conclusion, the proposed extension would fully integrate with the host building and the surrounding area and in providing for a high standard of design, the proposal would comply with LP Policies CC7, H2 and H11 of the adopted local plan as well as the general design objectives set out in the NPPF.

iii) Amenity of adjoining occupiers and new occupants

- 5.11 The proposed extension is sited on the southern side of the existing building in a location that is well away from the rear gardens of neighbouring properties on Albert Road (No.94) and Orwell Close. The proposed extension would be sited 4.5m away from the side boundary with No.94 Albert Road. The closest part of the adjoining property to the application site comprises of a garage and driveway and therefore the distance to the flank elevation of No.94 will be at least 8.5m. There are no other properties within the vicinity of the extension that require further consideration.
- 5.12 Therefore, the proposed development would not result in material harm to the living conditions of occupiers of neighbouring dwellings as required by Policies CC8 and H11.
- 5.13 The proposal would involve the extension of flats 1 and 3 and the creation of a new ground floor flat. The size of each unit, as extended, meets and exceeds the internal space standards set out within the National Technical Housing Standards and would offer future residents a high-quality internal and external living environment. Each room would be provided with an open outlook to all habitable windows. The garden area (which is unchanged) is not subject to excessive shading. The proposal therefore complies with LP Policies CC8, H5 and H10 in this regard.
- 5.14 In summary, Policies H2, H5, H10 and CC8 of the LP and paragraph 135 (f) of the NPPF are met as there would be no significant detrimental impact to the living conditions of existing or future occupiers.

iv) Housing density, type and mix

- 5.15 The provision of an additional residential unit of the site would equate to a density of 24dph and accordingly the proposal is marginally below the expected minimum density of 30dph recommended under Policy H2. This acknowledges the layout of the existing building and the need to respect and retain its original character, including the non-designated heritage asset. The proposal would therefore be of an appropriate density given its suburban location and would make effective use of land in a manner consistent with the area's character.
- 5.16 The proposal would provide for an additional flat in a sustainable location. Policy H2 of the LP states that wherever possible, residential development should contribute towards meeting the needs for the mix of housing set out in figure 4.6 of the Local Plan, in particular for family houses. The proposal therefore accords with Policy H2 as flat 3 will effectively become a large two-bedroom unit through the upper floor extension. This is an important material consideration.
- 5.17 A S106 agreement will be provided to secure the required financial contribution towards off-site affordable housing for the additional unit, as required under Policy H3 (i.e. 10%).

v) Access and Parking provision

- 5.18 The proposal would provide an additional 2no. parking spaces accessed from Chelford Way. In total, each flat would be provided with 2no. spaces, plus an on-site visitor parking bay (flat 2 will maintain its existing 2 spaces). 4no. parking spaces are currently accessed from Albert Road and no changes are proposed to this arrangement. Provision is made within the site layout for secure bin storage through the retention of the existing structure which adjoins the north-western boundary.

vi) Trees and ecology

- 5.19 The application is accompanied by an Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) which concludes that all trees of merit can be retained and protected including those which are protected. The proposals would therefore ensure that the most important

landscape features of the site are retained, including all the TPO trees. The extension is sited within a location that will not increase pressure for future tree pruning. The proposal therefore meets LP Policy EN14.

- 5.20 The Ecological Appraisal confirms that the building only has negligible potential to support roosting bats. Two dusk emergence and/or dawn return to roost surveys were undertaken in May 2023). No bats or evidence of bats were observed during the PEA and no bats were seen entering or emerging from the property during the activity survey. This indicates that the property has not been used as a roost by bats and that an EPSL from Natural England is not required. The previous objection on ecological grounds was based upon the mistaken assumption that a tree was being removed which had not been assessed for bats. As there was never any tree removal proposed, it is clear that there is no conflict with LP Policy EN12 given that the earlier roost assessment of the building was accepted.

6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The application proposal is for the extension and alterations to flats 1 and 3 and for the provision of an additional flat and a larger flat at first floor/second floor level. The application should be supported for the following reasons:
- i) The site lies within the defined urban area of Caversham (Reading) in a sustainable location close to a range of services and transport links including bus services 22, 81, 82 and 145C which provides regular services to destinations such as Reading, Caversham Heights, Sonning Common and Henley on Thames. The efficient use of the site and density proposed meets Policies CC1, CC6, H1 and H2 of the LP and the NPPF (efficient use of land) which encourages efficient re-use of buildings and land.
 - ii) The proposed extension to the existing building (Heritage) will respect the character of the existing building, which the Council state is a non-designated heritage asset. The proposal provides for a form of development that is in keeping with the character and appearance of the host property and surrounding area in terms of its size, scale, layout, height and design and therefore complies with LP Policies EN4, H2 and CC7 and the design/heritage objectives of the NPPF.
 - iii) The proposal is consistent with the Council's dwelling mix requirements under Policy H2 of the LP. The proposed development is of an appropriate density having regard to the character and appearance of the surrounding area and the Council's stated views on the host building.
 - iv) A S106 agreement will be entered into to provide the required financial contributions towards affordable housing in accordance with LP Policy H3 (i.e. 10%).
 - v) The siting of the proposed extension has taken into account the positioning of adjacent properties and ensures that the proposal would not result in a

material loss of amenity to occupants of adjoining properties. The garden area is unchanged and therefore shading will not present an issue. The proposal therefore accords with Policies H2, H5, H10, H11 and CC8 of the LP and paragraph 135 (f) of the NPPF in this regard.

- vi) The proposal makes suitable provision for parking in accordance with RBC standards and re-uses existing access points. The proposal does not raise any highway safety issues and complies with LP Policy TR3.
- vii) The proposal is acceptable in respect to trees and biodiversity, as confirmed in the accompanying consultant reports. The emergence survey has not revealed the presence of bat roosts. As there is no tree removal, the earlier concerns about the bat survey have been met. The Council's only issue in respect to trees was for future pressure for branch pruning. The proposal is therefore compliant with LP Policies EN12 and EN14.