

DELEGATED HOUSEHOLDER APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Redlands

App Ref: 240206/HOU

Address: 9 Erleigh Road, Reading, RG1 5LR

Proposals: Alterations to front garden to form off-street parking, including forming new crossover and associated works

Case Officer: Mr Gary Miles

Applicant: Mr Ghalib Hussain

Date received (valid from): 16 February 2024 **Target Decision date:** 3 May 2024

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The proposal site is a three-storey semi-detached dwelling located on Erleigh Road, Redlands Ward. The surrounding area is considered predominantly residential on the north side of Erleigh Road, with Reading School playing fields located directly opposite of the proposal site. The Royal Berkshire Hospital is located 150m west of the proposal site.

The proposal site is located within the Alexandra Road Conservation Area, with the dwelling identified as a Building of Townscape Merit in the Alexandra Road Conservation Area Appraisal.

Site visit date: 30th November 2023

Site visit photos



2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The proposal which is a resubmission of application number 231624, consists of alterations to the front garden to form off-street parking, including forming a new footway crossover and associated works.

Plans & Documents considered:

Application Form dated 16th February 2024

BS:5837 Tree Protection Plan (Duckworths Arboriculture Ltd) - dated February 2024 superseded Tree Works Notice - dated June 2023

Southern Electric Power Distribution-connection services quotation - dated November 2023

Southern Electric Power Distribution-Lamp post relocation plan - dated August 2023

Reading Borough Council Highway work quotation - dated May 2023

Drawing no: 1358/6/h - Proposed Front Externals - dated February 2023

Drawing no: 1358/3/g - Location & Block Plans - dated November 2022

Letter from Liberty Supported Living - dated February 2024

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 20th February 2024

BS5837 Arboricultural Report (Duckworths Arboriculture Ltd) - dated February 2024

Photographs of driveways in the area submitted by applicant

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 4th March 2024

Photographs of driveways in the area submitted by applicant

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 12th March 2024

BS5837 Tree Protection Plan version 2 (Duckworths Arboriculture Ltd) - dated February 2024 -.

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 13th March 2024

Email received from applicant dated 27th March 2024, the email explains that 9 Erleigh Road is not included within the 13R residents parking scheme, therefore not entitled to any visitor or parking permits and this should be taken in to account.

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

221741 - Change of use from C3 single family dwellinghouse to six bedroom HMO (C4 Use Class) - Refused - Feb 2023

231624 - Alterations to front garden to form off-street parking, including forming new crossover and associated works - Refused Jan 2024

4. CONSULTATIONS

The following addresses were consulted by letter.

Flat 1, 7 Erleigh Road, Reading, RG1 5LR

Flat 2, 7 Erleigh Road, Reading, RG1 5LR

1a Erleigh Road, Reading, RG1 5LR

11 Erleigh Road, Reading, RG1 5LR

Flat 3, 7 Erleigh Road, Reading, RG1 5LR

Two letters of representation has been received, 1 Comment, 1 Support:

Comment received from a resident of Erleigh Road

My concern and that of others relates to the continuing changes in the proposed use of this property, we are told of one proposed use of the property by the owner and his associates and rapidly another use is found. This property was clearly an investment and has been improved, but we were told the parking spaces were needed for several cars as the owner needs to ferry his children to different schools. I was told that the owner would be in residence in two or three

years, in the meantime the premises would be leased to the hospital for doctors' accommodation. I was also told that RBC didn't issue parking permits on Erleigh Road, but there are clearly notices for residents' parking permits nearby.

As to the proposal from Liberty Supported Learning, my concern is that accommodation for vulnerable 16 - 18 year olds is a national scandal as Newsnight viewers know. I want to be reassured that Liberty Supported Learning will be different and that there will be strong supervision by RBC and that the Liberty Supported Learning will be regulated by the Care Quality Commission and OFSTED, no evidence for which has been provided. If it goes ahead, I want to see the highest standards from the beginning, not the catalogue of failure found elsewhere. This seems to be an entirely reasonable expectation for the local residents to have.

Brighter Futures for Children

Letter of support dated 20th March 2024,

Support for Liberty Supported Living application for dropping the curb outside premises on Erleigh Road

I am happy to support the planning application to enable improved access to Liberty Supported Living services in Erleigh road. Brighter Futures for Children currently have three placements with the provider and I am sure that this will support access by social workers to the young people looked after. I am also aware that Liberty Supported Living are bidding to be part of our contracted Framework, we are hoping to establish a long-term contractual relationship with this organisation. Access to property will support young people's access to their social workers, personal assistants and any other third party agency involved in their support plan.

Yours sincerely

Fiona Rimmer

Strategic Commissioning Manager

4.2 Internal Consultees

Transport Officer:

Comments provided for previous application 231624 are still appropriate and should be read in conjunction with the following comments:

Following confirmation from the Highways and Drainage Supervisor that the proposed location of the lamp column is acceptable. All associated relocation costs will be met by the applicant and will require the appropriate licenses obtained from Highways.

As previously advised the introduction of the dropped crossing will result in the loss of 1 space within the permit bay. Transport would not support a formal break in the residential/shared parking bays fronting the development site unless protection markers were in place; The width of the access for a single dwelling should not exceed 3m and matching access protection marker would be required.

Licenses are required to undertake works on any part of the public highway, this includes the introduction of a vehicle crossing.

From a Transport perspective, there are no objections.

Natural Environment Officer (Trees):

Natural Environment still have concerns regarding the loss of green frontage in the Alexander

Road conservation area. Comments provided below for previous application 231624 are still appropriate:

The comments provided for previous application 231624 are still appropriate and should be read in conjunction with the following comments:

This site is located within the Alexandra Road Conservation Area and is close to the Green Link as defined by policy EN12. In addition, this part of Erleigh Road is characterised by the street trees; Conservation Areas in general being high priority areas for tree retention and planting. As such, tree retention and mitigation of any direct or indirect pressure on the trees are important considerations in assessing this application.

With reference to the Arboricultural Report Ref. SCD 06186 / 2023 by Duckworths Arboriculture, with the accompanying Tree Protection Plan, the following are noted:

This report partially addresses the development impact on neighbouring and street trees. Specifically, the provision of a no-dig, permeable surfacing driveway over a Cellular Confinement System addresses the encroachment within the Root Protection Area of T002 Oak tree growing at no. 7. The AMS does not address how marrying the levels of the raised no-dig driveway (150mm CCS + wear layer) with the existing pavement .

Development impact which is not addressed or inaccurately addressed by the report is as follows:

- The East limit (and less consequential so, the W one) of the (street tree) T001 Lime's RPA appears arbitrarily drawn to the edge of the proposed crossover access. If any works to ground level are necessary to implement this, it may cause damage to the roots of T001. The same approach to the shape of T005 Lime's RPA is taken by the author.*
- T002 Oak's crown overhangs the site above the proposed parking area. This will lead to future pressure the prune the tree to avoid conflict with the parked vehicles. As part of the Green Link, we should avoid future pressure to trees.*

I note that the canopy of T001 and its relationship with the new access differ between the TPP and Proposed Front Externals plan 1358/6/d - plans should be consistent.

It does not appear that the width of the crossing is stated anywhere, hence this needs to be confirmed. The crossing details need to be checked and accepted by Transport DM to clear on street tree impact.

Whilst grounds works within the site could be dealt with via condition L7 (to amend the current AMS), there is a lack of clarity to demonstrate no harm to street trees.

The proposal is not supported by the Natural Environment officer and is contrary to policy EN14 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

Conservation Officer:

The Conservation Officer comments provided below for previous application 231624 are still appropriate:

The Relevant policies and legislation

From the point of view of the historic environment, the main statutory tests are set out within the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Sections 16(2) and 66 require

that **special regard** be given to the desirability of preserving listed buildings, their settings or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess.

Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 also requires the Council to pay **special attention** to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of designated Conservation Areas.

National Planning Policy and Guidance

The NPPF outlines government policy, including its policy in respect of the historic environment. Chapter 16 of the NPPF 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment' sets out the Government's high-level policies concerning heritage and sustainable development.

Paragraph 197 requires local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Paragraph 199 of the NPPF requires that 'when considering the impact of a proposed development on the **significance** of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation...'. And paragraph 200 says, 'any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration...) should require **clear and convincing justification**'. Paragraph 202 says that 'where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighted against the **public benefits** of the proposal...'

National Planning Practice Guidance on Historic Environment provides context to the NPPF.

Local Planning Policy and Guidance

Policy EN1 'Protection and enhancement of the historic environment' of the Reading Borough Local Plan sets out the Council's aspirations for the historic environment. The policy requires that all proposals to protect and, where possible, enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings, historic character and local distinctiveness of the area in which they are located. It echoes the NPPF by stating, "Proposals should seek to avoid harm in the first instance. Any harm to or loss of a heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification, usually in the form of public benefits".

Applications which affect **Listed Buildings** are expected not to have an adverse impact on the elements that contribute to their special architectural or historic interest, including their settings.

Policy EN3 'Enhancement of conservation areas' of the Reading Borough Local Plan requires that development proposals within Conservation Areas **contribute positively to local character and distinctiveness**.

Policy EN6 'New Development in a Historic Context' also requires new development to **contribute to, respect and enhance the architectural and visual qualities of the historic environment** characterised by heritage assets.

Alexandra Road Conservation Area Appraisal is also a material consideration in determining applications for development.

Other Guidance

Historic England Advice Note 2 - Making changes to Heritage Assets illustrates the application of policies set out in the NPPF in determining applications for Planning Permission and Listed Building Consent.

English Heritage's "Conservation Principles" provides policy and guidance for the "sustainable management of the historic environment".

Relevant heritage assets

Located within the Alexandra Road Conservation Area, the application site relates to a three-storey semi-detached late Victorian dwellinghouse to the northwest of Erleigh Road. It is opposite to the listed curtilage of Reading School, a Grade II Listed Building on the southern/south eastern boundaries of the conservation area.

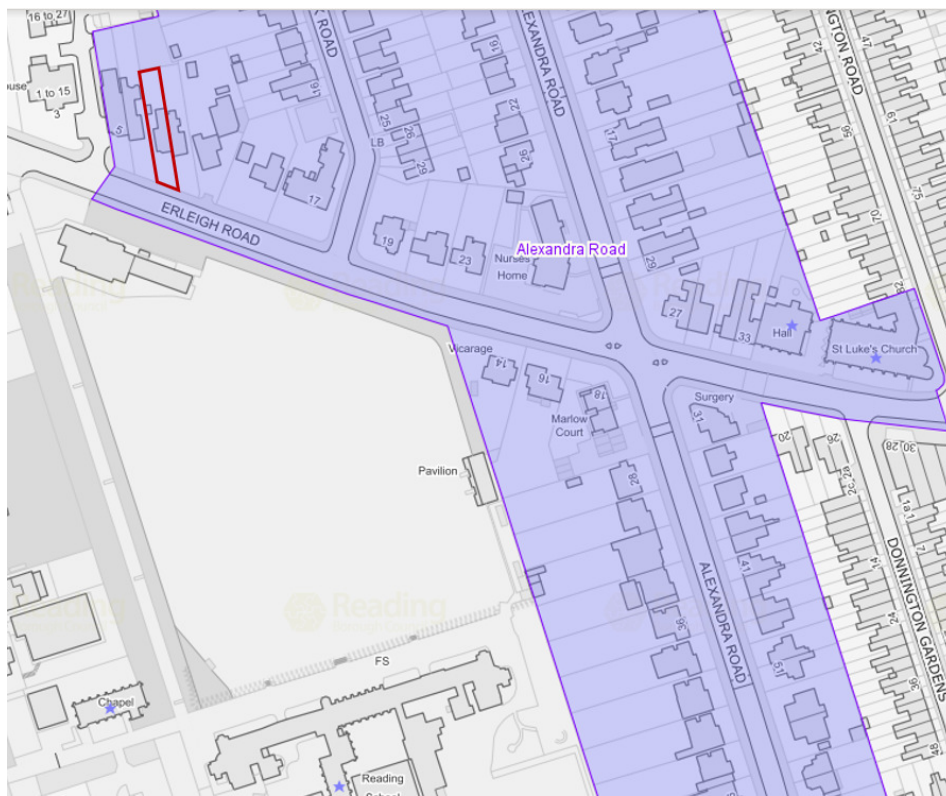
Significance of heritage assets

The NPPF defines significance as the “value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest.”

The interest may be architectural or historic, as set out in the Town and Country Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 Section 1.

“Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting.” (NPPF, 2023)

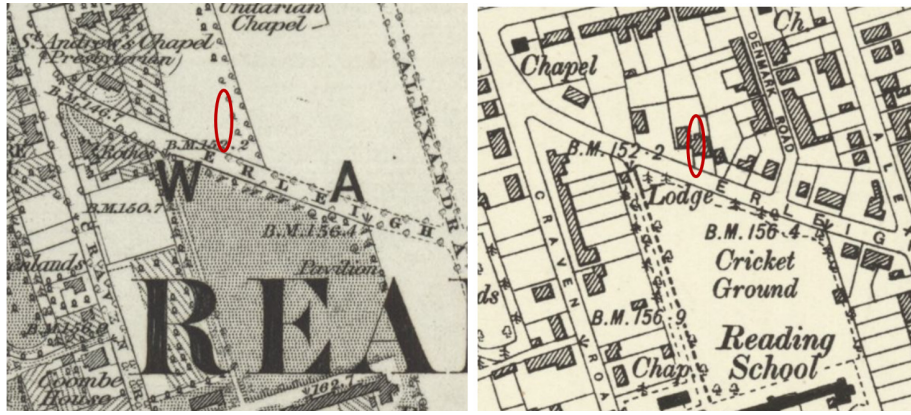
Historic England assesses significance in a similar manner, referring to evidential, historic, aesthetic and communal values of a place.



The application site (outlined in red), listed buildings (purple starred) within the Alexandra Road Conservation Area (light purple)

As described by the Alexandra Road Conservation Area Appraisal, the special interest of the area is composed of “cohesive architectural development of the late 19th century with a wealth of period detail”, one of which is the original front boundaries constituting brick walls, iron railings and evergreen hedges.

The subject property, which is an attractive building retaining its soft landscaping in its front garden and boundary treatment of metal railings above brick walls, appears on the OS Map dating 1898, confirming the typical house with a relatively large garden forming the main characteristic of the Alexandra Road Conservation Area.



The application site on the OS Map of 1872-1877 (published in 1883) (Left) - undeveloped - and on the OS Map of 1898 (published in 1900) - developed - (Right)

As such, the site contributes to the local distinctiveness and identity of the conservation area with an original boundary treatment creating a space/garden that provides an important transition between public and private zones, and with its landscaping relating to the well tree'd (lime trees) character of Erleigh Road.

Impact of proposal upon heritage asset(s)



View of the front boundary treatment, which retains original railing standards and contributes to the significance of the conservation area via low brick walls and railings (Google Streetview)

Similarly, the proposed materials for the driveway and the parking area would introduce materials of hard landscaping (in appearance) that would not contribute to the historic green landscaping/character of the site and the conservation area. Greener and more eco-friendly options, such as grass pavers, would be more suitable as a surface material for this area.

The proposal would result in the loss of original railing standards and, by reason of its design and materials, it would fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the

conservation area, causing less than substantial harm at a moderate level. This harm is not outweighed by any public benefit; as such, the proposal is not acceptable on heritage grounds. The proposal is not supported by the Natural Environment officer and is contrary to Policies EN1 and EN3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019”

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.

5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

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. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. The following local and national planning policy and guidance is relevant to this application:

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework 2023

National Planning Practice Guidance

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC7 Design and the Public Realm

EN1 Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment

EN3 Enhancement of Conservation Areas

EN14 Trees, Hedges and Woodlands

TR1 Achieving the Transport Strategy

TR3 Access Traffic and Highway-related Matters

TR5 Car and Cycle Parking)

SPG/SPD

Alexandra Road Conservation Area Appraisal (March 2005)

Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD 2013

6. APPRAISAL

Character and Appearance

Policy H9 states that an extension to a house will be acceptable where it respects the character of the house in terms of scale, location, materials and design and respects the character and pattern of neighbouring properties and the street as a whole in terms of scale, location, materials and design, and any important existing building line. Policy CC7 also sets out relevant considerations for design.

In accordance with Reading Borough Local Plan policy CC7: Design and the Public Realm, development will be assessed to ensure that it (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*

In accordance with Reading Borough Local Plan policy EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment, development within Conservation Areas “will be expected to protect and where possible enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings, the historic character and local distinctiveness of the area in which they are located. Proposals should seek to avoid harm in the first instance. Any harm to or loss of a heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification, usually in the form of public benefits.”

In accordance with Reading Borough Local Plan policy EN3: Enhancement of Conservation Areas, “Development proposals within Conservation Areas must make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. Positive consideration will be given to proposals which take opportunities to enhance the character of conservation areas.”

The proposed development seeks the removal of the existing boundary wall and Victorian railing to the front. The boundary treatment is considered to fall comfortably within the description of special interest features as described within the Alexandra Road Conservation Area Appraisal (March 2005). The existing front boundary, combined with the front garden is considered to be a feature that contributes positively to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

The existing front garden and boundary to 9 Erleigh Road is considered to be a positive feature in its own right and also mitigates the harmful effects of other dwellings along this section of Erleigh Road where front gardens and front boundaries have been lost to onsite vehicle parking to the detriment of the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The existing arrangement provides the opportunity for an attractive front garden with views of an attractive semi-detached Victorian dwelling. The garden, associated planting, trees and boundary treatments presents a spacious, verdant frontage to the street and an appropriate setting for the Victorian houses beyond.

It is the view of officers that the provision of a vehicle crossing and on street vehicle parking to the front of the proposal site would be harmful to the character and appearance of 9 Erleigh Road and the Conservation Area as set out in the Conservation Officer response above.

It is acknowledged that there are vehicle crossings to existing properties in Erleigh Road and surrounding streets. Officers have reviewed the photographs of driveways supplied by the applicant however, many of the driveways are original and a number of these crossings/driveway entrances were installed prior to Erleigh Road becoming a classified conservation area. The photographs show a number of driveway entrances in nearby streets which are not within a conservation area. The character of the area is not defined by driveways and the harm to the existing character that has been identified indicates that the proposal should be rejected.

The introduction of driveway and footway crossovers within a conservation area such as the Alexandra Road Conservation Area and Erleigh Road further erodes features that contribute positively to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and for this reason the proposal is not supported by officers. The development is not considered to make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness or enhance the Conservation Area. Therefore, the development is not considered in accordance with Policies CC7, EN1, EN3 and EN14 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

Trees

The proposals would result in harm to the root protection areas of adjacent trees and introduce a pressure to prune or fell as set out in the Natural Environment Officer comments above. The harm to individual trees would conflict with the policy aims of preserving trees. The loss or degradation of these green features would also harm visual amenity and consequently harm the character and appearance of the conservation area.

7. CONCLUSION

The proposed development has been assessed as set out above and is considered to be unacceptable.

8. RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE

1. The development would result in the loss of the existing front boundary and surviving element of original late Victorian Iron gate post/railing standards, together with the loss of the front garden, which currently contributes positively to the character and appearance of the Alexandra Conservation Area and the dwelling identified as a Building of Townscape Merit. The proposed loss of boundary treatments and the garden and introduction of hard surfacing and vehicles within the space would result in harm to the character and appearance of the Alexandra Road Conservation Area. The development is therefore contrary to Policies CC7 & EN1, EN3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.
2. The development would have detrimental impact on neighbouring trees including street trees. The development fails to demonstrate suitable root protection to the roots of T001 and T005. T002 overhangs the site above the proposed parking area. This will lead to future pressure to prune the tree to avoid conflict with the parked vehicles. The proposal will negatively impact on green frontages and quality tree specimens within the Alexandra Road Conservation Area with consequent harm to visual amenity and the character and appearance of the conservation area. The development is therefore contrary to Policies CC7, EN1, EN3 and EN14 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.