

DELEGATED PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Katesgrove

App Ref: 231771/FUL & 231773/LBC

Address: 155-157 Southampton Street, Reading, RG1 2QZ

Proposals: Proposed part first floor side and rear extension to enlarge existing studio flat, new ground floor entrance and associated shopfront alterations.

Case Officer: Marcie Rejwerska

Date received (valid from): 19 December 2023

Target Decision date: 20 March 2024

(ext.)

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site comprises a two-storey, end-terrace property on the east side of Southampton Street. The property has an existing single storey side wraparound extension and is occupied by Pizza 2 Night takeaway. There is an existing internal staircase to access an existing studio flat on the first floor, which is banded as a separate residential property. The property is Grade II listed in a grouping with 161 and 159 Southampton Street and the listing reads as follows,

II Late C18 altered. No.163 is stucco fronted brick with brick block cornice. Old tile roof, hipped to left. Three chimneys in all. No.163 has three glazing bar sashes on first floor and an early C20 pub front on ground floor. Nos.157 to 161 (odd) have altered first floor windows, one each, and plain shopfronts.

The site is not within a conservation area.



Application site as seen from Southampton Street from the north. Image taken from Google Maps.

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Planning permission and Listed Building Consent is sought for proposed part first floor side and rear extensions to enlarge an existing studio flat. The proposal also comprises a new ground floor entrance to access a proposed staircase for the first floor flat, a reduced floor area for the shop at ground floor and associated shopfront alterations.



Proposed elevations

Plans considered:

Heritage Statement (SK Design Consultant), dated 23/10/23

P1428-01 - Location & Block Plan, dated 10/23

P1428-02 - Plans & Elevations, dated 10/23

Received by the LPA on 06/12/23.

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

0000021819 - Shopfront and internal fittings - Conditional consent granted on 29/06/1973

0003784 - Illuminated fascia - Unconditional consent granted on 19/10/1973

85/TP/0269 - Continued use as Fish & Chip shop - Conditional consent granted on 16/05/1985

081185/LBC - Alterations to shop front (retrospective) - Application withdrawn on 13/11/2008

090023/ADV - Illuminated fascia sign - Application permitted on 09/03/2009

090873/LBC - Retrospective alterations to shop front (re-submission of 08/01265/LBC) - Application permitted on 09/03/2009

4. CONSULTATIONS

Non-statutory:

RBC Conservation Officer - Objection:

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 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. The proposed development would be determined by the following factors:

- "a. The positive contribution of the development to the existing historic townscape (scale, height, mass, proportion, plot size, street form, materials, significant vistas and views, and open space);
- b. Sensitivity to historic context;
- c. Reflection of borough-wide major heritage themes that contribute to local distinctiveness (e.g. patterned brickwork or former worker terraced housing);
- d. Whether development promotes and/or improves access to previously undiscovered or neglected historic significance."

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

The application site relates to a Grade II Listed Building at 157 Southampton Street, which constitutes a part of buildings listed under 157 to 161 Southampton Street and 163, The Hop Leaf Inn, located on the eastern side of Southampton Street. The site is not within a conservation area; however, it is also adjacent to the Grade II Listed British School at 153 Southampton Street to the north/northwest.

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.

In addition to the official listing entry, which summarises the special historic and architectural interest of the Grade II building(s) at 157 to 161 Southampton Street and 163, The Hop Leaf Inn, based on the OS Maps and relevant planning history, it is noted that No. 157 retains its original retail function on the ground floor - within its historic extension while Nos 159 and 161 have been converted into residential use with alterations to the original facades; and due to the setback position of the adjacent listed old school building, No. 157's side elevation which represents original built form of this terrace, constitutes an integral part of its significance.

The official listing reads as follows.

"SU 7172 NE 4/573 SOUTHAMPTON STREET (east side) Nos.157 to 161 (odd) and No.163 (The Hop Leaf Inn) II Late C18 altered. No.163 is stucco fronted brick with brick block cornice. Old

tile roof, hipped to left. Three chimneys in all. No.163 has three glazing bar sashes on first floor and an early C20 pub front on ground floor. Nos.157 to 161 (odd) have altered first floor windows, one each, and plain shopfronts. Listing NGR: SU7184472606”
View of the subject listed building from Southampton Street, 2018 (Google Street view 2024); the original form of the site, dating the 19th century, is legible.

Impact of proposal upon heritage asset(s)

The proposal includes the erection of a first-floor extension on an ‘L’ shaped footprint that would be attached to the north/northwest elevation and rear elevation of the listed building. Although it would have a hipped roof with a ridge level lower than the existing one, would be positioned slightly set back from the front elevation and utilise matching brick construction under a clay-tiled roof; as illustrated below, this extension would demolish the original side wall of the listed building, would significantly alter the original built form of the listed building and would also result in loss of legibility of the historic shop extension to the ground floor.

Proposed elevations showing the extent of the new element, altering the original built-form and historic shop extension, resulting in loss of historic fabric and legibility of the listed building. In addition, the proposed internal works: removal of the retaining original walls on the ground floor, replacement of the existing shop window with a door, introduction of a new staircase, walls, and new door opening to the proposed bedroom to the rear would cause further loss of the historic fabric of the listed building, harming internal layout and façade organisation of the shop. The rear elevation of the building would be occupied wider than the existing, again considerably disrupting the architectural expression of the original rear elevation. As such, the proposed first-floor side and rear extension and associated alterations would result in a significant loss of historic fabric. The proposed works, by virtue of their siting, scale, form and design, would have a detrimental impact on the original and historic built form within the listed curtilage and on the retained internal layout. The works, therefore would adversely affect the character and special architectural and historic interest of the listed building causing less than substantial harm at the highest level. Without public benefits to outweigh the harm, this would be contrary to paragraph 208 of Chapter 16 of the NPPF (2023) and Policies EN1 and EN6 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019), which seek to protect, contribute, respect and where possible enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings.

RBC Transport - No objections subject to conditions.

RBC Environmental Protection - Noise mitigation conditions recommended.

Public:

The following addresses were consulted by letter.

178 Southampton Street, Reading, RG1 2RD
Mary Seacole Nursery, Wolseley Street, Reading, RG1 6AZ
159 Southampton Street, Reading, RG1 2QZ
176 Southampton Street, Reading, RG1 2RD
180 Southampton Street, Reading, RG1 2RD
15 The Old British School, 153 Southampton Street, Reading, RG1 2BL
14 The Old British School, 153 Southampton Street, Reading, RG1 2BL
12 The Old British School, 153 Southampton Street, Reading, RG1 2BL
11 The Old British School, 153 Southampton Street, Reading, RG1 2BL
10 The Old British School, 153 Southampton Street, Reading, RG1 2BL

Two objections received citing concerns regarding:

- Negative impact on the character of the property and the street
- Loss of light and privacy for 153 Southampton Street
- Loss of view for neighbours
- Parking competition on neighbouring streets
- Bins storage and potential for increased litter
- Noise and anti-social behaviour from hot food takeaway unit.

5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special interest which it possesses.

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 and Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework

National Planning Practice Guidance

Historic England Advice Note 2 - Making Changes to Heritage Assets

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC1: PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

CC5: WASTE MINIMISATION AND STORAGE

CC6: ACCESSIBILITY AND THE INTENSITY OF DEVELOPMENT

CC7: DESIGN AND THE PUBLIC REALM

CC8: SAFEGUARDING AMENITY

EN1: PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

EN5: PROTECTION OF SIGNIFICANT VIEWS WITH HERITAGE INTEREST

EN6: NEW DEVELOPMENT IN A HISTORIC CONTEXT

EN16: POLLUTION AND WATER RESOURCES

EN17: NOISE GENERATING EQUIPMENT

H9: HOUSE EXTENSIONS AND ANCILLARY ACCOMMODATION

TR1: ACHIEVING THE TRANSPORT STRATEGY

TR3: ACCESS, TRAFFIC AND HIGHWAY-RELATED MATTERS

TR5: CAR AND CYCLE PARKING AND ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING

OU5: SHOPFRONTS AND CASH MACHINES

SPG/SPD

Design Guide to Shopfronts (2022)

Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)

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.

APPRAISAL

Design and heritage implications

Policy CC7: Design and the Public Realm is a strategic policy seeking high standards of design quality in new development. It sets out how various components of development including layout, urban structure and urban grain, and scale, make a positive contribution to their surroundings and respond positively to their local context. Policy OU5: Shopfronts and Cash Machines makes further consideration in relation to shopfront design, specifically in relation to Listed Buildings.

Policy EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment sets out the LPA's requirements for the historic environment. The policy requires that all proposals 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. This is echoed by the NPPF Para. 206 by stating *"Proposals should seek to avoid harm in the first instance. Any harm to or loss of heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification, usually in the form of public benefits"*.

The submitted brief heritage statement does not include an assessment of the site's historic background, significance nor value, as required under NPPF para. 200. From the planning history available and the statement submitted, it is not possible to establish the background of the existing single storey side extension, which we can only ascertain through historic area maps, was erected in the late 19th century. It is therefore considered a part of the listing building.

The RBC Conservation Officer (comments in full above) notes that the site retains its original retail function on the ground floor including within its historic extension while the majority of the rest of the terrace (under one listing) has been converted into residential use with alterations to the original facades; and due to the setback position of the adjacent listed old school building, the existing side elevation which represents original built form of this terrace, constitutes an integral part of its significance.

The proposal includes a side and rear first floor extension and a new entrance for the residential unit above the existing hot food takeaway on the ground floor, allowing the unit to become self-contained, and increase the internal area of the flat from <20m², to approx. 48m² with the addition of one bedroom. This involves alterations to the existing shopfront, although how this would be achieved has not been demonstrated on the submitted plans. The shopfront in itself is not original, having been amended from a less sympathetic design around 2009. The submitted statement states that the shopfront will require minor alterations which are demonstrated on the proposed elevations to include the addition of an external door to access the flat above. Although the shopfront is not an original design or layout, the function of the ground floor retail use would be lost, which is considered harmful to the character of the heritage asset.

The RBC Conservation Officer has identified that the proposed extensions would be harmful to the original built form externally and internally, and historic fabric of the property through demolition of original first floor side and rear walls. The rear elevation of the building would be occupied wider than the existing, considerably disrupting the architectural expression of the original rear elevation. The significance of the harm cannot be completely determined without a full heritage statement.

Setting

Finally, the application site is part of a group Grade II listing which incorporates the rest of the terrace and is located adjacent to another Grade II listed building to the north. The proposal by way of its unsympathetic additions would have harmful impact on the setting of the terrace as a whole and the listed no. 153 Southampton Street to the north, upsetting the rhythm and pattern of this line of buildings.

The proposal would cause less than substantial harm at the highest level and is, therefore, considered contrary to Policies CC7, EN1 and OU5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) and para. 205 of the NPPF 2023.

Residential amenity

Policy CC7: Safeguarding Amenity sets out expectations to ensure that new development does not reduce the quality of the environment for others, particularly where it would affect residential properties. Policies EN16: Pollution and Water Resources, and EN17: Noise Generating Equipment are applicable to the use of the property as a commercial kitchen and food establishment.

Objections have been received with regards to concerns of loss of privacy, outlook and access to sunlight to residential units at 153 Southampton Street as a result of the proposed development. Although no side elevation windows are proposed within the extension, the proximity to the boundary with the units at 153 Southampton Street, and the scale and layout of the extension poses a risk of overshadowing and loss of light to south elevation windows serving habitable rooms (bedrooms and living rooms) in units 1a, 2 and 3 of 153 Southampton Street. No light assessment has been submitted to demonstrate otherwise. While the flat on the upper floor of Unit 1a of 153 Southampton Street benefits from being dual aspect, Units 2 and 3 of 153 Southampton Street are oriented to have their rear elevation facing south onto the application site and as such would be at the higher risk of harm from the proposal.

Similarly, the proposal extends 4m to the rear on the first floor - this would 'box in' the neighbouring 159 Southampton Street which is already impacted by a two storey rear extension to the south, leading to further risk of loss of sunlight, as shown in the photograph below.



Images taken from submitted plans.

Furthermore, objections have been received in relation to issues commonly associated with commercial hot food takeaway use, however, as this is an existing establishment those considerations are not considered relevant to this proposal. The proposal does, however, include the relocation of the kitchen exhaust vent. The submitted plans however, do not demonstrate the unit located on the roof of the single storey extension directly next to the first floor rear elevation window - it is unclear what purpose this unit serves. The applicant has confirmed that additional ducting would be required for the relocation of the existing vent, however, the specifics of this have not been submitted. It is, therefore, unclear whether the proposed relocation of the kitchen exhaust vent would have negative impact on the nearby residential receptors.

Overall, the proposal is considered contrary to Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019). Insufficient information has been submitted to get a full insight into the current exhaust vent arrangement and the proposed relocation.

Other matters

Southampton Street (A327) is a one way (South to North) main transport corridor and is located within the Zone 2, the primary core area but on the periphery of Zone 1, the central core area, which lies at the heart of Reading Borough, consisting primarily of retail and commercial office developments with good transport hubs. The site is well connected with a high level of public transport accessibility and access to public car parks.

Increase in the number of bedrooms for the existing residential unit affects the required parking provision, however, due to the location of the application site a car-free development is acceptable. There are extensive parking restrictions in the area and therefore there is no expected increase in pressure on the highway network. A condition could have

been included regarding no automatic entitlement to parking permits had the scheme been otherwise acceptable.

Conclusion

The proposal has been assessed against the adopted policies as outlined above and is considered to be contrary to policies CC7: Design and the Public Realm, CC8: Safeguarding Amenity, EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment, OU5: Shopfronts and Cash Machines of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019), and the Design Guide to Shopfronts SPD (2022). A recommendation is therefore made to refuse both planning permission and Listed Building consent based on the reasons as set out below.

RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE PLANNING PERMISSION AND LISTED BUILDING CONSENT

Due to the following reasons for refusal:

1. The proposed extension by reason of its excessive scale together with its unsympathetic form and appearance, and the proposed shopfront by reason of its unsympathetic form and appearance, would relate poorly to the existing listed building and result in a significant loss of historic fabric with consequent harm to its heritage significance and its future preservation. This harmful arrangement would also result in harm to the setting of the terrace as a whole and the listed no. 153 Southampton Street to the north, upsetting the rhythm and pattern of this line of buildings. As such the proposal is Contrary to paragraph 208 of Chapter 16 of the NPPF (Dec 2023) and Policies CC7, EN1 and EN6 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).
2. The proposal by reason of its scale, layout and siting would result in the loss of access to sunlight to neighbouring residential properties on either side, contrary to Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).
3. Insufficient information has been submitted to demonstrate that the existing and proposed kitchen exhaust vent would not result in harm to the nearby sensitive receptors due to noise and odour, or that it would have an acceptable impact on the appearance and character of the heritage asset, contrary to Policies CC7, EN1, EN16 and EN17 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

Informatives:

1. In reaching its decision, the Local Planning Authority received and assessed the following information submitted:

Heritage Statement (SK Design Consultant), dated 23/10/23
P1428-01 - Location & Block Plan, dated 10/23
P1428-02 - Plans & Elevations, dated 10/23

2. Positive and proactive - refusal