

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT - Application No. 240410/FUL

Address: 1015 Oxford Road, Reading

Proposal: Demolition of existing HMO and build 9 self contained flats

Case officer: Ethne Humphreys

Target date: 6/8/2024

Site Description and Surrounding Area

The application site relates to No.1015 Oxford Road located on the south side of Oxford Road. The building is in use as a large Sui Generis HMO.

The site is within an air quality management area and is located on a 'treed corridor' as designated in the Tree Strategy.

The surrounding area is largely residential, although No.1017 Oxford Road is a hotel which has recently received permission for use as a children's home (ref.230485) and there is a car showroom/forecourt on the opposite side of the road.

Proposal

The application seeks planning permission for the demolition of existing building and for the erection of a residential block containing 9 flats in Use Class C3 with associated access and parking. The proposal comprises 8 x 2 bed and 1 x 3 bed flats.

The proposed materials include:

Off white render

Charcoal grey cladding

Charcoal grey external windows and doors

Grey roof slates

Black soffits and fascias

9 car parking spaces are proposed.

Plans and Documents Considered

Drawing No: Location Plan dated 2/2024

Drawing No: Proposed Roof Plan 7 dated 01/2024

Drawing No: Proposed and Existing South Elevation with Adjoin Buildings 7 dated 01/2024

Drawing No: North and South Elevation 11 dated 01/2024

Drawing No: East and West Elevation 12 dated 01/2024

Drawing No: Roof Plan and Section 10 dated 01/2024

Drawing No: Vehicle Tracking 13 dated 01/2024

Drawing No: Sections across the Site 14 dated 1/2024

Drawing No: Utilities Services 15 dated 1/2024

Drawing No: 90m Vehicle Splay 2 dated 1/2024

Received 2nd April 2024

Proposed Ground Floor Plan 4 dated 01/2024

Proposed First Floor Plan 5 dated 01/2024

Proposed Second Floor Plan 7 dated 01/2024

Ground, First, Second Floor Plan 9 dated 01/2024

Received 19th July 2024

Affordable Housing Statement

Air Quality Assessment

Daylight and Sunlight Report

Energy Efficiency Statement
Planning Statement
Preliminary Bat Roost and Nesting Bird Assessment
SuDSmart Plus
Noise Assessment
Open Space Statement
Sustainability Statement
Transport Statement
BS5837:2012 Assessment Tree Survey
Arboricultural Method Statement and Impact Assessment

Small Sites Metric Biodiversity Calculation Tool
Received 11th June 2024

Planning History

221506/FUL Erection of a new block of 12 flats, following demolition of existing 8 bedroom HMO. Refused.
1910600/FUL Retrospective planning permission for change of use to large HMO. Permitted.
091205/OUT Outline application to demolish existing building and erect 12 x 2 bed apartments (access, layout and scale only). Withdrawn (recommendation to PAC refuse).
021214/FUL First floor side extension and change of use - care home to residential use (retrospective). Permitted.
020166/FUL First floor side extension. Refused.

Consultation Responses

Environmental Protection - No objection subject to conditions to control construction hours, submission and approval of a construction method statement, bin store details and noise assessment and mitigation scheme.

Ecology - Object, discussed further below.

LLFA - No objection, subject to conditions.

Natural Environment - Object, discussed further below.

Thames Water - No objection subject to building works not being within 3m of public sewer or 1m of lateral drain.

Transport - Object, discussed further below.

Waste - Looks like bin storage could be achieved, would need confirmation.

Public Consultation

Neighbouring properties were notified by letter and a site notice was displayed at the site.

2 neighbour letters of objection have been received. The issues raised can be summarised as follows:

- Overdevelopment of site
- Increase noise levels
- Additional traffic pressure
- Insufficient parking
- Overshadowing of neighbours
- Loss of privacy

- Antisocial behaviour

Summary of discussions with applicant/agent:

The agent was advised of concerns including relating to the design/landscaping, transport concerns, amenity concerns, quality of accommodation concerns, ecology matters and affordable housing.

Revised plans were received to indicate compliance with Policy H5 in terms of unit and bedrooms sizes. However, the revised plans are not consistent, and it is not clear whether the bedroom sizes do comply with standards.

The applicant was given the opportunity to withdraw the application. However, the application was not withdrawn and hence the issuing of the decision notice.

Equality Act

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.

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:

Accordingly, the National Planning Policy Framework and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

National Planning Policy Framework 2023
National Planning Guidance 2014 onwards

The relevant sections of the NPPF are:

Section 2 - Achieving Sustainable Development
Section 5 - Delivering a Sufficient Supply of Homes
Section 8 - Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities
Section 9 - Promoting Sustainable Transport
Section 11 - Making Effective Use of Land
Section 12 - Achieving Well-Designed and Beautiful Places
Section 14 - Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change
Section 15 - Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment

Reading Borough Local Plan 2019

CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction
CC3: Adaptation to Climate Change
CC5: Waste Minimisation and Storage
CC6: Accessibility and the Intensity of Development
CC7: Design and the Public Realm
CC8: Safeguarding Amenity

CC9: Securing Infrastructure
EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network
EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodland
EN15: Air Quality
EN16: Pollution and Water Resources
EN18: Flooding and Sustainable Drainage Systems
H1: Provision of Housing
H2: Density and Mix
H3: Affordable Housing
H5: Standards for New Housing
H10: Private and Communal Outdoor Space
TR1: Achieving the Transport Strategy
TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging

Supplementary Planning Documents

Affordable Housing SPD (2021)
Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011)
Revised SPD on Planning Obligations under Section 106 (2019)
Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2019)
Employment Skill and Training SPD (2013)
Tree Strategy (2021)
Biodiversity Action Plan (2021)

Appraisal

Land Use Considerations

The National Planning Policy Framework encourages the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land) and seeks that all housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

From a purely land use perspective, a proposal to introduce 9 C3 residential units would broadly comply with the objectives of Policy H1 (Provision of Housing) by contributing towards meeting the housing needs within the Borough. The mix would be acceptable. Furthermore, there is no objection to the loss of the HMO and the existing building is of no architectural merit, not listed nor in a Conservation Area. However, this is subject to the more detailed considerations of relevant Local Plan policies and the context of the application site. As the remainder of this report demonstrate, the proposal has failed to satisfactorily meet a number of other policy criteria.

Design Considerations and Impact on Street Scene

Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) seeks to ensure that new development enhances and preserves the local character. The policy places importance on the layout of the urban structure and urban grain, stipulating that development should respond positively to the local context and create safe and accessible environments. The policy requires a “high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located”.

Paragraph 135 of the NPPF 2023 details that decisions should ensure that developments are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping and are sympathetic to local character including the surrounding built environment.

The National Design Guidance identifies 10 key components for good design and of particular note is the characteristic of ‘Context’ and it states that “well designed new development responds positively to the features of the site itself and the surrounding context beyond the site

boundary. It should enhance positive qualities and improve negative ones.” Additionally, there is specific reference to ‘views inwards and outwards’.

The existing character of this side of the street is of detached two storey buildings (some with roof accommodation) set within generous grounds. As above, there is no in principle objection the existing property being demolished in design terms and it is considered that there is some scope for increased scale in this location. However, this needs to be of a carefully considered design to ensure that new development maintains and enhances the character of the area. The scheme has reduced in height since application 221506 was refused, with overall height and eaves height similar to adjacent properties which is more appropriate. However, the width and depth are near on identical to 221506, near on infilling the width of the site appearing bulky and prominent, in marked contrast with neighbouring buildings, and with a dominance of hardstanding at the front of the site that would exacerbate the poor design. The proposals would appear overly dominant, and the proposed scale and layout would also result in other concerns as set out below.

It is recognised that there are other large properties along this side of Oxford Road. However, gaps between neighbouring properties at first floor (single storey side structures at ground floor) allow for a level of spaciousness about the properties. As can be seen clearly be seen from the proposed roof plan the proposed building would be deep and wide, with little relief to the side boundaries and significantly large than neighbouring properties. Whilst the applicant states there would be landscaping, submissions are not clear in this respect and there would be a dominance of built form and hardstanding at the front of the site with little space for meaningful soft landscaping.

The scale and bulk of the proposed building is considered to result in a visually dominant form of development which, combined with the footprint, further exacerbates the overdevelopment of the site. The overall architectural approach does little to break up the mass with varying roof elements and materials and it is unclear where the proposed development takes its design cues from. In terms of detailing, the deep side elevations lack architectural detailing. The elevations lack refinement, resulting in a poor quality appearance. The windows would all vary size and the overall effect of the various heights and fenestration and position would result in an incongruous and dominant feature within the street scene which would lack coherence and accentuates the over-large scale of the building.

As a result, the proposal is considered to present a cramped layout in terms of scale and a cramped relationship between buildings and spaces within the site. The use of several materials results in a cluttered and disjointed appearance and are not considered sufficient in themselves to create a visually interesting building or to mitigate the shortcomings of the architecture. The proposed building is a complete contrast with any local buildings, with no attempt to blend with or improve the area. The proposals are considered to introduce a dominant form of development within a prominent location which would appear visually incongruous with the adjacent buildings and would not enhance the street scene.

In overall terms, the proposal appears overdeveloped with little regard to existing character, or the need to provide appropriate landscaping. The proposal is not of sufficient high quality design and would not response positively to its context, contrary to Policies CC7 and H11 and the NPPF 2023.

Amenity of Future Occupiers

Policy H5 (Standards for New Housing) seeks that all new housing is built to high standards. Policy EN15 (Air Quality) seeks to protect existing and future occupiers from the impact of poor air quality and Policy H10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space) seeks that residential developments are provided with adequate private or communal outdoor amenity space.

It is not clear whether all units and bedrooms would meet the size standards set out in the Nationally Prescribed Space Standards under Policy H5. The proposed second floor plan notes that the unit and bedrooms would meet the standards at the minimum; however, the layout plan showing the ground, first and second floor plan shows that the bedroom sizes would not meet the space standards. At ground floor and first floor level, some of the single bedrooms would each feature one bedroom window that would directly face a blank wall. At such close proximity this is considered to be visually overbearing and to provide inadequate outlook.

Given the depth and layout of some of the kitchen/living areas, and proximity of neighbouring building, it is unclear whether these areas would receive adequate levels of daylight and sunlight (noting that the daylight / sunlight report that has been submitted is with regard to daylight/sunlight to neighbouring properties, and not the proposed building itself). In addition, given the proposed parking spaces shown on the site plan, near on directly in front of the only windows to serve the living/dining areas and bedrooms of the front units at ground floor this further compromises the quality of accommodation through visual intrusion noise and disturbance. There is also a lack of privacy to ground floor units, with no clear defensible space.

Policy H10 deals specifically with private and communal space and requires such space to allow for sitting out, children's play areas, home food production, green waste composting, refuse storage, drying space. *"The design of outdoor spaces will respect the size and character of other similar spaces in the vicinity"*. Para 4.4.87 of the RBLP sets out that *"in the past, the Council has sought the following minimum provisions for private or communal outdoor space for each type of accommodation, and they provide a useful guide for proposals: (b) Flats outside central Reading: 1 and 2-bedroom: 25 sq m per flat.."*

All units would have access to a large communal garden area located to the rear of the site. Given this and the proximity to nearby open space lack of private garden areas for the flats is not considered to warrant a refusal in this instance.

The site is located close to the busy Oxford Road and a noise assessment has been submitted with the application which has been reviewed by Environmental Protection Officers. It proposes suitable glazing to protect the development from external noise; however, it is based on predictions as it was undertaken during the Covid 19 period and should be updated with current world measurements. Notwithstanding, the Environmental Protection Officer considers the assessment to be conservative in terms of proposed high level of protection and this may not be necessary. The proposed ventilation strategy has not been confirmed. Should the application have otherwise been recommended for approval, conditions would have been attached to secure submission and approval of a noise assessment and mitigation scheme prior to commencement of development to ensure an appropriate glazing specification and mechanical ventilation scheme are secured.

The submission makes reference to air source heat pumps; however, it is not clear if these are proposed. If so, a noise assessment would be required. As above, this could also have been secured by way of condition.

A condition would also have been recommended to secure submission and approval of details of the bin storage arrangements for the development including measures to protect the bins from pests and vermin, as well as ensuring correct size of bins.

Impact on Neighbouring Amenity

Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) requires developments to not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing properties in terms of: Privacy and overlooking; Access to sunlight and daylight; Visual dominance and overbearing; Harm to outlook; Noise and disturbance; Artificial lighting; Vibration; Dust and fumes; Smell; and Crime and safety.

The neighbouring properties potentially most affected by the proposals are No's 1013 and 1013a and No.1017 Oxford Road located to the south east and north west of the site respectively.

In relation to No.1013/1013a Road, first floor windows are proposed on the flank elevation facing this property and across the rear. One window would serve a bathroom and could be conditioned to be obscurely glazed. However, the window facing across the rear would serve a kitchen and it is not considered reasonable to obscurely glazed, given concerns over light levels (discussed above). As such, this is considered to result in a perception of - if not actual - overlooking of the garden space to No's 1013/1013a. Given the close proximity of the proposed building, there could be loss of privacy to the buildings of No's 1013/1013a themselves also. Concerns were raised under application 221506 that, due to the proximity of the proposed building and projection past the rear of this neighbouring property, that at 3 storey height this would result in an unneighbourly visually overbearing effect to occupiers of this property. This current application, albeit of a lower height, has been sited further back into the plot. It remains that this would be visually overbearing.

Similarly, first floor windows are proposed on the flank elevation facing No.1017 Oxford Road. These would serve a bathroom window which could be obscurely glazed and kitchen window - whilst, as above, it would be unreasonable to obscurely glaze this window, it is not considered to result in any material loss of privacy given the rear extension of No.1017 (with no windows on the flank elevation at this point). However, No.1017 Oxford Road has guest house bedrooms with windows that face No.1015. The increase in depth and height in close proximity to his common boundary is considered to result in an unneighbourly visually overbearing effect to users of this property.

The unacceptable relationships identified above are considered to further demonstrate that the proposals are an overdevelopment of the site. Contrary to Policy CC8.

The construction phase of the proposed development would also have potential to impact on the amenity of surrounding occupiers. Should the application have otherwise been supportable, conditions would have been recommended to secure a submission and approval of a construction method statement and to control construction hours to mitigate potential noise and dust impacts on the surrounding area.

Transport

Policies TR3 (Access, Traffic and Highway related matters), TR1 (Achieving the Transport Strategy) and TR5 (Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging) seek to address access, traffic, highway and parking relates matters relating to development.

The site is located along the A329 Oxford Road and is located within Zone 3, Secondary Core Area, of the Council's adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD.

In accordance with the Parking Standards and Design SPD, the development would be required to provide 12 no. on-site parking spaces per 2 bedroom unit, 2 per 3 bed unit plus visitor parking at a ratio of 1 space per 4 dwellings equalling 2 spaces. Based on the Council's standards, the proposed development would be required to provide a total of 16 car parking spaces. The proposals would provide a total of 9 car parking spaces which falls below the Councils adopted standards. No data/car ownership statistics have been provided to support the reduced provision - which was also previously stated under application 221506. It is noted that the submitted Transport Statement (4.3) states:

"The proposed development of nine apartments will have ten parking spaces of which two (nos. 4 and 9) will have charging points".

This statement does not match provision indicated on the submitted proposed site plan. Notwithstanding, data to support a reduction in parking provision has not been submitted.

In accordance with the Councils adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD the required dimensions of a standard parking bay are 2m x 5m. Forecourt depths of 6m are also required. It is noted that the parking bays illustrated on the submitted proposed site plan are of differing sizes (ie bays 2, 6 and 7), and do not comply with the standards as detailed in the Councils Parking Standards and Design SPD.

The proposed parking layout demonstrates parking space 1 would be located immediately adjacent to the vehicular access point. Vehicles must be able to fully enter into the site from the classified road and wait if another vehicle is manoeuvring in or out of a parking space without causing an obstruction on the classified road. The tracking diagram does not illustrate that all parking spaces would be accessible without obstruction.

The proposal includes widening the existing access to 4.8m wide, allowing for 2 way vehicle movements in and out of the site which the Transport Officer has confirmed in itself would be acceptable in highways terms, noting natural environment concerns discussed below.

A turning area is proposed within the site to enable delivery vehicles to enter and leave the site in forward gear which the Transport Officer has confirmed is acceptable.

Visibility splays have been illustrated; however, if planting of hedges/trees outside the boundary is proposed (submissions are not clear) this would obstruct visibility. The grass verge area outside the property is part of the public highway and not in the ownership of the applicant. Any work on the public highway would require consultation and appropriate licences.

In accordance with the Parking Standards and Design SPD, a minimum provision 0.5 cycle storage spaces should be provided per 2 bed unit and 1 per 3 bed unit, equating to 5 cycle storage spaces. The Transport Statement states that 12 cycle stands would be located at the rear of the site. This would be an overprovision; however, the location of the storage unit contradicts the proposed site plan which shows it located to the front of the site. As such, further details would be required to ensure a suitable layout could be achieved. Should the application have otherwise been supportable, this would have been secured by way of condition.

The construction phase of the proposed development would be likely to impact the surrounding highway network given the prominent location. Should the application have otherwise been considered supportable, a condition would have been attached to secure submission, approval and implementation of a detailed Construction Method Statement.

It is evident there is some conflicting and missing information and the Highway Authority objects to the development, which is contrary to Policies TR1 and TR3.

Natural Environment

Policy EN14 (Trees, Hedges and Woodland) seeks to extend the Borough's vegetation cover and that development should make provision for tree planting whilst Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) seeks proposal should include appropriate landscaping. Given that the site is also located within an Air Quality Management Area and is located on a 'treed corridor' (as designated in the Tree Strategy) proposals should demonstrate an appropriate level of greening and/or net gain in the tree number as well tree retention, particularly on the frontage.

There are two trees on the grass verge at the front of the site which are Council owned and the location plan provided confirms the red line of the site does not include this verge. The vehicular

access is proposed to be moved closer to No.1013, closer to one of these trees and likely within its RPA - it is noted that these trees are not shown on the proposed ground floor / site plan. Given the bank at the front of the site, the Natural Environment officer is unclear how this could be achieved without excavating into the root system, to the detriment of the tree.

An Arboricultural Impact Assessment has been submitted with the application. However, this does not mention the new access, despite impacts as above - and noticing concerns raised and associated reason for refusal of application 221506 in this respect. Submissions have not acceptably addressed the reason for refusal.

Whilst the submission makes reference to landscaping, no landscaping plan or principles document has been submitted. There would be a dominance of hardstanding at the front of the site - as well as bin store directly on the frontage which adds further concerns about landscaping on the frontage.

It is noted that the layout proposed in the SuDS document does not match that proposed, with an attenuation tank potentially located in root protection areas. SuDs provision does not appear to have been considered in conjunction with landscaping.

There is insufficient information to demonstrate the proposals are acceptable in relation to existing trees and insufficient landscape details to demonstrate that appropriate landscaping could be achieved, and with regard to Biodiversity Net Gain (discussed below) and to meet with policy requirements with consequent harm to visual amenity and environmental quality of the area. As such, the proposals fail to provide sufficient required soft landscaping, contrary to Policies CC7, EN14 the Tree Strategy and the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD.

Ecology

Policy EN12 (Biodiversity and the Green Network) seeks that development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity and should provide for a net gain of biodiversity wherever possible by protecting, enhancing and incorporating features of biodiversity on and adjacent to development sites and by providing new tree planting and wildlife friendly landscaping and ecological enhancements wherever practicable.

A Bat Survey report has been submitted, which concludes that the building has a number of features potentially suitable for use by roosting bats and bat droppings were found in both roof voids. The Council's Ecologist agrees with the conclusion that further surveys would need to be undertaken to determine if the building hosts a bat roost.

Given the above there is insufficient information for the Council to determine whether or not protected species would be affected by the proposed development. As such the proposal is contrary to Policy EN12 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

Given the nature of the scheme, it would also have been appropriate to ensure that ecological enhancements were provided, namely bird/bat boxes and wildlife friendly landscaping. This could have been secured by way of condition in compliance with Policy EN12 had the proposal been able to be supported.

Biodiversity Net Gain

In accordance with Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021) Part 2, 13 (1) *Every planning permission granted for the development of land in England shall be deemed to have been granted subject to the condition in sub-paragraph (2).* (2) *The condition is that the development may not be begun unless— (a) a biodiversity gain plan has been submitted to the planning authority (see paragraph 14), and (b) the planning authority has approved the plan (see paragraph 15).*

The application is supported by a small sites metric. This notes that *“The existing site is a large detached house with shed and outbuilding to the south east corner of the site, an area of approximately 1600m2. The sheds are to be taken down and replaced with grass and landscaping. The hardstanding to the front is to be enhanced with grass and landscaping as per plan submitted”*. The metric also indicates new trees to be planted. However, no landscaping plan has been submitted and submitted plans only indicate grass.

Given the above, it is considered unclear how the applicant is seeking to comply with BNG requirements, and the application fails to demonstrate BNG in accordance with NPPF para. 136; 180; 185; and 186, and Policy EN12 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

Affordable Housing

Policy H3 (Affordable Housing) requires that for new residential development of 5-9 dwellings, a financial contribution will be made that will enable the equivalent of 20% of the housing to be provided as affordable housing elsewhere in the Borough.

The submission states that the applicant would be willing to agree to a negotiated financial contribution towards affordable housing. However, no GDV valuations have been submitted to allow the appropriate contribution to be calculated (as per the adopted SPD) and as such an affordable housing contribution has not been agreed (in any future appeal it would be expected for 2 valuations to be submitted at the outset of the appeal to allow further consideration of this). Given this, and as the proposal is not considered acceptable in other planning terms, the Council has not pursued the S106 legal agreement to secure the financial affordable housing provision. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies H3 and CC9 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

An informative will specify that this reason for refusal could be overcome, in the context of an acceptable scheme in all other respects, by entering into a s106 or unilateral undertaking.

Sustainability

Policy H5 (Standards for New Housing) requires that all new build housing integrate additional measures for sustainability.

A sustainability statement has been submitted with the application. This suggests that carbon emissions would be reduced through the use of passive design principle and use of PV panels and heat pumps. It is not clear, however, whether PV panels and heat pumps are actually proposed. Notwithstanding, and should the application have otherwise been recommended for approval, conditions would have been recommended to ensure the development meets the following requirements:

- Higher water efficiency standards of 110 litres per person per day; and
- A 19% improvement over building regulations energy requirements

Although secured by planning condition, these requirements would have been administered through the Building Regulations, with confirmation of compliance submitted to the LPA to discharge the condition.

Community Infrastructure Levy

The proposal would be a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) liable development. The applicant has provided the CIL Additional Information Form. If the scheme had been acceptable an informative would have been attached to the decision notice to advise the applicant of their responsibilities in this respect.

Matters Raised in Representations

All material considerations have been addressed in the above assessment.

Overall Planning Balance and Conclusion

It is acknowledged that there would be some planning benefits associated with the proposed development, such as the provision of 9 residential units to assist with the Borough housing targets. However, there are considered to be a number of significant shortcomings, such as the proposed scale, massing and detailed design deficiencies which results in the proposals being harmful to the character and appearance of the area and resulting a cramped overdevelopment of the site. In addition, there are significant concerns over the impact on the living accommodation of existing nearby occupiers as well as future occupiers. Furthermore, the affordable housing element is not agreed, and the insufficient landscaping is a further shortcoming, along with lack of information relating to biodiversity net gain and failure to demonstrate lack of harm to bats (protected species). The benefits are not considered to outweigh the identified harm by a significant margin. Having regard to the material considerations and all matters raised, the Local Planning Authority considers that the balance of considerations therefore weighs firmly against the proposal, and planning permission is recommended to be refused.

RECOMMENDATION:

REFUSE Planning Permission

1. The proposed development, due to its excessive scale, site coverage and layout would result in a cramped overdevelopment of the site which fails to accommodate built form, parking areas and landscaping in a manner which enhances the character and appearance of the area. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policy CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and Paragraphs 135 and 139 of the NPPF 2023.
2. The proposed development, due to its incongruous and contrived appearance combined with overall scale, bulk and massing would appear overly dominant within the street scene failing to sit comfortably within the surrounding context. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policy CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and Paragraphs 135 and 139 of the NPPF 2023.
3. The proposed development, due to its scale and siting in relation to No.1013, 1013a and 1017 Oxford Road would result in an overbearing effect, harmful to the amenity of neighbouring occupiers. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies CC8 and H11 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and Paragraphs 123, 135 and 139 of the NPPF 2023.
4. The proposed development, due to its internal layout, single aspect design, the siting of windows and for the front ground floor flats in particular the adjacent car parking layout, would result in future occupiers having a poor quality of amenity through poor outlook and daylighting and lack of defensible space. This would lead to a poor standard of accommodation being provided. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies CC8 and H11 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and Paragraphs 123, 135 and 139 of the NPPF 2023.
5. The proposed vehicular parking layout fails to demonstrate that it would comply with the Parking Standards and Design SPD in respect of vehicle parking. This could result in on-street parking /reversing movements on Oxford Road that would adversely affect road safety and the flow of traffic. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies TR3 and TR5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.
6. The proposed development fails to demonstrate that there would be no harm to existing trees on site and high amenity trees on land to the front of the site and fails to demonstrate acceptable provision of tree planting and soft landscaping with consequent harm to visual

amenity, air quality, biodiversity and environmental quality of the area. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies CC7, EN15 and EN14 of the Reading Borough Council Local Plan 2019 and the Reading Borough Council Tree Strategy 2021.

7. The applicant has failed to submit sufficient information for the Council to determine whether or not bats (a protected species) would be adversely affected by the proposed development, contrary to Policy EN12 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.
8. The proposed development has failed to demonstrate a biodiversity net gain (BNG) within the site or off site. The proposal would therefore fail to comply with Policies EN12 and H11 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and Paragraphs 180 and 186 of the NPPF 2023.
9. In the absence of a completed legal agreement to secure an acceptable contribution towards the provision of Affordable Housing, the proposal fails to contribute adequately to the housing needs of Reading Borough. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies H3 and CC9 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and the Council's Adopted Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document 2021.