

Planning Statement for G. Hussain

9 Erleigh Road, Reading, RG1 5LR

Proposal: Alterations to front garden to form off-street parking for one vehicle, including forming new crossover and associated works



Nimbus Maps

Site Information

Consultant	Visionary Planning Uk
Client	Mr G. Hussain
Site Address	9 Erleigh Road, Reading RG1 5LR
LA	Reading Borough Council
Description of Development	Alterations to front garden to form off-street parking, including forming new crossover and associated works
Pathway (PD/Application/Appeal)	HH Application

Constraints Review

Flood Risk Zone	Flood Zone 1
Contaminated Land	None known
Tree Preservation Order	None known
Heritage Assets	Conservation Area
Noise Abatement Areas	None known



RTPI
Chartered Town Planners



Helen Morris Ruffle. M.A. M.R.T.P.I., BIAC.
Trevean, 2 Penmelen, Camelford,
Cornwall. PL32 9UH
07729389847
info@visionaryplanninguk.com
www.visionaryplanninguk.com

Explosive Hazard Areas	Unknown
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	No
Special Protection Area	No
Site of Special Scientific Interest	No
RAMSAR Convention Site	No
Site of Importance to Nature Conservation	No
Article 4(2) Directions	No
Green Belt	No

Local Policy Requirements

Local Plan/Core Strategy

Effective Policies in Development Control

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



RTPI

Chartered Town Planners



BIAC
Special Advisers to Rural Business and on the Environment

Helen Morris Ruffle. M.A. M.R.T.P.I., BIAC.
Trevean, 2 Penmelen, Camelford,
Cornwall. PL32 9UH
07729389847
info@visionaryplanninguk.com
www.visionaryplanninguk.com

Planning History

240206/HOU- Alterations to front garden to form off-street parking, including forming new crossover and associated works
Refused 19 April 2024

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

January 2024

Report Date

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This is a full application submitted by Visionary Planning UK, who have been engaged by the Applicant Mr G. Hussain to seek consent for Alterations to front garden to form off-street parking, including forming new crossover and associated works at 9 Erleigh Road, Reading, RG1 5LR.

1.2 The extant Reading Borough Local Plan was adopted in November 2019 and this statement is based upon the policies therein.

The site

1.4 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. (Officer report).

1.5 The proposal which is a resubmission of application number 240206/HOU, comprising alterations to the front garden to form off-street parking, including forming a new footway crossover and associated works.

National Planning Policy Framework (in precis format where applicable).

2.1 The NPPF provides that at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision making this means that development proposals should be approved that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay.

There are 3 overarching objectives, which are independent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways, those being, economic, social and environmental.

2.1.1 1 It is considered that the proposal will benefit all three objectives.

Economic: It will in the short term provide employment for those engaged in building the dwelling, the applicant is not a builder and will require local support and tradesmen.

It will also support the social element as the applicant will be able to live in the local area and support the area in economic terms by using the local facilities.

2.2 Para 11 states that plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For plan-making this means that:

The presumption in favour of sustainable development

Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

For **plan-making** this means that:

- a) all plans should promote a sustainable pattern of development that seeks to:
 - meet the development needs of their area; align growth and infrastructure; improve the environment; mitigate climate change (including by making effective use of land in urban areas) and adapt to its effects;
- b) strategic policies should, as a minimum, provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses, as well as any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas, unless:
 - i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets
 - ii. of particular importance provides a strong reason for restricting the overall scale,
 - iii. type or distribution of development in the plan area; or
 - iv. 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.

2.3 Chapter 11 **Making effective use of land** states:

119. Planning policies and decisions 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. Strategic policies

should set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously-developed or 'brownfield' land(44).

(44) Except where this would conflict with other policies in this Framework, including causing harm to designated sites of importance for biodiversity.

120. Planning policies and decisions should:

- a) encourage multiple benefits from both urban and rural land, including through mixed use schemes and taking opportunities to achieve net environmental gains – such as developments that would enable new habitat creation or improve public access to the countryside;
- b) recognise that some undeveloped land can perform many functions, such as for wildlife, recreation, flood risk mitigation, cooling/shading, carbon storage or food production;
- e) support opportunities to use the airspace above existing residential and commercial premises for new homes. In particular, they should allow upward extensions where the development would be consistent with the prevailing height and form of neighbouring properties and the overall street scene, is well- designed (including complying with any local design policies and standards) and can maintain safe access and egress for occupiers.

2.4.1 The new parking arrangement will provide a public benefit whereby the occupants Operate a supported living dwelling on site and require onsite parking for one vehicle without which they could not continue without and thus, the property will be vacant and unless another occupant can be found that does not require on-site parking it runs the risk of decay.

2.5 Chapter 12 Para 130 of the NPPF **Achieving Well Designed Places** sets out the way planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

- a) 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;
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
- d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
- e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
- f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

2.5.1 The design is to a high standard and fulfils the client brief. The proposal adds to the required parking for the current tenants.

2.6 Chapter 14. **Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change** states:

154. New development should be planned in ways that:

- a) avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change.

When new development is brought forward in areas which are vulnerable, care should be taken to ensure that risks can be managed through suitable adaptation

measures, including through the planning of green infrastructure; and
b) can help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, such as through its location, orientation and design.

2.6.1 The proposal is not in a flood zone but the design has considered the location, orientation to ensure that it does not impact negatively either the immediate or wider environs.

Habitats and biodiversity

2.7 Para179. To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:

- a) Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation; and
- b) promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.

2.7 The proposal does meets the requirements for Biodiversity Net Gain.

The exemptions are as follows:

- (a) small developments where an application for planning permission is made or has been granted before April 2024,
- (b) developments with no impact on priority habitat and where impacts on other habitat fall below specified thresholds (namely less than 25 square metres of habitat that has biodiversity value greater than zero and less than 5 metres in length of linear habitat),
- (c) householder applications,

- (d) HS2,
- (e) off-site gain developments i.e. developments which fulfil the biodiversity net gain requirement arising in relation to another development, and
- (f) certain self-build and custom build developments.

2.8 Planning for climate change Paragraphs 152-153 of the NPPF state:

152. The planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change. It should help to: shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.

2.9 Conserving and enhancing the historic environment states:

Proposals affecting heritage assets

200. In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

201. Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

202. Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect of, or damage to, a heritage asset, the deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision.

203. In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Considering potential impacts

205. 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 the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

206. Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of:

- a) grade II listed buildings, or grade II registered parks or gardens, should be

exceptional;

b) assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, grade I and II* listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly Exceptional.

207. Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

- a) the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and
- b) no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and
- c) conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and
- d) the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.

208. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

209. 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 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 heritage asset.

2.10 The proposal is supported by a Heritage and Conservation appraisal which states *As previously described, a building in occupation is key to maintaining the property in good condition. Additionally, affected parties have stated that allowing this modification "would have a positive impact on establishing a long-term contractual relationship between Brighter Futures for Children and Liberty Supported Living." Ensuring stable and high-quality supported living accommodations through this contractual relationship could also provide a broader public benefit.*

In the professional opinion of the author, the current front garden and boundary contribute to but do not mitigate the harmful effects of alterations to other frontages along this section of Erleigh Road. Yes, many front gardens and front boundaries have been lost to onsite vehicle parking to the detriment of the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. However, mitigation must come forward with proposals for each property and the onus for wider improvements should not be placed on proposals in adjoining properties.

A minor boundary reconfiguration, that is reversible, would not deter an appreciation for the character of this road. The proposed reconfigured boundary would continue to be part of the front garden and a positive feature in its own right. The current and proposed reconfiguration provides the same opportunity for appreciation of attractive front garden views and views of attractive semi-detached Victorian dwellings, some of which are Buildings of Townscape Merit. Therefore, the proposal would continue to contribute positively to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

The Proposed Development manages change effectively within the historic environment, especially in the Conservation Area, and is supportable in policy terms and any very limited harm is reversible and mitigated by the public benefits identified.

2.11 It is considered that the proposal accords with the NPPF policies.

3.0 Local Plan Policies. Reading Local Plan

(In precis format)

3.1 **EN1: PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT**

Historic features, areas of historic importance and other elements of the historic environment, including their settings will be protected and where possible enhanced. This will include:

- ☐ Listed Buildings;
- ☐ Conservation Areas;

All proposals 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.

3.1.1 A Heritage and Conservation appraisal has been submitted with this application and it is considered that the public benefit outweighs the harm to the Conservation Area and non designated Heritage asset.

3.2 **EN3: ENHANCEMENT OF CONSERVATION AREAS**

The special interest, character and architecture of Conservation Areas will be conserved and enhanced. 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.

These may include:

- ☐ Reducing visual clutter caused by negative factors, such as poles and overhead wires,

satellite dishes or unnecessary street furniture;

- ☐ Restoring original building features;
- ☐ Removing inappropriate additions or alterations to buildings;
- ☐ Protecting and encouraging the maintenance of green spaces and important trees, particularly where they are intrinsic to the history and character of the area;
- ☐ Improving signage and street furniture;
- ☐ Restoring or re-establishing appropriate paving, railings or walls;
- ☐ Sympathetic landscaping and planting;
- ☐ Improving or restoring green spaces, including front gardens, that are appropriate to the historic interest of a Conservation Area;
- ☐ Signage that reveals and promotes the Conservation Area and its boundaries;
- ☐ Interpretation panels to inform the public of the area's historical significance.

Where a Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan has been adopted for a particular Conservation Area, this will be a material consideration in determining applications for development.

3.2.1 The Heritage and Conservation impact assessment states:

The Proposed Development manages change effectively within the historic environment, especially in the Conservation Area, and is supportable in policy terms and any very limited

harm is reversible and mitigated by the public benefits identified.

3.3 EN6: NEW DEVELOPMENT IN A HISTORIC CONTEXT

In areas characterised by heritage assets, the historic environment will inform and shape new development. New development will make a contribution to the historic character of

the area by respecting and enhancing its architectural and visual qualities and considering how heritage considerations can influence the design of new development. When determining planning applications for new development, the following factors will be taken into consideration:

- 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.

3.3 See attached Heritage Assessment

4.0 The Proposal

4.1 The Proposed Development requires the removal of short sections of the current (modern) brick boundary wall while retaining shortened sections of the current railings to allow the reconfiguration shown on the drawing (1358.20sk2.garden.A3-Model).

4.2 Design, Character and Impact upon Neighbour Amenity

4.3 *Previously in the pre-application the Officer stated that:*

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 the 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.

4.4 The Heritage Impact Assessment disagrees with the aforementioned statement and counterargues:

In the professional opinion of the author, the current front garden with boundary contributes to but does not mitigate the harmful effects of alterations to other frontages along this section of Erleigh Road. Yes, many front gardens and front boundaries have been lost to on-site vehicle parking to the detriment of the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. However, mitigation of cumulative loss within a Conservation Area must come forward with proposals for each property and the onus for wider improvements should not be placed on proposals in adjoining properties, specifically this application.

5.0 Conclusions

5.1 This is a new dwelling which sits well on the site and integrates in the street scene and surrounding locale. It fully meets policy requirements both of the NPPF and Local Plan.

5.2 It is considered consent should be forthcoming.

Visionary PlanningUK

Helen Morris-Ruffle M.A M.R.T.P.I BIAC

Helen Morris Ruffle. M.A. M.R.T.P.I., BIAC.
Trevean, 2 Penmelen, Camelford,
Cornwall. PL32 9UH
07729389847
info@visionaryplanninguk.com
www.visionaryplanninguk.com