

Delegated Application Report

Address: The Salvation Army Hostel, Willow Street, Reading

Application No: 240790/FUL

Proposal: Provision of a new modular building to provide safe refuge and sleeping accommodation for homeless people.

Case Officer: Ethne Humphreys

Target Date: 14th August 2024

SITE DESCRIPTION

The site relates to Willow House, located to the west and south of Castle Street. To the north of the site is the St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area. To the west is the IDR.

PROPOSAL

Planning permission is sought for a new modular building to provide temporary accommodation for homeless people. It would be sited within the garden of Willow House Hostel. It would serve maximum 4 people at a time.

PLANS/ DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED

Location Plan 2306/12/03 01 Rev A

Proposed Site Plan 2306/23/03 02 Rev A

Proposed Elevations 2306/12/03 03 Rev A

Existing Site Plan and Elevations 2306/12/03 04

Received 19th June 2024

CONSULTATIONS

Internal Consultees

Berkshire Archaeology - No comments received.

Environmental Protection - No objection.

Natural Environment - No objection subject to condition.

Transport - Verbally confirmed no objection.

External Consultation

Adjoining properties were consulted via letter.

2 neighbour letter of representation received concerned with:

- Quality of landscaping
- Loud shouting by non-residents

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

None.

LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy Framework, among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'.

The application has been assessed against the following policies:

National Planning Policy Framework 2023

National Planning Policy Guidance 2014 onwards

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction
CC3: Adaption 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
H1: Provision of Housing
H2: Density and Mix
H3: Affordable Housing
H5: Standards for New Housing
H6: Accommodation for Vulnerable People
TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging
EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network
EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodland
OU1: New and Existing Community Facilities

Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents

- Reading's Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2020-2025
- Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024
- Revised Sustainable Design and Construction 2019

APPRAISAL

Land use considerations

It is considered that there is general support for the proposed use under Policy H6 (Accommodation for Vulnerable People) which considers specialist accommodation for

vulnerable people, including homeless people. The existing building currently supports homeless people. The principle of the development is considered acceptable, provided that the proposals meet other local planning policy requirements discussed below.

Impact on Neighbouring Amenity

Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) requires that development will not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties.

The site is in close proximity to residential properties. However, the building would be sited in the enclosed garden of Willow House hostel and is not considered to result in any loss of privacy or overbearing effects due to its siting and the relatively small-scale nature of the building. The Council's Environmental Protection Officer has not raised any concern in respect of noise/disturbance. It would likely comprise maximum 4 people at a time and on a temporary period and access to the building would be controlled via Willow House. There would be no increase in staffing numbers and no increase in vehicle parking spaces/negligible impact in highway movements (no Transport Officer objection). It is not considered that there would be any detrimental impacts in respect of noise and disturbance to nearby occupiers.

Design considerations

Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) requires that all development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located and Policy EN14 (Trees, Hedges and Woodland) seeks to extend the Borough's vegetation cover and include appropriate landscaping.

The proposed building would have a low height and of a green colour to minimise its impact. However, given its utilitarian appearance, similar to that of a storage unit, it would not be suitable for permanent retention. Advice previously given was that the length of planning permission should be guided by the 'design life' of the building but that if none was stipulated at application stage, that a maximum of 10 years would likely be appropriate. The submission is silent in this respect and a condition requiring its removal within 10 years will be imposed.

The submission notes that climbing plants and vegetation upon fencing would be maintained to provide a visual barrier from the neighbouring sites. The current fence vegetation appears poor and sporadic and better screening is required. As such, further details of landscaping will be secured by way of condition.

Archaeology

Policy EN2 (Areas of Archaeological Significance) requires that applications adequately assess and investigate sites of archaeological significance.

Whilst comments have not been received under this application, Berkshire Archaeology previously advised that it's unlikely the works would have any archaeological impact. Whilst the wider area is of interest, nothing specific is expected within the site itself and observation at the adjacent site to the north showed a lot of made ground, likely from the construction of the IDR. Previous advice was that the only circumstance that would warrant a WDI would

be if the entire footprint were to be sunk into the ground. This is not the case. No concerns are considered to arise in this respect.

Conclusion

The proposal would assist with the aims of Policy H6 and is not considered to result in such an intensive use on the site on a temporary basis to result in material harm to neighbouring properties nor harm to the character and appearance of the area. A temporary permission of 10 years is appropriate.

Recommendation **GRANT** Temporary Planning Permission