



DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT (DAS) INCLUDING HERITAGE AND OPEN SPACE STATEMENTS

PROPOSED CHANGE OF USE OF EXISTING BUILDING AND EXTENSIONS TO PROVIDE 18 APARTMENTS
TRINITY HALL, SOUTH STREET, READING, RG1 4QU
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AUGUST 2024
STATUS: PLANNING

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Photograph 1: looking towards the rear of the site from Livery Close. With Trinity Hall on the right and the approved Queens Road development nearing completion on the left.

Executive Summary

- This DAS explains how the proposed development is a suitable response to the site and its setting, and demonstrates that it can be adequately accessed by prospective users.
- The existing main building on this corner site of South Street and Sidmouth Street will be retained. A small existing garage building on the South Street frontage next to Livery Close will be demolished.
- The scheme will provide 18 new apartments with secure cycle parking for 10 cycles compared to the Council's standard of 9.
- The existing vehicular access off of South Street will be closed off, with a full height kerb and the footway reinstated.
- The scale, height and appearance of the proposed development has been designed with similar buildings in the local area in mind. There is a varied scale, height and appearance to buildings in both South Street and Sidmouth Street, including some large and tall blocks of built form, several of which are on corner plots of a larger upper height.
- The architectural details and materials to be used in the new building are intended to compliment those found in the local area at this junction of South Street and Sidmouth Street.
- Landscaped green open space around the proposed development has been provided with tree and hedgerow planting together with other landscaping, particularly to the frontages along South Street and Sidmouth Street, and are intended to include native or biodiversity friendly species.

Site Location



The site comprises an existing three-storey brick building containing 24 bedspaces of student accommodation (including a wardens flat and office) that has remained unused since August 2014 and is to be retained. The building was constructed in the 1980s and is plain in appearance. It nevertheless contains embodied carbon and its retention offers the opportunity for improvement in its appearance on this corner site, including from Livery Close to the rear. It is located on the north side of South Street, at the junction with Sidmouth Street which lies to the east, and fronts both roads. There is an existing vehicular access from South Street to an open off-street car park providing for 11 cars, and a detached garage. Livery Close lies to the west. There is also some existing landscaping the existing building at the site. Internally the facilities are basic when compared with more recent student accommodation, including only shared toilets (no en-suites) and cooking facilities (no individual cooking facilities).

The site is located within the Reading Central Area. The site lies within an air quality management area and South Street is a designated cycle route. There are a number of open spaces within walking distance from the site that have been designated as Local Green Spaces (LGS) and Public Open Spaces (POS) such as Kings Road Gardens (425m away), Eldon Square (575m), Forbury Gardens (650m) and Kings Meadow and the Coal Woodland (1.5km). Although not a designated open green space in the Local Plan, the River Kennet is accessible from Kennett Side, 200m north of the site, providing leisure walks to the River Thames which is accessible 1.4km northeast of the site.

The surrounding area comprises a mix of commercial and residential buildings of varied scale, height and appearance. To the north is the new Queens Road residential extension, with off-street parking immediately adjacent to the application site. To the east is the Grade II listed 3&5 Sidmouth Street, a 1880s 3 storey pair in the Butterfield Vicarage style. Also to the east are the modern 3 storey Sidmouth Court flats. To the south-east is the Grade II listed 9 Sidmouth Street, a 2 storey end of terrace grey brick building from the 1850s. Nos. 50-52 South Street, to the south of the site, is a slightly elevated, blue/red brick 3 storey building occupied by the Reading Islamic Centre. To the west at 48 South Street is the 4 storey Shepton House flats with a pitched roof. To the west of the application site is Livery Close beyond which are no's 43-49 South Street that are Grade II listed. This is a mid-19th century 2 – 2 1/2 storey residential terrace with Bath ashlar front, and flint with brick dressings and quoins to the side and rear.

HERITAGE STATEMENT

The statutory requirements set out in Sections 66(1) and Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 have been considered as well as the requirements in the Reading Local Plan policies and the guidance in the NPPF (including para. 194) and the PPG.

The relevant historic environment records have been consulted. There are no heritage assets on the site and there are no locally listed buildings nearby. The closest listed buildings that may be affected by the proposed development as part of their setting are:

- to the east of the site, the Grade II listed 3&5 Sidmouth Street, a 1880s 3 storey pair in the Butterfield Vicarage style.;
- to the south-east is the Grade II listed 9 Sidmouth Street, a 2 storey end of terrace grey brick building from the 1850s; and
- to the west of the application site is Livery Close beyond which are no's 43-49 South Street that are Grade II listed. This is a mid-19th century 2 – 2 1/2 storey residential terrace with Bath ashlar front, and flint with brick dressings and quoins to the side and rear. Consulting the Historic Environment Record reveals no archaeological features on the site.

The proposal in the current application would be separated from No 43-49 South Street by Livery Close. The scale of the proposed building takes into account the slope of the site, the expired planning permission for the part 3, part 4 storey building, the scale of the buildings in the nearby area including commercial- storey office buildings, and other part 4 , part 5 storey buildings and recent planning permissions for apartments in the local area, including the approved residential development adjoining the site to the north which is nearing completion.

The relationship between the height of the proposal and of no's 43-49 South Street and the other nearby listed buildings has been carefully considered. The effect on the listed buildings is considered to be at worse at a very low degree of 'less than substantial' harm being caused by the proposed development.

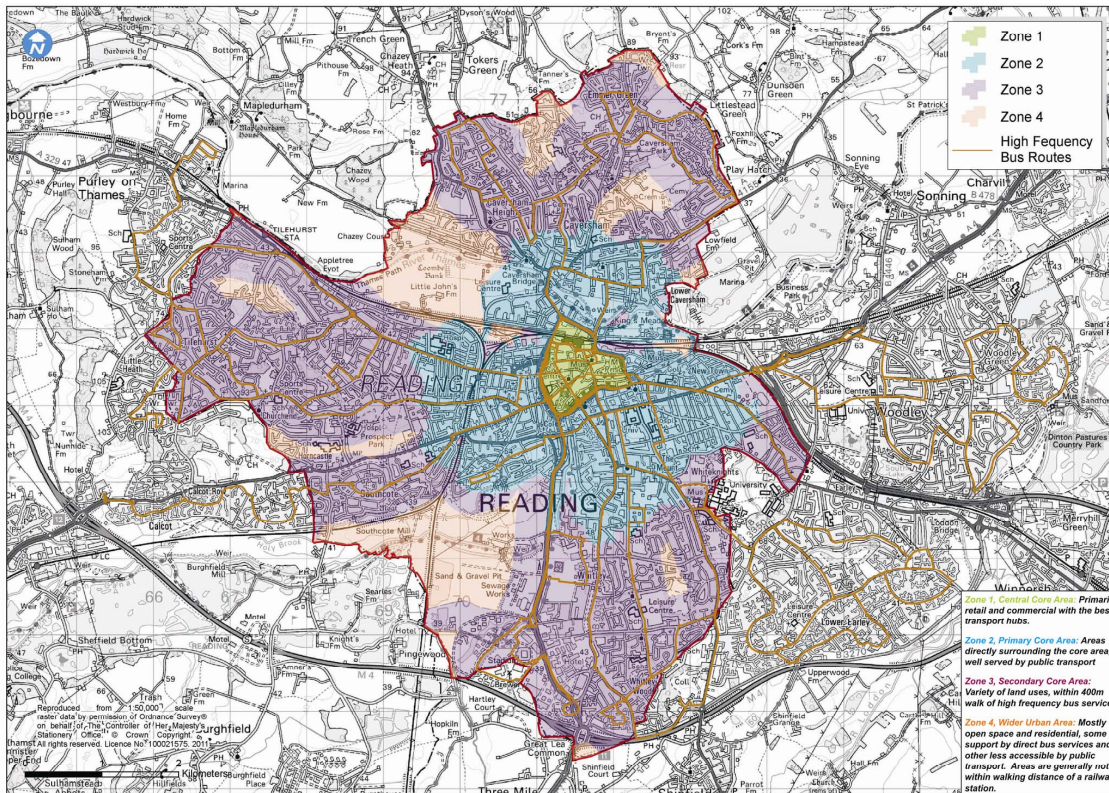
In the planning balance any harmful impacts of the proposed development need to be weighed with the public benefits of the proposal, such as the suitably high standard and energy efficiency of the the proposed residential accommodation (compared for example to the existing student accommodation and warden's flat provision of cycle storage facilities, and the potential for Biodiversity Net Gain are all tangible planning benefits of the proposal. In this case it is considered that in a suitable planning balance the public benefits of the proposal outweigh any heritage harm that may be identified.

Planning Context 1

The site lies in the Reading Central Area (RCA) which lies at the heart of Reading Borough.

In terms of parking provision, the site is located in Zone 2 and is well served by public transport. As detailed in Reading Borough Council's 'Revised Parking Standards and Design' for 1-2 bed flats in Zone 2, parking is generally required at a rate of 1 space per flat. However, the standards also state that *"Should a developer require fewer spaces than are set out here then there would need to be demonstration, to the Highway Authority's satisfaction, that there would be no detriment to highway safety as a result."*

Given that the site lies within the RCA, the close proximity of the site to Reading town centre, the nearby parking restrictions and the number of nearby alternative sustainable travel opportunities, the provision of zero car spaces is considered to be appropriate and would not result in a detrimental impact on highway safety in the context of the Council's parking standards. Car-free sites are fairly common in Reading and a justification as to why a car-free development is considered acceptable is given in the Transport Statement 5 Aug 24 accompanying the application.



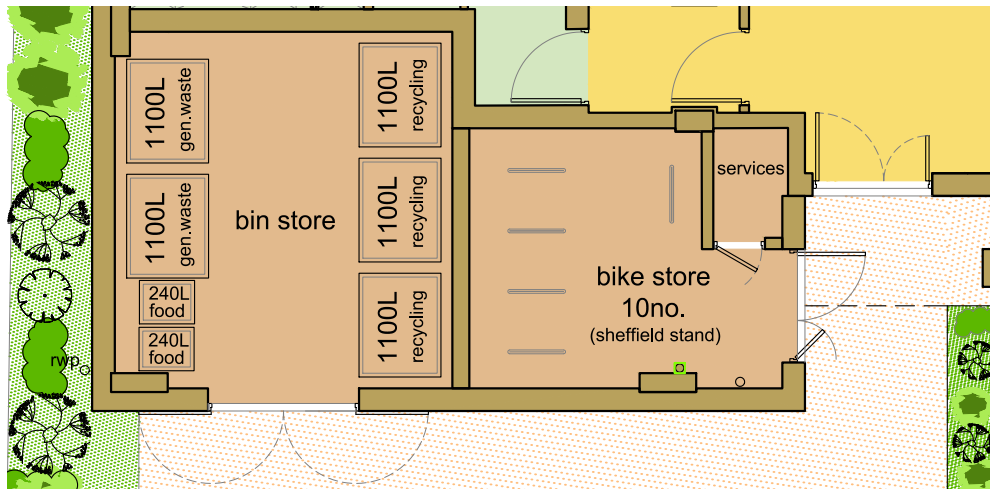
Planning Context 2

For cycle parking provision, 1-2 bed flats require a minimum of 0.5 cycle parking spaces per flat, so a minimum of 9 cycle parking spaces should be provided for this site. However, 10 cycle parking spaces are provided for in a secure store using the Council's preferred 'Sheffield' type stands and this ought to be more than sufficient to comply with the above standards.

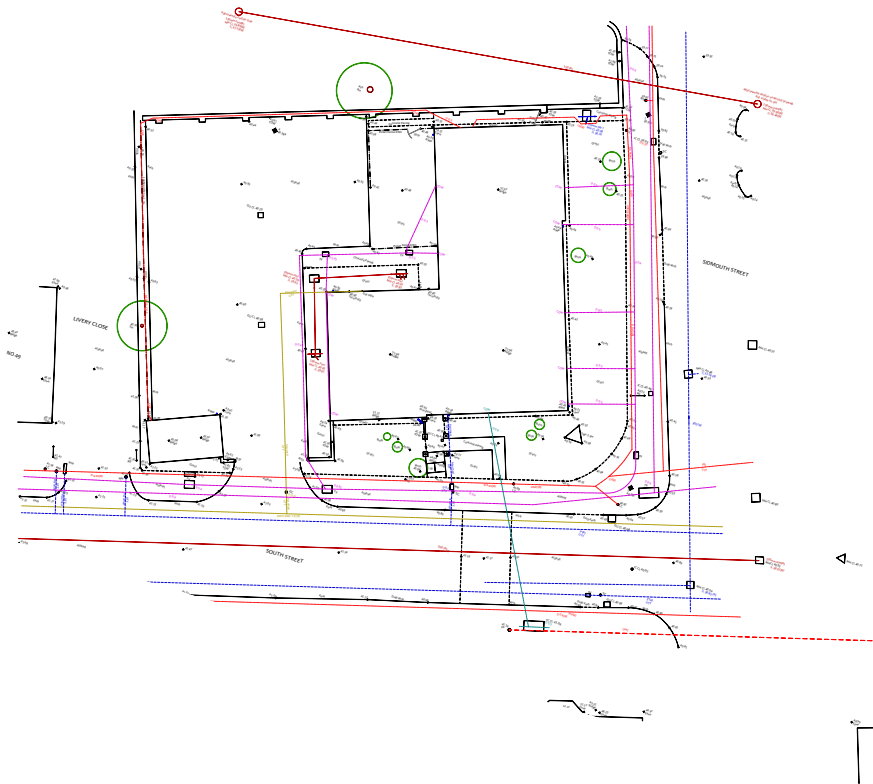
The cycle stands within the secure store are based on the West London Cycle Parking Guidance (one of the leading industry cycle guidance documents) which advises that 1.0m should be provided between Sheffield stands, with 0.6m between a stand and the wall. The West London Cycle Parking Guidance also advises that a minimum of 1.2m should be provided to allow a person to walk alongside their bike through a gap or corridor (in this case between the cycle store doors and the front entrance), and this is also designed for in the application.

Reading Borough Council's 'Waste Management Guidelines for Property Developers, Architects, Planners and Contractors' advises that 1 x 1,100 litre bin is required per 5 flats, if refuse is collected on a fortnightly basis, or 1 x 1,100 litre bin per 10 flats, if refuse is to be collected on a weekly basis. Provision is made in the application for 6 x 1,100 litre bins and which provides flexibility for either a fortnightly or weekly collection.

Refuse collectors or residents would not have to pull the bins far from the bin store and which is within the 'carry' distances, and sufficient clearance has been provided around each of the bins to allow residents and refuse collectors to access the bins. The doorway width is to the standard width of 2.0m to allow the bins to be manoeuvred out of the refuse store.



Site Context 1: Topography, utilities and the scale of the proposed building



The application is accompanied by a topographical survey of the site, the existing building (outlined in red on the submitted ground floor plan and elevations) and of nearby buildings.

The site slopes downwards from the south (South Street) to the north (towards the three commercial-storied office buildings). In South Street the level is between 40.89m AOD and 41.17m AOD. Adjacent to the existing wall along the northern boundary the site drops to between 39.94m AOD in Sidmouth Street, to 40.52m AOD in Livery Close. There is then a fall in the site away from South Street by between 0.5 and 1m.

The level of the extensions to the existing building takes advantage of this fall, in the provision of the communal garden space to the rear and in a third floor roof garden, the surrounding landscaping and tree planting to the boundaries, and the cycle and refuse stores to the front.

The location of the utilities are included on the topographical survey and the proposed tree planting, and the other landscaping shown on the Landscape Strategy Plan, together with the Drainage Strategy, has taken these into account.



The site was the subject of a planning permission for the 'Erection of part 3, part 4 storey building to provide 25 student units(42 bedspaces) (Sui Generis) and associated works, following demolition of existing 3 storey building (Sui Generis)' on the 3 December 2015 under application ref. 151356. This planning permission has expired and a CGI of the approved scheme from the corner of South Street and Sidmouth Street is shown on the left.

The scale of the proposed building takes into account the slope of the site, the expired planning permission for a part 3, part 4 storey building, the scale of the buildings in the nearby area including the approved residential scheme adjoining the site to the north in Queens Road, and other part 4 , part 5 storey buildings in the local area.

There are a number of 4-storey buildings close to the site, including the majority of buildings on the south side of South Street. Others have the appearance of greater height because of their commercial-storeys, high parapets, large roof forms and steep roof pitches. In the proposed development there is a gradual change in height and stagger along South Street from No 43 - 49 and sloping roofs are proposed as shown below.



proposed south - south street - elevation

Site Context 2: Height of the proposed building in relation to nearby buildings (Queens Road to the north and No 43 – 49 South Street)

The Queens Road development adjoining the site to the north and nearing completion





No 43 – 49 Livery Close from the rear and the existing building on the site

OPEN SPACE STATEMENT

Policy H10 of the Local Plan states that:

““Dwellings will be provided with functional private or communal open space **wherever possible**, that allows for suitable sitting-out areas, children’s play areas, home food production, green waste composting, refuse storage, general outdoor storage and drying space. Houses will be provided with private outdoor space whereas **flats may be provided with communal outdoor space, balconies and/or roof gardens**.”.

The flats are provided with communal outdoor space and a roof garden (see the submitted Landscape Strategy Plan and the 3rd Floor and Roof Terrace Landscape Plans)., and two of the flats (Units 17 and 18 on the third floor) would have private terraces (the 3-bed flat Unit 18 having two private terraces).

In addition, the Transport Statement considers the accessible and sustainable nature of the site in detail, including its proximity to areas of green open space which residents could easily walk or cycle to including:

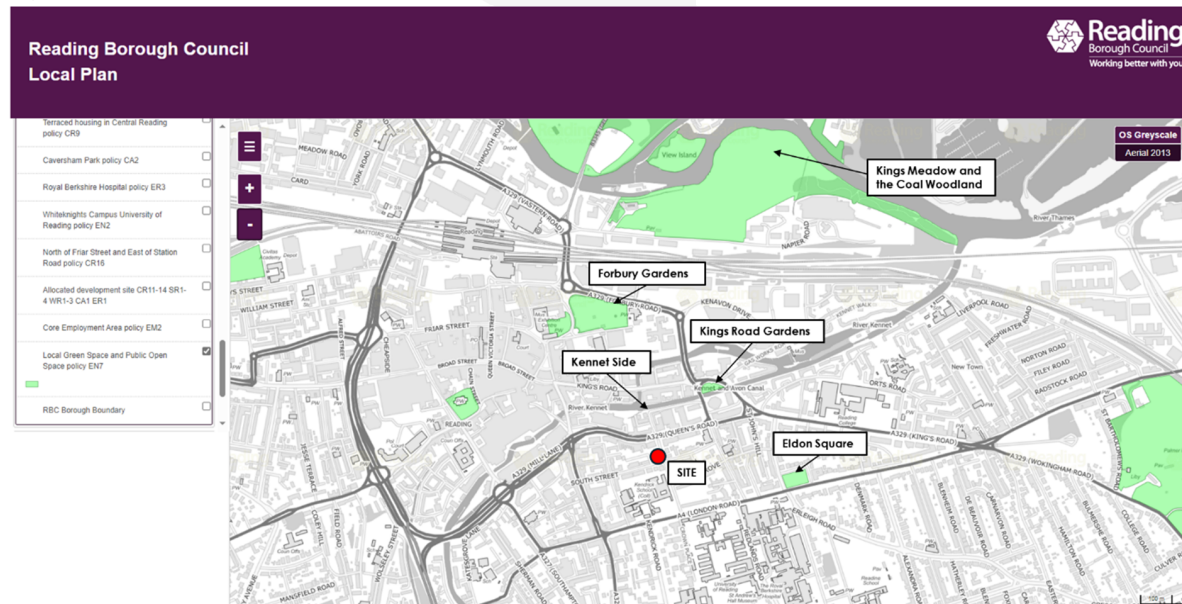
Kings Road Gardens, POS (425m northeast of the site);

EN7Eb, Eldon Square, POS (575m east of the site);

EN7Cb, Forbury Gardens, LGS (650m north of the site);

EN7Cd, Kings Meadow and the Coal Woodland, LGS (1.15km north of the site); and although not a designated open green space in the Local Plan, the River Kennet is accessible from Kennett Side, 200m north of the site, providing leisure walks to the River Thames to the northeast. The River Thames is accessible 1.4km northeast of the site, providing local connections to Thames Valley Park,.

Figure 1: Local Green Spaces and Public Open Spaces near the site



Evaluation:

Design opportunities and constraints

The extended building would be part 3, part 3 1/2 storey in height, with the 3 1/2 storey element largely being confined to the roof space of the existing building. Given the steeply pitched nature of the existing roof space of the existing building, the proposed increase in overall height to the new ridge is quite limited (see the submitted plan PL50). A limited increase in the ridge height is considered to be appropriate in design terms, bearing in mind the varied heights of buildings in the area and that this corner is considered the most appropriate in design terms to introduce some additional height.

This is also an opportunity to improve the design quality of the building, with new tree planting and landscaping, at the junction of South Street and Sidmouth Street on this corner site.

Enhancement of the existing landscape strips, in particular those along South Street and Sidmouth Street, is proposed and in which there are no trees. Tree planting is incorporated into the proposal along both frontages.



Proposals

The amount of development comprises 18 apartments (7 x 1-bed, 10 x 2-bed and 1 x 3-bed), 'Sheffield' cycle stands in a secure store for 10 cycles, a refuse store able to accommodate 5 x 1100L refuse bins and 2 x 240L refuse bins. These can all be adequately accessed by prospective users. A C3 residential use would provide public benefits in the form of its contribution towards housing supply.

The scale, form and materials of the proposed development are a suitable response to its setting and takes visual cues from the local area. The scale of the development aligns with Policy CC6 of the Reading Borough Local Plan November 2019 which advises that *"the scale and density of development will be related to its level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport to a range of services and facilities, with the densest and largest scale development taking place in the most accessible locations"*.

The environmental objectives expressed in Policies CC2 'Sustainable Design and Construction', CC3 'Adaption to Climate Change', CC4 'Decentralised Energy', CC5 'Waste Minimisation and Storage', EN18 'Flooding and Drainage' and H5 'Housing Standards' of the Reading Borough Local Plan November 2019 have all been considered in the proposal.

CC2: The proposal uses energy, water, minerals, materials and other natural resources appropriately, efficiently and with care and take account of the effects of climate change.

CC3: The proposal has been designed to incorporate measures to adapt to climate change. Where possible, the new building has been orientated to maximise the opportunities for both natural heating and ventilation and reducing exposure to wind and other element. It has been designed to maximise resistance and resilience to climate. The proposal incorporates the use of trees and other planting as part of a landscape scheme to provide shading of amenity areas, buildings and the streets and to help to connect habitat, designed with trees that have been carefully selected, that will be managed and are adaptable to meet the predicted changed climatic conditions. The proposal will minimize the impact of surface water runoff from the development in the design of the drainage system, and does not need to incorporate mitigation and resilience measures for any increases in river flooding levels as a result of climate change.

CC4: There is no decentralised energy network in the area. Consideration has been given to the inclusion of decentralised energy infrastructure within the proposal but the proposal is not suitable, feasible or viable for this form of energy provision.

CC5: The proposal has been designed to minimise the generation of waste in the construction, use and life of the building and promote more sustainable approaches to waste management, including the reuse and recycling of construction waste and a layout and design that provides adequate, well-designed space to facilitate waste storage, reuse and recycling.

EN18: The proposal lies in an area at lowest risk of flooding and taking into account the effects of climate change. It has considered flooding from all sources, including fluvial, surface water, groundwater and sewer flooding.

H5: The apartments comply with the nationally-described space standards.

The development has been designed so that where possible it can meet the required standards in the Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Design Guide December 2019.

Summary

- Planning permission for the proposal would meet the encouragement given in the National Planning Policy Framework to making the effective use of land by using as much as possible land that has been previously developed (brownfield land). This is particularly the case as the building is vacant and has remained unused since August 2014.
- The accessibility of the site, which is within the Reading Central Area, is considered acceptable for the proposal (Policy CC6 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)) and the principle of a Class C3 residential use would align with the broad objectives of Policy H1 in assisting to meet the annual housing targets.
- An increase in height is considered to be appropriate in design terms, bearing in mind the steeply pitched nature of the existing roof space of the existing building, the increase in overall height being limited, the varied heights of buildings in the area, and that this corner is considered the most appropriate in design terms to introduce additional height. The setting of nearby listed buildings would be preserved.
- Moreover, planning permission for the proposal would enhance the character and appearance of the area, and the public realm.