

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Katesgrove

App Ref: PL/24/0656 Full planning permission & PL/24/0657 Listed building consent

Address: 144 Southampton Street Reading RG1 2RD

Proposal: Refurbishment and conversion of existing house into 4 HMO units (Part-retrospective)

Applicant: Mr Klementian Velo

Received date: 2024-05-21

Target Decision date: 2024-08-28

Case Officer: Marcelina Rejwerska

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is a two-storey mid-terrace dwelling on the west side of Southampton Street. The property is part of a Grade II listed terrace set back from the road with large front gardens. The national listing reads as follows:

SOUTHAMPTON STREET 1. 5128 (West Side) Nos 142 to 146 (even) SU 7172 NE 4/250 II GV 2. Mid C19. 2 storeys, Nos 144 and 146 with attic. Stucco cornice. Parapets. Slate roofs, part hipped. Long front gardens to street. No 142, 2 modern casements, former datestone removed, lower extension to right. Nos 144 and 146 a 3 window pair, grey brick headers with red dressings and paired doors in centre. No 144 has glazing bar sashes. 2 course band over first floor. 1 window wing to left with chequered parapet and a 2 arch loggia with rubbed brick arches on ground floor and set back door to left, round headed window to right.

The site is also within an Article 4 Direction area restricting permitted development rights for change of use from C3 class to C4 class.



*Left: Image of the property prior to unauthorised works, taken from real estate agent advert (2023).
Right: Image of the site at present, taken by RBC Conservation Officer (2024).*

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Planning permission and Listed Building Consent are sought for refurbishment of the property and conversion of the existing 3-bedroom house into a 4-bedroom HMO (C4 use class). The proposal includes conversion of the bathroom into one bedroom and installation of ensembles to all bedrooms. A highway access is also proposed along with a paved driveway. The proposed works have already commenced without permission, and includes removal of the front boundary wall, internal refurbishment works, clearance of all vegetation from the front garden, removal of the bathroom and installation of the timber frames for partition walls for all ensembles.



2.1. Information submitted:

Heritage Statement, dated 13th May 2024
 Sustainability Appraisal, dated May 2024
 Planning Statement & Design and Access Statement, dated 12th May 2024
 240501-01 Location Plan
 240501-02 Block Plan
 240501-03 Proposed Site Plan
 240501-04 Existing Floor Plans
 240501-06 Proposed Floor Plans

Received by the LPA on 21st May 2024

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

98/00821/LB – Installation of new drainage sewer pipework to rear elevation – Conditional consent granted on 20/05/1999

99/00948/FUL – Installation of a vehicular access from Southampton Street to the new dwelling at 144 Southampton Street – Refused on 07/12/1999

4. CONSULTATIONS

The following were consulted:

- RBC Transport Development Control
 - No transport related objections.
- RBC Natural Environment
 - The proposal fails to demonstrate no damage to off-site tree / trees as a result of the proposed new driveway and associated construction activities, resulting in potential loss of amenity trees on a designated 'treed corridor' and within the designated Air Quality Management Area.

- Ecology
 - The proposal has failed to demonstrate that there would be no net loss of biodiversity or that a biodiversity net gain would be achieved, through ecological enhancements either on or off site.
- RBC Conservation Officer
 - Objection – Reason for Refusal - The proposed refurbishment and conversion of existing house into 4 HMO units, by virtue of their detrimental impact on the historic plan form, harm to the architectural design and setting by causing loss of historic fabric, original garden walls and soft landscaping would adversely affect the character and special architectural and historic interest of the building and its setting and fail to preserve or enhance the significance of the Grade II Listed Building. As such, the proposal would lead to less than substantial harm at the highest level to the significance of the heritage asset in conflict with Policy EN1 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) and the NPPF (2023), and recommended for refusal on heritage grounds.
- Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee
 - The documentation submitted does not include the expected full description of the exterior and interior of the listed building and the impact of works to be undertaken. In particular, the
 - Heritage Statement submitted does not include a history of the property or demonstrate the heritage impact of the proposal. Photographs of the property should also have been included.
 - Creation of a vehicular access to Southampton Street, requiring the demolition of the front garden wall is not acceptable and the damage caused should be rectified at the earliest opportunity.
 - The application does not comply with Policy EN1 Protection and enhancement of the historic environment.
 - Change of use to an HMO may fail the 25% threshold for 50m radius.

The following addresses were consulted by letter:

- 146 Southampton Street, Reading, RG1 2RD
- 41 Sherman Road, Reading, RG1 2PP
- 142 Southampton Street, Reading, RG1 2RD
- 43 Sherman Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 2PP
- 45 Sherman Road, Reading, RG1 2PP

Letters of representation have been received as follows:

- | | | |
|--|---|--------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member of the Public | 142 Southampton Street,
READING,
Berks, RG1 2RD | Object |
|--|---|--------|

Site notices for both applications were erected on site by the applicant. A site visit was carried out by the case officer and RBC Conservation Officer.

5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the LPA 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'. However, the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making (NPPF paragraph 12).

National Policy and Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework
National Planning Practice Guidance
Conservation Principles Policies and Guidance 2008
HEAG304 Listed Building Consent

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC1: PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
CC5: WASTE MINIMISATION AND STORAGE
CC7: DESIGN AND THE PUBLIC REALM
CC8: SAFEGUARDING AMENITY
EN1: PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT
EN12: BIODIVERSITY AND THE GREEN NETWORK
EN14: TREES, HEDGES AND WOODLAND
H1: PROVISION OF HOUSING
H2: DENSITY AND MIX
H7: PROTECTING THE EXISTING HOUSING STOCK
H8: RESIDENTIAL CONVERSIONS
H10: PRIVATE AND COMMUNAL OUTDOOR SPACE
TR1: ACHIEVING THE TRANSPORT STRATEGY
TR3: ACCESS, TRAFFIC AND HIGHWAY-RELATED MATTERS
TR5: CAR AND CUCLE PARKING AND ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING

SPD

REVISED PARKING STANDARDS AND DESIGNS 2011
RESIDENTIAL CONVERSIONS 2023

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.

6. APPRAISAL

6.1. Land Use Matters

The proposed change of use of the dwelling to a small HMO (C4 use class) is assessed in relation to local policy H8 and the Residential Conversions SPD.

For properties within an Article 4 Direction area, a density test is applied as follows:

"Planning permission will not normally be granted for a change of use from a dwelling to HMO where the proportion of HMOs (either C4 or sui generis) will result in HMOs representing 25% or more of the residential properties within a circle of 50m radius measured from the application site."

The calculated density of HMOs or converted flats within a 50m radius of the application site is already in excess of the threshold at 28%. The proposal would increase the density to 31% and is as such considered unacceptable.

Furthermore, the gross internal area of the property measures below 120m² which is the minimum size as outlined in the Residential Conversions SPD for a property to be able to support a conversion to HMO. The loss of the central house bathroom further indicates that the property is not suited for use as a HMO, resulting in a loss of family-sized accommodation in the Borough.

Overall, the principle of development is not accepted.

6.2. Character, Design, and Heritage Implications

Policy EN1 states "Applications which affect Listed Buildings will not have an adverse impact on those elements which contribute to their special architectural or historic interest including, where appropriate, their settings." Policy CC7 also outlines relevant design considerations.

The proposed works include no external alterations to the property itself, although the rear elevation contains a number of unauthorised unsympathetic alterations and additions which should be considered within this application as they affect the significance of the heritage asset. No alterations or improvements have been proposed.

The existing internal layout of the property represents the standard house plan of the Victorian period for the middle class and workers' housing. It is therefore in the interest of preserving the historical value of the listed building that the proposed internal alterations are not supported. No information has been submitted to justify the proposed works nor demonstrate how the works would preserve or enhance the historic fabric of the property.

A new highway access and paved driveway are proposed, identified as an emergency vehicle access rather than to provide off-road parking spaces. The proposed driveway is considered harmful to the setting of the listed building which currently has a front garden which was pre-emptively cleared of vegetation to enable development. The property also had a characteristic brick boundary wall which was removed without permission to enable vehicle access for works which have taken place. The removal of the wall is similarly not considered acceptable. Of the other listed buildings in the vicinity, all are characterised by their vegetated front gardens with no vehicle access, apart from the adjoining number 146 Southampton Street, which has an unauthorised vehicle access and should therefore not be considered to set a precedent.

Overall, the proposed works are considered harmful to the listed building and are therefore not accepted.

6.3. Residential Amenity

Policy CC8 requires development to not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of the existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for future occupiers of new residential properties.

There are no residential amenity risks identified as the external works are limited. The change of use from a single-family dwelling to a small HMO would not cause undue levels of noise.

6.4. Biodiversity and Landscaping

Policy EN12 states “On all sites, development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity and geodiversity and should provide a net gain for biodiversity wherever possible.”

Policy EN14 further states “Individual trees, groups of trees, hedges and woodlands will be protected from damage or removal where they are of importance, and Reading’s vegetation cover will be extended.”

The submitted statement states that there is no valuable vegetation on site, however, it is evident that the site had been pre-emptively cleared of trees and vegetation. It is not known what the quality of the removed trees was, nor the species or quality of the removed on-site vegetation. No further information has been submitted to demonstrate that the proposed driveway will not result in harm to the Root Protection Areas of nearby off-site trees.

As such, insufficient information has been submitted to demonstrate that the proposed development will not result in a biodiversity net loss and that off- and on-site vegetation will not be unreasonably harmed or damaged as a result of the proposed works.

7. CONCLUSION

The proposals have been assessed in line with national and local adopted policy as outlined above and is considered not acceptable. There is no identified public benefit which would outweigh the harms identified.

8. RECOMMENDATION

Refuse

Due to the following reasons:

1. The proposed change of use to a small HMO (C4 use class) would exceed the density of HMOs in an Article 4 Direction area and would contribute to the loss of mixed and sustainable communities in Reading contrary to Policy H8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and the Residential Conversion SPD 2023.
2. The property due to its relatively small size is not considered a suitable dwelling to enable the conversion to an HMO and would result in the loss of family-sized accommodation, contrary to Policies H7 and H8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.
3. The proposal by way of its design would result in harm to the Listed Building through unsympathetic and unnecessary internal alterations to facilitate the development. This is contrary to Policy EN1 of the Reading Borough Local Plan and para 205-214 of the NPPF (2023).
4. The proposed driveway by virtue of its design and excessive size, and associated removal of the brick boundary wall, would be harmful to the verdant setting of the Listed Building and the entire terrace as a whole, resulting in a deterioration of its historic value, contrary to Policy EN1 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and para 205-214 of the NPPF (2023).

5. The proposal has failed to demonstrate that there would be no net loss of biodiversity or that a biodiversity net gain would be achieved, through ecological enhancements either on or off site. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policy EN12 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and Para 180 to 194 of the NPPF (2023).
6. The proposal fails to demonstrate no damage to off-site and on-site tree / trees as a result of the proposed new driveway and associated construction activities, resulting in potential loss of amenity trees on a designated 'treed corridor' and within the designated Air Quality Management Area. This is contrary to Policies EN14 and EN15 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and the Reading Borough Council adopted Tree Strategy (2021).