06 September 2023

Reading Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	**PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT**
Ward	Abbey
Planning Application Reference:	230319/FUL and 230320/LBC
Site Address:	101 Oxford Road, Reading, RG1 7UD
Proposed Development	Removal of office carparking from site to allow the construction of one new dwelling in grounds of listed building and alterations to boundary wall
Applicant	Mr Babar Butt
Report author	David Brett
Deadline:	Extension of time agreed on decision to 13/09/2023. A further extension will be required to allow completion of the S106.
Recommendations	Delegate to the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services (ADPTPPS) to i) GRANT full planning permission, subject to the satisfactory completion of a s106 legal agreement or ii) Refuse full planning permission if the legal agreement is not completed by 13/11/2023 (unless officers on behalf of the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services agree to a later date for completion of the legal agreement).
S106 Terms	S106 to secure a contribution of £23,750.00 for the purposes of affordable housing.
Conditions	Planning Permission: *1.* Time Limit – Three Years *2.* Approved Plans *3.* Materials – details to be submitted prior to commencement above ground floor slab level. *4.* Construction Method Statement (To Be Approved) *5.* Landscaping details to be submitted prior to commencement above ground floor slab level. *6.* PD rights removal (Part 1, Classes A, B, C, D & E - extensions, roof extensions/alterations, porches, outbuildings and works within curtilage). *7.* Provision of Cycle Storage (To Be Approved) *8.* SAP Assessment Minor (Design Stage) (To Be Approved) *9.* SAP Assessment Minor (As Built) (To Be Approved) *10.* Biodiversity Enhancements (To Be Approved) *11.* Parking Permits – Notification of full postal address to LPA *12.* Parking Permits – Notification to future occupants of parking restrictions and parking permit entitlement.

	13. Access Closure with Reinstatement *14.* Remove PD rights for conversion to HMO *15.* Mechanical Plant (Noise Assessment Required) *16.* Hours of Construction/Demolition *17.* No Bonfires Listed Building Consent: *1.* Time Limit – Three Years *2.* Approved Plans *3.* Materials – details to be submitted prior to works starting
Informatives	Planning Permission: *1.* Positive and Proactive *2.* Terms and Conditions *3.* Pre-Commencement Conditions *4.* S106 *5.* Terms *6.* Building Control *7.* Complaints about construction *8.* Encroachment *9.* Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) *10.* Parking Permits Listed Building Consent *1.* Positive and Proactive *2.* Terms and Conditions *3.* No works except those expressly consented.

1. Executive Summary

1.1. The proposal is recommended for approval subject to securing a S106 agreement for a financial contribution of £23,750.00 to go towards providing affordable housing elsewhere in the Borough as outlined above and the conditions set out above. Listed Building Consent is also recommended for approval.

1.2. The proposal would provide a family sized dwelling in a sustainable location. The application is recommended for approval.

2. Introduction and Site Description

2.1. The area to the south of 101 Oxford Road is predominantly residential consisting of two to three storey terraced rows. This section of Oxford Road consists of a mix of centre uses at ground floor level, with residential above. The proposal site is very close to Reading Town Centre, bus links and cycle routes.

2.2. The proposal site is located within the Castle Hill / Russell Street / Oxford Road Conservation Area. The main building at 101 Oxford Road is a Grade II Listed Building under the List Entry Name “ROX BOROUGH HOUSE”, List Entry Number 1113545 and the application site forms part of its curtilage. The listing for 101 Oxford Road describes 101 Oxford Road as follows:

> “*OXFORD ROAD (South Side) 1. 5128 No 101 (Rox Borough House) SU 7175 SW 2/537 II GV 2. Circa 1859. 2 storeys, symmetrical . Red brick on basement with 1st floor stone cill band and wood block eaves cornice to slate roof. Coped gables with kneelers. End chimneys. 3 windows on 1st floor, 2 on ground-floor, glazing bar sashes; architrave surrounds and bracketed cornices on ground floor. Steps to 4 panel door, rectangular overlight. Basement openings have cast iron guards with*

honeysuckle ornament. Plain verandah at back. Brick flanking walls with stone cope and modern rails."

2.3. The existing building at 101 Oxford Road is used as an office, with an ancillary car park and amenity space to the rear.

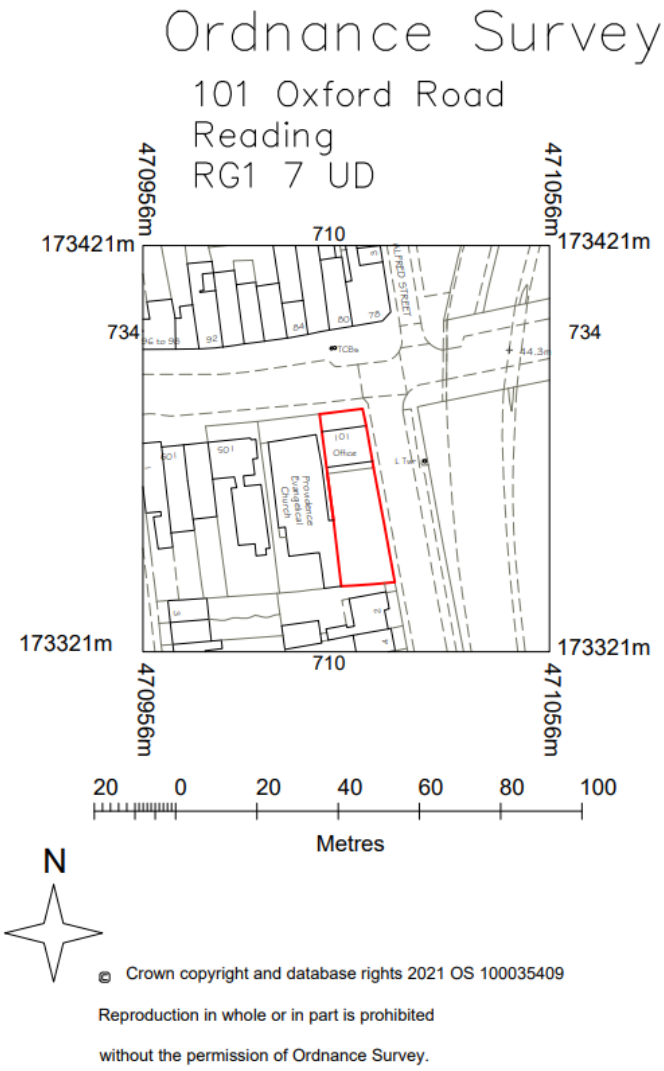
2.4. Providence Evangelical Church on Oxford Road, and 2 Howard Street both adjoin the proposal site and have been designated as Buildings of Townscape Merit within the Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area Appraisal.

2.5. The proposal site is also located within the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). The proposal site also lies in an area subject to an Article 4 which means the conversion of 101 Oxford Road to residential is not permitted development.

2.6. The application was called to Planning Applications Committee by Abbey Ward Councillors due to the following reasons:

- The loss of on-site vehicle parking to the main building at 101 Oxford Road.
- The non-provision of on-site vehicle parking to the proposed dwelling.

2.7. *<u>Location Plan:</u>*



© Crown copyright and database rights 2021 OS 100035409

Reproduction in whole or in part is prohibited

without the permission of Ordnance Survey.

2.8. *Site Photos:*

3. The Proposal

3.1. Full planning permission and Listed Building Consent are sought for the erection of a three-bedroom dwelling to the rear of 101 Oxford Road. The existing area upon which the dwelling is to be constructed is a hard-standing car park, serving the main building at 101 Oxford Road which is used as offices.

3.2. The proposed two-storey detached dwelling would have a frontage along Howard Street. The development would result in the removal of off-street parking to 101 Oxford Road. No replacement off street vehicle parking is proposed for the existing building at 101 Oxford Road, and no off-street vehicle parking is proposed for the new dwelling.

3.3. These applications follow two informal pre-application responses (see paragraphs 4.1 and 4.2 below) provided by the LPA for residential development on the site in 2022. On both occasions the principle of residential development within the site was accepted, provided the development met the policy requirements within the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019. In design terms, the advice provided within the latest pre-app (reference 220523/PRE) recommended a reduction in scheme from one to two dwellings, but also remarked that the overall design and detailing of the development was sympathetic to its surroundings, taking cues from properties on Howard Street. In terms of the impact upon the setting of 101 Oxford Road, the advice provided stated that the removal of the existing car park would enhance the setting of the Listed Building.

3.4. During the course of applications 230319/FUL and 230320/LBC, the scale of the development has been reduced to address officer concerns that the development was excessive in terms of size and scale. This was also to address officer concerns that there was a lack of quality outdoor amenity space to the proposed dwelling. As revised, the proposed footprint and size of the dwelling has been reduced, changing from a five-bed dwelling to a three-bed dwelling. The proposed alterations to the listed boundary wall along Howard Street have also been scaled back to retain the wall as existing and modify the existing vehicular access to become a pedestrian access, incorporating iron railings and hedge planting.

3.5. The following plans have been received (double strikethrough denotes superseded documents):

- Air Quality Assessment: 101 Oxford Road, Reading prepared by Air Quality Consultants – J10/14359A/10/1/F1 (Application 230319/FUL only)
- Schedule of Materials
- Noise Impact Assessment prepared by Clark Saunders Acoustics – AS12906.230118.R1 (Application 230319/FUL only)
- Arboricultural Report prepared by Ridleaves Arboriculture (Application 230319/FUL only)
- Location Plan
- ~~Floor plans, Elevations & Section – As Proposed – 962-101 Rev B~~
- ~~Block plan & Streetscape As Existing – As Proposed – 962-001 Rev B~~
- Heritage, Design & Access Statement

Received on 13/03/2023

- Floor plans, Elevations & Section – As Proposed – 962-101 Rev F
- Block plan & Streetscape As Existing – As Proposed – 962-001 Rev F
- Parking Statement – CJS/23-07-21 (Application 230319/FUL only)

Received on 21/07/2023

- Floor plans, Elevations & Section – As Proposed – 962-101 Rev G

Received on 24/08/2023

4. Planning history

101 Oxford Road (Proposal Site)

4.1. 220523/PRE – Pre-application advice for the loss of office car parking in order to facilitate two residential dwellings – Observations sent on 01/06/2022

4.2. 220113/PRE – Pre-application advice for proposed erection of 2 X 3-bed houses within curtilage of listed building – Observations sent on 09/03/2022

4.3. 181062/LBC – Re-point front garden walls – Application Permitted on 17/08/2018

4.4. 170180/APC – Discharge of Conditions 2 and 3 of planning permission 161659 – Conditions Discharged on 27/04/2017

4.5. 161659/LBC – Re-point and repair damaged sections of the boundary wall located between 101 Oxford Road and 2 Howard Street. – Application Permitted on 31/10/2016

4.6. 091437/FUL – Reconstruction of boundary wall on Howard Street – Application Permitted on 22/12/2009

4.7. 080729/LBC – Alterations to the internal layout of the building and change of use from D1 (Doctors' Surgery) to Sui Generis use (consulting rooms and off ices for Reading Community Welfare Rights Unit) – Application Permitted on 15/09/2008

4.8. 080040/FUL – Change of use from D1 use (Doctors' Surgery) to Sui Generis use (consulting rooms and offices for Reading Community Welfare Rights Unit) – Application Permitted on 15/09/2008

5. Consultations

5.1. A re-consultation of application 230319/FUL was carried out for a period of 21 days from 24/07/2023, expiring on 07/08/2023. A re-consultation of application 230320/LBC was also carried out for a period of 21 days from 01/08/2023, expiring on 22/08/2023.

5.2. The reason for the re-consultation of the application was due to the submission of revised plans that adjusted the scale of the development.

5.3. The following consultation responses were received following the re-consultation:

RBC, Transport Development Control (response to application 230319/FUL)

5.4. The site is located within the Reading Central Area and within Reading's primary shopping area. The site is located on the boundary of Zone 1/Zone 2 of the adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD which is an area at the very heart of Reading Borough, consisting primarily of retail and commercial office developments, with limited residential. The main line railway station and bus interchange is located within the Reading Central Area, while the main shopping centre is situated within walking distance to the east of the site. The Reading Central area also contains the largest proportion of public car parking spaces.

5.5. The site is located on the corner of A329 Oxford Road and Howard Street. The A329 Oxford Road has parking restrictions preventing on-street parking and forms part of the Red Route 'no stopping' corridor. There are also short stay limited waiting bays in close proximity to the site.

5.6. Policy TR5 states that development should provide car parking and cycle parking that is appropriate to the accessibility of locations within the Borough to sustainable transport facilities, particularly public transport. Local parking standards are set out in the RBC, Revised Parking Standards and Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which takes into account the accessibility of the site. In accordance with the adopted standards, a 3-bedroom would require 2 parking spaces.

5.7. When consulted on planning applications for new dwellings, the Highway Authority assesses the proposals on a number of grounds including accessibility and parking requirements. Where proposals are in areas where Waiting Restrictions/Resident Parking Controls exist, and no, or insufficient on-site parking provision is proposed, conditions and/or informatives are imposed to advise that no parking permits will be issued to newly constructed dwellings. This is to avoid adding to the pressures for on-street parking that led to the imposition of the controls in the first place.

5.8. I have reviewed the revised plans (reducing the size of the dwelling to 3 bedrooms) and the parking statement justifying the non-provision of parking in the context of the site's town centre location and access to public transport services. In NPPF terms, the site is highly sustainable.

5.9. The NPPF states that "Development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe." Whilst the new dwelling does not provide parking, there are parking controls and restrictions surrounding the site ensuring that any overspill will not impact on road safety. Any planning consent will also impose conditions/informatives on the address to ensure that the property is not eligible for parking permits, and therefore, any parking associated with the site is not accommodated on the highway. In view of this, there are no transport objections on parking grounds.

5.10. Any disused accesses (existing dropped kerb) must be reinstated to the satisfaction of the Local Highway Authority which will be covered by condition.

5.11. Refuse bins would need to be presented at the front of the property to enable on-street servicing to occur.

5.12. In accordance with the Borough's Parking Standards and Design SPD, a minimum provision 2no. cycle storage spaces should be provided per dwelling. Cycle storage for the dwelling is located in the rear garden area which can be conditioned.

RBC, Natural Environment (response to application 230319/FUL)

5.13. The site has lost a number of trees in recent years from the rear garden (they were growing too close to the boundary wall) hence has lost canopy cover in an area which requires an increase, so any application should seek to provide new tree planting, as was advised at the pre-application stage.

5.14. With reference to the Arboricultural Report ref 19243 - Version 1.0 dated 11th November 2022 from Ridleaves; this confirms the removal of one group of small Sycamore on the west boundary (regardless of development), which I suspect is just regrowth from the Sycamores previously removed (in 2013 without authorisation). I have no objection to their removal and would suggest that steps be taken to prevent their regrowth and potential harm to the wall.

5.15. The report confirms that the Root Protection Area of T1 extends into the site and concluded that it can be protected purely by fencing. However, when comparing the existing and proposed Block plans along with the TPP, it appears that the impingement into the RPA involves conversion of soft landscape (grass) to hard landscape:

5.16. This is not dealt with in the Arb report. Sometimes, small impingements are not deemed to be a concern but in this case, it should be considered for two reasons: 1) the RPA is shown as a theoretical circle, rather than a true RPA reflecting likely root growth restrictions – the wall in this case – and if shown as a polygon of the same area to reflect this, would extend further into the proposed hard landscape area, 2) T1 is a Cherry tree, known for their shallow and surface rooting nature hence more prone to damage from changes in their RPA, especially creation of hard surfacing. I note that there is no parking provision hence this concern could, it seems, be resolved easily by leaving the entire RPA as soft, effectively creating a soft landscape bed in the north-east corner. Otherwise the AIA will need to be reviewed and a brief AMS provided – please liaise with the applicant to confirm how they wish to proceed prior to a decision.

5.17. Indicative hedging is shown on the north and east boundaries, which is positive but further planting, including trees, would be expected given the high priority site criteria and advice given at pre-application stage. It would seem that a few suitably sized trees could be accommodated on the north boundary – details could be secured by condition, but the principle should be confirmed prior to a decision.

5.18. I note that part of the existing wall on the east boundary is to be removed/reduced, hence would allow view of any hedging, hence allow street scene benefit. This assumes, of course, that this is acceptable from a heritage point of view given the official listing entry appears to mention the walls ROX BOROUGH HOUSE, Non Civil Parish – 1113545 | Historic England

5.19. In conclusion, it is likely that the development could be supported in tree & landscape terms if satisfactory responses are received to the queries above.

RBC, Environmental Protection (response to application 230319/FUL)

5.20. The noise assessment proposes suitable glazing to ensure internal noise levels will be acceptable. The ventilation strategy in the assessment does not appear to be consistent with the proposal in the application to install mechanical ventilation and a heat pump. Can this be clarified?

5.21. <u>Air Quality - Increased exposure</u>

5.22. The assessment demonstrates that the air pollutant levels at the site will be below the objective limit values therefore no further mitigation or assessment will be required.

5.23. <u>Construction and demolition phases</u>

5.24. We have concerns about potential noise, dust and bonfires associated with the construction (and demolition) of the proposed development and possible adverse impact on nearby residents (and businesses).

5.25. Fires during construction and demolition can impact on air quality and cause harm to residential amenity. Burning of waste on site could be considered to be harmful to the aims of environmental sustainability.

RBC, Ecology (response to application 230319/FUL)

5.26. The proposals are unlikely to affect protected species or priority habitats and as such there are no ecological objections to the application.

5.27. However, in accordance with paragraph 180 of the NPPF, which states that “opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged” a condition should be set to ensure that enhancements for wildlife are provided within the development. This part of Reading supports a population of swifts whose numbers have declined in recent years in part due to a lack of nesting sites which are found in buildings and the development represents an opportunity for habitat enhancement to also benefit bats and insects.

Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee (response to application 230320/LBC)

5.28. We note that the revised plans address many of our detailed objections as set out below:

- The proposed house is now smaller and does not impinge beyond the existing car park.
- The hipped roof on the north elevation as well as the reduced size improved the proposed streetscape.
- The revised building line is an improvement.
- The rear dormer has been replaced by a skylight.

5.29. Most importantly, the revised proposal will still damage the setting of the listed building albeit to a lesser extent and therefore fails to comply with policies EN1 and EN6. It cannot be seen in isolation from plans the owner may have for 101 Oxford Road itself. 101 Oxford Road is listed with many original interior and exterior features. It is currently let on a lease as an office with car parking but the Design, Access & Heritage Statement (para 1.03) says that this is shortly coming to an end.

5.30. The proposal is for a building that is very similar to 2 Howard Street rather than a building that would complement and enhance 101 Oxford Road and its setting within the Russell Street/Castle Hill/Oxford Road Conservation Area and therefore fails to comply with policies EN1, EN3 or EN6.

5.31. The street scene view shows that the new property is slightly taller than its neighbour. The roof line is not level with those of its Howard Street neighbours. The impact is reduced as the house is now smaller.

5.32. Although the gable end to the north has been replaced by a hipped roof and the size of the building reduced, the additional window squeezed into the front gable and differing window heights mean that it jars rather than gels with No 2.

5.33. The applicant does not mention the materials for exterior doors. Quality of materials particularly the brick should be secured by condition.

Public/local consultation and comments received

5.34. 3 neighbouring properties were consulted by letter and one site notice was displayed at the application site.

5.35. One letter of objection was received to the application. As a result, the following concerns were raised (as summarised):

- The proposal would harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area and have an adverse impact on the listed building and its walled garden within the conservation area.

6. Legal context

6.1. 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).

6.2. Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special interest which it possesses.

6.3. Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority in the exercise of its functions to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

6.4. In this regard, the NPPF states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the Local Plan 2019 according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).

6.5. Accordingly, the latest NPPF and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

6.6. <u>Reading Borough Local Plan 2019</u>

Policies:

CC1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

CC2 Sustainable Design and Construction

CC7 Design and the Public Realm

CC8 Safeguarding Amenity

EN1 Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment

EN3 Enhancement of Conservation Areas

EN4 Locally Important Heritage Assets

EN12 Biodiversity and the Green Network

EN14 Trees, Hedges and Woodland

EN15 Air Quality

H3 Affordable Housing

H5 Standards for New Housing

H10 Private and Communal Outdoor Space

TR3 Access, Traffic and Highways-Related Matters

TR5 Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging

6.7. Supplementary Planning Documents

Affordable Housing SPD (2021

Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011)

Planning Obligations Under s106 (2015)

Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2019)

Tree Strategy (2021)

6.8. Other Local Documents

Russell Street / Castle Hill / Oxford Road Conservation Area Appraisal (March 2020)

7. Appraisal

7.1. The main considerations are:

- Land Use Principles
- Design and Heritage
- Transport
- Standards for New Housing
- Safeguarding Amenity
- Affordable Housing
- Natural Environment and Ecology
- Air Quality

Land Use Principles

7.2. The proposal site is located within an urban area of Reading. The development proposes a three-bedroom dwelling, where Policy H3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan identifies a need in the borough for family sized housing.

7.3. The principle of a new dwelling is acceptable in this location, provided the development meets the policy requirements of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

Design and Heritage

7.4. In accordance with Policy CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019); 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. Development is assessed based on its layout, landscaping, density, scale, architectural detail and materials.

7.5. Further to Policy CC7, development must respond positively to their local context and create or reinforce local character and distinctiveness, including protecting and enhancing the historic environment of the Borough and providing value to the public realm.

7.6. As the proposal site is located within the Castle Hill / Russell Street / Oxford Road Conservation Area and within the curtilage of a Grade II Listed Building, the development is also assessed against Policies EN1 and EN3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

7.7. In accordance with Policy EN1 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019); all proposals are expected to protect and where possible enhance their historic setting and avoid harm in the first instance. Development must not have an adverse impact on the setting of Listed Buildings. Concerning Conservation Areas, Policy EN3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) requires development to conserve and enhance the special interest, character and architecture of Conservation Areas.

7.8. As existing, the land upon which the dwelling is proposed is a hard standing car park serving 101 Oxford Road, offering little in the way of visual interest to the Conservation Area. The garden area immediately to the rear of 101 Oxford Road consist of soft landscaping, with five trees within the site that are considered to contribute positively both to the setting of the Grade II Listed Building and the Conservation Area. When viewing the rear of the site from Oxford Road, the trees along the boundary are considered to make an important contribution to its setting. The importance of trees along Howard Street is emphasised within the Castle Hill / Russell Street / Oxford Road Conservation Area Appraisal (2020), as they provide an essential barrier to traffic noise.

7.9. During these planning applications, the development has been revised to reduce the scale of the proposed development. This is due to concerns raised by officers regarding the size and scale of the development and its impact upon the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and the setting of the Grade II Listed Building at 101 Oxford Road. There were also concerns that the proposed dwelling would not provide suitable private amenity space to future occupants due to the size and layout of the proposed garden. With the main issue being the size of the footprint of the proposed dwelling within the plot and its location.

7.10. As revised, the footprint of the proposed dwelling has been reduced from 75m^2 to 49m^2. This reduction in footprint has increased the quality and size of private amenity space provided to the three-bedroom dwelling. The reduction in size and scale of the proposed dwelling has also resulted in a reduction in the number of bedrooms proposed from five bedrooms to three.

7.11. The reduction in size and scale of the proposed dwelling has increased the separation distance of the proposed dwelling to the rear elevation of 101 Oxford Road from 18m to 22m. This has resulted in a reduction of the impact that the development would have upon the setting of the Grade II Listed Building, whilst also improving the size and quality of the private amenity space to future occupants of the proposed dwelling.

7.12. When viewed from Oxford Road, the development would be largely obscured by the apple tree and cherry tree along the side boundary to 101 Oxford Road, (noting that it cannot be guaranteed that these will always remain). The development would be viewed prominently when looking north from Howard Street. Proposed street scene elevation drawings have been provided demonstrating that the ridge height would be no higher than 2 Howard Street and 101 Oxford Road directly south of the proposed dwelling. The

proposed dwelling is also smaller in size and scale when compared with 4 and 4a Howard Street to the south of the proposal site. The proposed dwelling does not go beyond the existing building line along Howard Street. The development is therefore considered to integrate comfortably with the existing dwellings along Howard Street.

7.13. In terms of appearance, it is evident that the design of the proposed dwelling has taken cues from 2 Howard Street. For instance, with the front gable proposed to the right of the dwelling, the arrangement of windows and doors, and in the inclusion of patterned brickwork. 2 Howard Street is described within the Castle Hill / Russell Street / Oxford Road Conservation Area Appraisal (2020) as an attractive 1850-70s single-family home of substantial size with a well-tended front garden that lends itself positively to the street scene.

7.14. Alterations were originally proposed to the listed side boundary wall to 101 Oxford Road along Howard Street. These alterations included the lowering of the height of the wall directly in front of the dwelling and continuing the wall to the side boundary to 2 Howard Street. Officers raised concerns regarding these changes as the side boundary wall to 101 Oxford Road is considered important to the character of 101 Oxford Road and Howard Street as evident by the repair and restoration work to this boundary wall within the planning history of the site. The revised proposals now importantly show the boundary wall to 101 Oxford Road will remain intact, which is an essential component to the setting and character of 101 Oxford Road and one which serves to define the historic curtilage.

7.15. As revised, the only alterations to the side boundary wall include the addition of gate railings and a hedge. Essentially converting the existing vehicular access to a pedestrian access for the proposed dwelling. The existing boundary wall also serves to provide privacy to future occupants of the proposed dwelling, in particular the private amenity space to the side of the proposed dwelling. Cast iron railings are an important feature of Howard Street, as explained in the Castle Hill / Russell Street / Oxford Road Conservation Area Appraisal (2020) within section 6.3.4 (Area Analysis).

7.16. The revised proposals involve the retention of the existing apple and cherry trees and provision of further soft landscaping in place of the existing hardstanding. This, together with the retained boundary wall will serve to retain the historic boundaries and enhance the parts of the historic curtilage not being built on which were formerly garden prior to the introduction of the car park.

7.17. In accordance with paragraph 202 of the NPPF; “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”. Any perceived damage to the setting of 101 Oxford Road in this case is considered less than substantial harm. The presence of a two-storey building within the curtilage of 101 Oxford Road of course has a significant impact upon its setting, with the loss of openness between 101 Oxford Road and the side of 2 Howard Street. This impact of this harm, however, is considered to be outweighed by the benefits of the development in providing a family sized dwelling, enhanced landscaping including new tree planting, removal of parked vehicles from within the curtilage and contributions towards Affordable Housing. The benefit of providing a family sized dwelling is also considered to outweigh any disbenefit to the loss of vehicle parking to the main building at 101 Oxford Road given the highly sustainable location.

7.18. It is considered reasonable to secure material details via condition, including the details of the railings to the front boundary to ensure that the detailing of the proposed dwelling respects the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

7.19. Subject to conditions, the development is therefore considered in accordance with Policies CC7, EN1 and EN3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

Transport

7.20. The proposed development would result in the loss of a car park, serving 101 Oxford Road which was last used as offices. It has not been demonstrated how many vehicle parking spaces the existing car park has a capacity for. On the day of the site visit, three vehicles were parked within the car park. Transport Development Control have stated within their consultation response for application 230319 that the existing car park has the capacity for four vehicles. As part of this development, no off-street vehicle parking is proposed for the new dwelling, and the existing parking provision to 101 Oxford Road will not be replaced. On that basis, the application has been considered against the loss of parking proposed to 101 Oxford Road, and the car free residential development.

7.21. Within the initial consultation response from Transport Development Control, the agent was requested to provide justification for the non-provision of vehicle parking associated with the family sized dwelling.

7.22. The justification for the non-provision of parking to proposed dwelling cited the location of the development in terms of its location to Reading Town Centre, bus links, and proximity to Reading train station. It is also highlighted that there are public parking spaces close to the proposal site.

7.23. Essentially, it has been identified that the proposal site is within a highly sustainable location, with good public transport links and is in very close proximity to local amenities.

7.24. As per the updated consultation response from Transport Development Control, paragraph 111 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021) (NPPF) states that; "Development should only be prevented on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residential cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe."

7.25. With regards to highway safety, there are parking controls and restrictions within the surrounding area, therefore any overspill would not impact highway safety. It is the view of officers that due to the highly sustainable location of both the proposed dwelling and the existing office at 101 Oxford Road, the non-provision of on-site vehicle parking spaces is considered acceptable. This is due to the location of the development in relation to local amenities and the availability of sustainable transport alternatives, such as bus routes, cycle routes, and Reading train station.

7.26. Conditions have been suggested by Transport Development Control concerning the submission of a Construction Method Statement, notifications to future occupants regarding parking permits, and for the cycle parking to be provided as specified on the approved plans. The inclusion of these conditions is considered reasonable by officers.

7.27. The development is therefore considered in accordance with Policies TR1 and TR3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

Standards for New Housing

7.28. As this application seeks a new dwelling, policy H5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan is applicable.

7.29. Policy CC3 (Adaptation to Climate Change) requires that development proposal incorporate sustainable design practices to take account of climate change. Policy H5 (Standards for New Housing) requires that all new housing is be built to the higher level of water efficiency standards under Building Regulations and achieves at a minimum a 19% improvement in the dwelling emission rates above the Building Regulations standards and details of this in the form of design and construction stage SAP reviews can be secured by way of conditions.

7.30. The gross internal floor space of the proposed dwelling is 113m^2. The proposed gross internal area therefore exceeds the minimum gross internal floor areas and storage standards for a three-bed, three-storey, six-person dwelling of 108m^2.

7.31. Therefore, the proposed development is considered to be in accordance with Policy H5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

7.32. An Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP) is proposed to the rear wall of the proposed dwelling. As per the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2019); ASHPs are listed under the options for energy efficiency, renewable and low carbon energy sources. ASHPs can be used as a complete solution for room heating using the same distribution system as a ground source heat pump or a traditional system.

Safeguarding Amenity

7.33. In accordance with Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019), development is required to not cause harm to the living conditions of existing residents within the locality and to provide acceptable living conditions and amenities for future occupiers of the development. The specific considerations in this instance are privacy, overlooking, visual dominance or overbearing development, and noise and disturbance.

7.34. The nearest residential property to the development is 2 Howard Street, which received planning permission in 2022 for conversion to a 9-bed large HMO. The approved conversion of 2 Howard Street to a large HMO has commenced but has not been completed. The proposed dwelling is not considered to result in harm to the living conditions of existing or future occupants of 2 Howard Street. The proposed dwelling would not result in harmful overlooking, loss of privacy or appear overbearing to occupants of 2 Howard Street.

7.35. In terms of the residential amenity of the wider surrounding area, the development would not result in harm to the living conditions of other residents along Howard Street, Zinzan Street or Oxford Road.

7.36. With regards to the living conditions of future occupants of the development, future occupants would not be harmfully overlooked, there would be suitable levels of privacy and outlook to habitable rooms and an acceptable area of private garden space would be provided.

7.37. Therefore, the proposed development is considered in accordance with Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

Affordable Housing

7.38. In accordance with Policy H3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan; "Residential development will make appropriate contribution towards affordable housing to meet the needs of Reading:

- (…) on sites of 1 – 4 dwellings, a financial contribution will be made that will enable the equivalent of 10% of the housing to be provided as affordable housing elsewhere in the Borough."

7.39. The applicant has agreed to enter into a legal agreement to secure a financial contribution if planning were to be granted.

7.40. A Section 106 Legal Agreement has been drawn up, which secures a financial contribution of £23,750 for the purposes of providing affordable housing elsewhere within the Borough. The figure has been calculated based on the valuations of the existing dwelling and the proposed additional dwelling from two Estate Agents. As per Policy H3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan and the Affordable Housing SPD (2021); for sites of 1-4 dwellings, where the contribution required by policy H3 is 10%, this will equate to 5% of GDV of the development.

7.41. This is considered acceptable and complies with Policy H3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan and the Affordable Housing SPD (2021).

Natural Environment and Ecology

7.42. The development proposes the retention of the five existing trees to the rear of 101 Oxford Road, with the planting of three new trees within the rear garden of the proposed dwellings. The species selected (Cherry trees) for the proposed dwelling have not been agreed by the Natural Environment Team as there is an over-dominance of this genus in

the borough, as per paragraph 3.37 of the Tree Strategy (2021). Cherry trees are the second most common tree in the borough, with Lime trees being the most common.

7.43. Nevertheless, the Natural Environment Team have confirmed that details of landscaping can be secured via condition applied to any approval of the application for full planning permission.

7.44. With regards to Ecology, there are no ecological objections to the development. In accordance with paragraph 180 of the NPPF, however, the development is encouraged to incorporate opportunities to enhance biodiversity. Therefore, a condition has been suggested by RBC Ecology to secure details of biodiversity enhancements prior to first occupation of the development.

Air Quality

7.45. This proposal has been considered against Reading Borough Local Plan policy EN15, as the proposal site is within an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). As demonstrated in the policy, this proposal does not meet the requirements for an Air Quality Assessment (AQA) and is considered not enough of a detrimental impact air quality to warrant such an assessment due to the size and scale of the proposal.

8. Equality implications

8.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

8.2. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation. It is considered that there is no indication or evidence that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular application.

9. Conclusion & planning balance

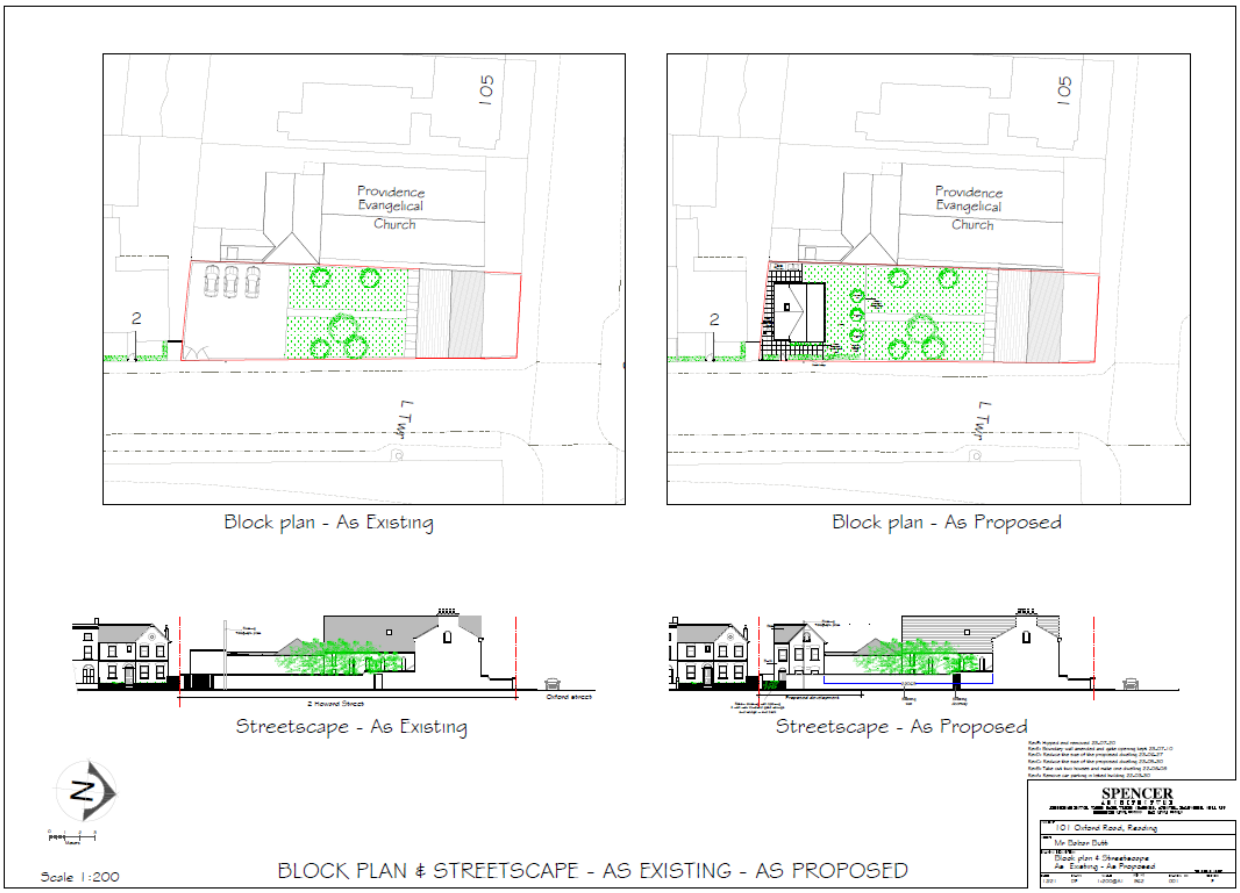
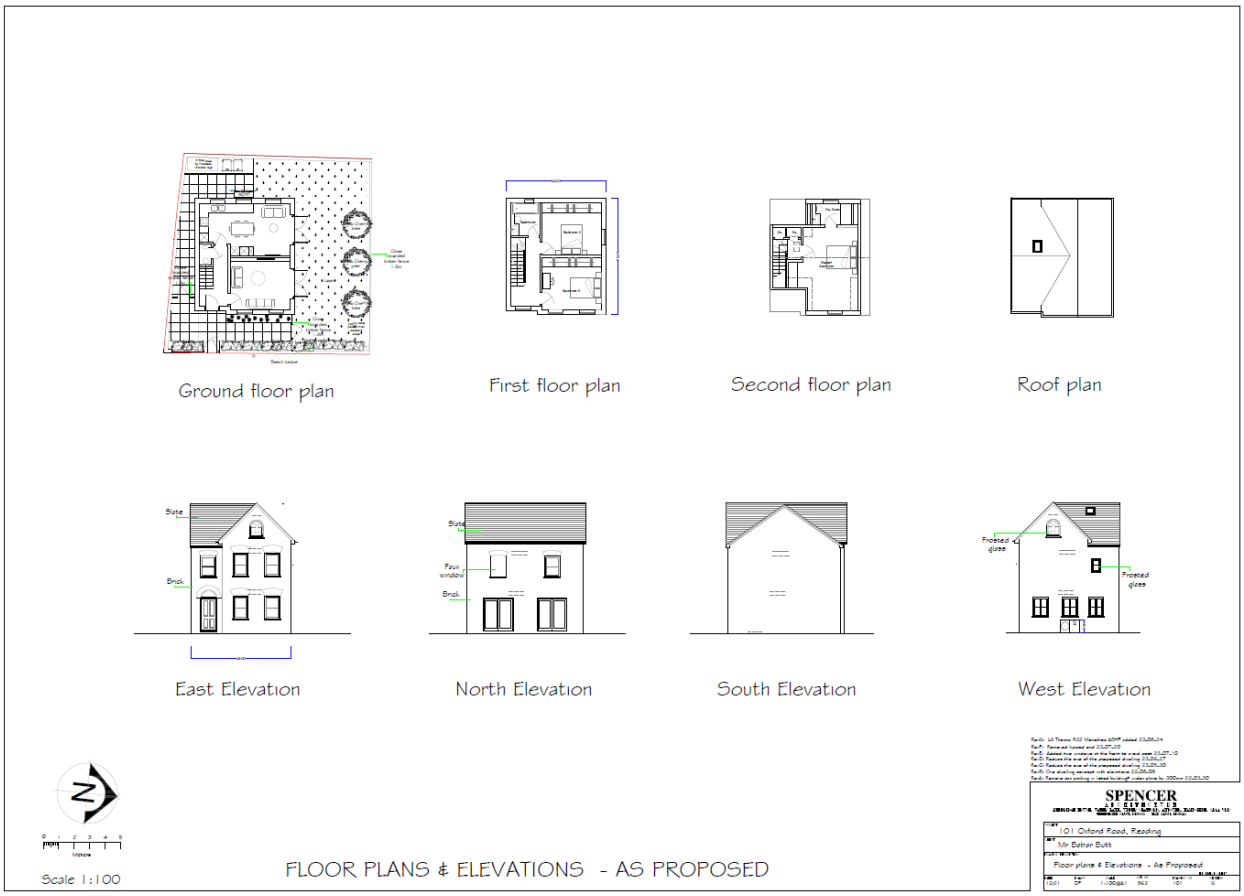
9.1 As with all applications considered by the Local Planning Authority, the application is required to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise, as per Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

9.2 Any harmful impacts of the proposed development are required to be weighed against the benefits in the context of national and local planning policies, as detailed in the appraisal above. This includes balancing the benefits of the proposal against the less than substantial harm identified in respect of heritage assets. Having gone through this process officers consider that the benefits of the proposal including the provision of a family sized dwelling, enhanced landscaping including new tree planting, removal of parked vehicles from within the curtilage and contribution towards Affordable Housing are sufficient to tip the balance in favour of the proposal.

9.3 It is considered that officers have applied a suitable planning balance when reaching this conclusion. As such, this application is recommended for approval subject to the conditions as outlined above.

Plans & Appendices

Block Plan & Streetscape – As Existing – As Proposed



Proposed Floor Plans and Elevations