

Planning & Heritage Statement

185A Oxford Road, Reading, Berkshire – RG1 7UZ

Introduction

This statement has been prepared to support the 'FULL planning permission' application for change of use of first floor from previously known use as academy to residential arranged into a 2-no. studio flats.

Site Description

The application site lies within Russell Street/ Castle Hill Conservation area however, the property is not a listed building.

The application site is located on A329 Oxford Road, a main artery in the city of Reading. Oxford Road is a single carriageway road with restricted on street parking. The road is a main public route into and around Reading city centre.

The street scene comprises of a variety of uses with a mixture of modern & traditional building mostly residential and with mixed used commercial on the ground floor offering retail, takeaways, restaurants etc. This gives a varied character to the area.

Oxford Road mainly comprises of two or three storey terraced properties with commercial units on Ground floor and residential dwellings or office use on top floors. Oxford Road buildings have been built in a mix of style and use of range of materials such as facing brick work and render. Some of the buildings have traditional architectural details representing their age while the modern building with fully or partially glazed facades give it a more varied appearance. The streets consist of mixed use, with commercial and residential properties.

Relevant Planning Policies

The following planning policies are taken into consideration for the above-mentioned proposal;

- Reading Borough Local Plan (Nov. 2019)
CC1: (PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT), CC6: ACCESSIBILITY AND THE INTENSITY OF DEVELOPMENT, CC7: DESIGN AND THE PUBLIC REALM and EN1: PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT
- Residential Conversions Supplementary Planning Document (Mar. 2023)
TR5, CC8, H8 - The provision of outdoor cycle storage
(H8, H10, H11, EN1, EN4): Sufficient and suitable refuse containers provision
(CC8, H8): The provision of Natural light
(CC8, H8): Internal Floor Space

Design

Design is limited to a solution of making efficient use of the existing available floor space. There have been few physical alterations internally that were required to convert the property to use as a self-contained studio flat. The basic design principal was to retain as many original features of the existing building by which the applicant has been successful keeping that approach.

Layout of Accommodation

The flats are arranged making the maximum use of the available floor space to produce 2 No. self-contained studio flats achieving average floor area of 40sqm. Access to the existing flat located on second floor is through an existing hallway through the main entrance door located at the front on ground floor.

The minimum gross internal area (GIA) standards are set out within the DCLG's technical housing standard, and the proposal complies with these standards.

The applicant has successfully provided the external windows to all habitable rooms, such as living rooms and bedrooms.

Transport & Highway Impact

This site is located within zone 2 of the council's adopted parking standards. The site benefits from abundance of public transport which includes bus stops approximately few minutes away from the application site.

No car parking has been proposed for the application site, as the site benefits from abundance of public transport this includes buses and West Reading train station approximately 5 minutes of walk away from the application site.

Town Centre is approximately 0.3 mile and within walking and cycling distance from the application site and residents of the proposed residential units will feel encouraged to use public transport or cycles other than the private cars.

Considering above information, it is deemed that the proposed development will actually reduce the number of trips as compared to the previously known use (Academy) hence, no adverse impact to the Transport and highways.

Waste & Re-cycle Bins collection

The existing waste and recycling bins are located at the front entrance serving the existing flat and therefore with the provision of additional bins new flats will be served to use the existing refuse and re-cycling bin area.

The proposed refuse and storage area is provided at the front forecourt which is practical on collection days and would be in keeping with the current arrangement of bins in the street. This is therefore, considered to be an adequate arrangement for convenience to occupiers and refuse collectors.

Bike Store

A secure cycle bunker is provided to the front forecourt of the building this can easily provide the secure covered bike parking 4 bikes.

Contamination Risks

To the best of our knowledge, there is no risk of contamination as the application site has never been used for the storage of hazardous materials therefore the proposal will not invite any sort of contamination risks.

Risk of Flooding

The Site falls within very low risk of flooding as per Environment agency (flood map for planning rivers and sea). The proposal is for the change of use of an existing space, therefore, we believe that Environmental agency will not object the proposal.

Heritage Statement

This is acknowledged that the application site is within the Russell Street/Castle Street Conservation area and the 185A Oxford Road was built in early Victorian circa 1840-1853 time. The historic development of the site and surrounding buildings has been explained in length within the Russell Street/Castle Hill conservation area appraisal produced by the council. The Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area was last appraised in 2004. A later appraisal in 2020 acknowledged that the Conservation Area was placed on Historic England's listing of "Heritage at Risk" at the end of 2018. Whilst considering the sensitivity of the conservation area, the objective is to respect the character of the building whilst improving the existing available space, so it is fit to be occupied for the residential use.

It is proposed to make internal changes to the building in the form of internal alterations and refurbishment works to bring the space up to date with a new residential use.

As the building lies within the Russell Street/ Castle Hill conservation area, a considerate approach is expected to recognise its historic and architectural importance as part of this designated area and the general townscape, as regards the proposal is successful in keeping in line with that approach, the proposed changes will not harm any elements of the building neither will alter the townscape other than reusing the existing space for residential purpose.

The proposed development therefore satisfies the requirement of S69 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 which requires the conservation area to be preserved or enhanced.

Conclusion

In accordance with the above assessment, it is considered that the proposal is consistent with the adopted Reading Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2008) CS15 (Location, Accessibility, Density and Housing Mix), Reading Borough Local Development Framework Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012). Therefore, the application should be recommended for grant of planning permission.