

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Caversham

App Ref: PL/24/1098 Full planning permission

Address: 10B BRIDGE STREET, CAVERSHAM, READING, RG4 8AA

Proposal: Partial demolish of rear extension and new rear extension to create ground floor flat and shop and 5 bedroom HMO to first and second floor. Shop access door position changed with access ramp.

Applicant: Nathan Crook

Received date: 2024-08-22

Target Decision date: 2025-03-14 (EOT)

Case Officer: Marcelina Rejwerska

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site comprises a mid-terrace two storey property on the west side of Bridge Street in Caversham. The existing use of the site is commercial on the ground floor with a 2-bedroom self-contained flat on the upper floors. The site is within the Caversham District Centre (RL3) and is identified as a key frontage within that centre. It is also within an Air Quality Management Area.

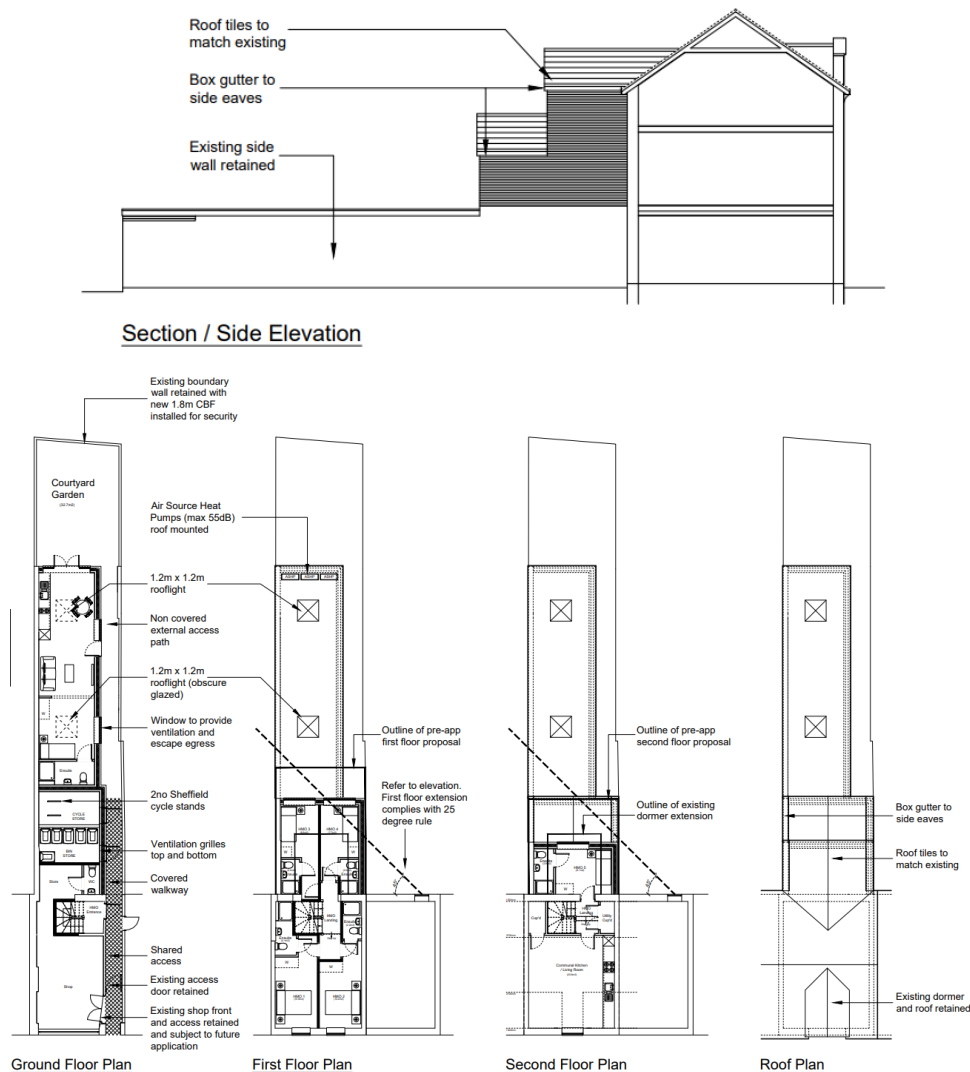
The application site is within the St Peters Conservation Area. It is also located within both Flood Zones 2 and 3, within 19m of the River Thames at the nearest point. The surrounding area is commercial in nature, with properties in varying character. Residential uses on the upper floors are also commonplace.



Left: Application site as seen from Bridge Street. Right: View from Reading Bridge looking towards Caversham District Centre.

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Planning permission is sought for partial demolition of the ground floor to create a new covered walkway from the front to the back of the site, in order to enable partial conversion and redevelopment of the rear of the site to create 1x 1-bedroom flat, and internal refuse storeroom and secure cycle storeroom. The proposal also includes conversion of the upstairs flat to a 5-bedroom HMO, facilitated by a rear two storey extension. The initial proposal also included shopfront alterations, but these have been omitted from the proposal following feedback (discussed in Para 6.2.).



2.1. Information submitted:

Planning Statement
BHD-0183-E100 Existing Site Plan and Location
BHD-0183-E101 Existing Floor Plans
BHD-0183-E102 Existing Elevations
BHD-0183-P100 Proposed Block Plan
BHD-0183-P104 Floor Details
Received by the LPA on 22 August 2024

BHD-0183-P103A HMO Details
BHD-0183-FRA Flood Risk Assessment

Received by the LPA on 8 November 2024

Officer note: The additional information below was submitted to resolve any pre-commencement conditions while the S106 legal agreement was being prepared.

BHD-0183-P101C – Proposed Plans
BHD-0183-P102C – Proposed Elevations
Received by the LPA on 7 January 2025

BHD-0183-105A – Planning Condition Notes
Received by the LPA on 8 January 2025

NALPRO201124.01 Noise Impact Assessment, Noise Assessments Ltd, dated 13 January 2025
Received by the LPA on 14 January 2025

BHD-0183-P106 – Traffic Management Plan
Acoustic Report Compliance Summary
Received by the LPA on 24 February 2025

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

PL/24/0417 - Partial demolish of rear extension and new rear extension to create 7-bedroom HMO. Shop access door position changed with access ramp. Application withdrawn following case officer feedback that proposal is an overdevelopment of the site.

4. CONSULTATIONS

The following were consulted:

- **RBC Transport Development Control**
 - As per the previous application there is no off-road parking associated with this site. There are extensive parking restrictions in place in the vicinity of the site. The Council's residential parking permit scheme also operates in the area. Under the Borough's current parking standards, this proposal would generate additional pressure for parking in the area. There should be an assumption that any future occupants of the proposed HMO will not be issued with resident or visitor parking permits which would be covered by condition and an informative applied. This will ensure that the development does not harm the existing amenities of the neighbouring residential properties by adding to the already high level of on street car parking in the area.
 - Given the site's location, a CMS will be required to ensure there is no disruption or impact on the highway and to pedestrians.
 - Bin storage should comply with Manual for Streets and British Standard 5906: 2005 for Waste Management in Buildings and should be located no further than 15m from the access point of the site to avoid the stationing of service vehicles on the carriageway for excessive periods. Plans illustrate bin storage adjacent to the cycle store. Details of how the refuse will be presented for collection has been provided but confirmation should be sought from the Council's refuse team to agree arrangements are acceptable.
 - Cycle storage requested to be amended – *proposed plans have been amended in line with Transport Comments.*
 - *Officer note: The applicant has since submitted a Construction Method Statement which has been agreed by the Transport Development Control team and therefore a compliance condition is recommended.*

- **RBC Environmental Health**

- Noise assessment required due to residential use of the upper floors and the general high noise level on the site.
- *Officer note: A noise assessment was submitted by the applicant which documented unacceptable internal noise levels with windows open. The applicant has prepared an additional statement which outlines the proposed use of MVHR to allow adequate ventilation without the need to open external windows. Therefore, the initial pre-commencement condition requiring the submission of a noise assessment has been amended to require the submission of the details of the MVHR plant prior to its installation.*

- **RBC Waste Services**

- We have historically had a lot of problems with bins being left out on the pavement causing an obstruction on Bridge Street, Caversham and at the end of last year all household waste bins were removed from this section of Bridge Street and domestic properties reverted to a waste sack collection. As this development has space for internal bin storage, I would be happy for them to have a bin collection but if we can write a planning condition or anything that emphasises the importance of returning the bins to the store after collection – that would be useful.
- The bins must be stored in the bin store area and only presented for collection no earlier than 7pm the night before collection and no later than 6am on the day of. Bins must be removed from the highway promptly after they have been emptied on the day of collection. The bins must be presented on the pavement for collection – crews would not retrieve the bins directly from the bin store.

- **RCAAC** – No comments received.

- **GS Ecology** – Proposal must include integrated bat and bird boxes. It may be worth pointing out that we recommend the use of universal nesting bricks which can be used by a variety of bird species

- *Officer note: The applicant has amended the proposed plans in line with the above feedback.*

All nearby properties were consulted. Two objections received citing concerns relating to:

- Unsuitable location for HMO.
- Detrimental impact on nearby businesses.
- No parking.
- Waste issues in the area.
- Anti-social behaviour in the area.
- Potential noise and nuisance issues due to high turnover of occupants.
- Not in keeping with neighbouring properties which are business related.

Comments received from CADRA:

This is a significant building in a sensitive area, forming the gateway to Caversham and lying within St Peters Conservation Area. It retains the original brickwork which is important to the character of the area and represents an important opportunity to enhance the CA. The Planning Statement refers to a Design & Access Statement but this is not shown and no Heritage Statement is provided. Despite some minor changes, the application represents over development and will detract from the Conservation Area. Refuse on Bridge Street is a regular problem with bins left out on the pavement and piles of rubbish left which severely detracts from the CA and the entrance to Caversham. The six bins mentioned will block the pavement impeding pedestrians. We note that the managing agent will be responsible for putting the bins out but must also be responsible for bringing them back in promptly. The positioning of the units will result in noise and disturbance. CADRA objects to this application.

Officer note: The above concerns are discussed within the Appraisal section of this report.

5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

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.

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

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC1: PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
CC4: DECENTRALISED ENERGY
CC5: WASTE MINIMISATION AND STORAGE
CC7: DESIGN AND THE PUBLIC REALM
CC8: SAFEGUARDING AMENITY
EN3: ENHANCEMENT OF CONSERVATION AREAS
EN16: POLLUTION AND WATER RESOURCES
EN17: NOISE GENERATING EQUIPMENT
EN18: FLOODING AND DRAINAGE
H1: PROVISION OF HOUSING
H2: DENSITY AND MIX
H3: AFFORDABLE HOUSING
H5: STANDARDS FOR NEW HOUSING
H8: RESIDENTIAL CONVERSIONS
H10: PRIVATE AND COMMUNAL OUTDOOR SPACE
TR1: ACHIEVING THE TRANSPORT STRATEGY
TR5: CAR AND CYCLE PARKING AND ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING
RL3: VITALITY AND VIABILITY OF SMALLER CENTRES

SPD

Affordable Housing (2021)
Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)
Residential Conversions (2013)

Other documents

St Peters Conservation Area Appraisal 2018

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

The NPPF (2024) states that LPAs should “encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value”. The NPPF definition of ‘previously developed land’ excludes private residential gardens in built up areas. Therefore, it is clear that the priority for development should be on previously developed land, in particular vacant and derelict sites and buildings.

The site comprises a ground floor retail unit which is currently vacant, and a first floor 2-bedroom flat which is also vacant. The site is a primary frontage within the Caversham District Centre (RL3), and the proposal will result in a reduced footprint of the commercial ground floor use. This however, is not considered harmful, as the retained space will remain functional and will not impede the use of the unit for commercial purposes, aligned with Policy RL3. Introduction of new or intensified residential uses is also not considered contrary to Policy RL3.

6.2. Housing mix and density

Policy H2 outlines the indicative densities for residential development in Reading and the factors which inform appropriate densities. Policy H5 is also relevant and sets out the standards for all new residential accommodation, including the minimum space standards.

Policy H8 sets out requirements for residential conversions to self-contained flats or HMOs, however, no specific guidance is given for conversion of a flat to HMO. Any relevant guidance relating to HMOs has been applied in the assessment of this application, including Appendix 4 (Checklist) of the Residential Conversions SPD.

The proposal comprises conversion of a 2-bedroom flat to a 5-bedroom HMO, and the creation of a new 1-bedroom flat on the ground floor. The mix and density are considered acceptable in this urban and dense location, and the loss of a 2-bedroom flat is not considered harmful in light of an increase to 2x residential units. The internal space created meets the minimum space standards, and the HMO is provided with a good quality communal room. Conditions are recommended to secure details of an HMO management plan and to ensure the communal room is retained for communal use.

The housing density is therefore considered acceptable in this case, in line with Policy H2 and H8 of the Reading Local Plan.

6.3. Character and design

The NPPF (Para 131) sets out that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. Policy CC7 requires all development to be of high-quality design and maintain and enhance the character and appearance of the surrounding area. Policy EN3 requires development in conservation areas to conserve and enhance the special interest, character, and architecture of conservation areas. It also requires development in conservation areas to make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

There are minimal external alterations proposed to the front elevation. The proposal initially included alterations to the shopfront to improve its appearance and to enhance the conversation area. However, the applicant has decided to do this separately at a later stage to allow more time and consideration for a sympathetic design. As such, the shopfront is no longer relevant to this proposal.

At the rear, a two-storey extension is proposed. This has been considerably scaled down, in line with pre-application advice from planning officers, and is now considered appropriately scaled to prevent appearing overbearing and out of kilter with the building line. The rear extension will be visible from The Griffin car park at the rear of the site; however, this is not considered harmful to the character or appearance of the conservation area.

The proposed layout of the ground floor flat has also been amended in line with officer feedback, and now includes obscure glazed roof lights and a rear private garden for the future occupants. The layout is now considered acceptable in relation to Policy CC7.

Overall, the proposal has little impact on the conservation area, and the revisions made to the design make the proposal acceptable in terms of Policy CC7.

6.4. Residential amenity

Policy CC8 seeks to ensure that new development does not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties.

There are no identified risks to both future occupants and the neighbouring residents. The fenestration layout will allow an adequate access to natural sunlight/daylight, and the rear extension has been reasonably scaled down to prevent appearing overbearing and potential loss of light to neighbouring properties. Rooflights to the ground floor flat are proposed to be obscure glazed to prevent overlooking from above, and a condition is recommended to secure this.

Policy EN16 and EN17 also set out requirements relating to noise pollution and noise levels generated by new mechanical plants. The proposal includes the installation of 3x new ASHP plants. A noise assessment condition is recommended to be submitted prior to installation of these.

A noise assessment was submitted by the applicant which documented unacceptable internal noise levels with windows open. The applicant has prepared an additional statement which outlines the proposed use of MVHR to allow adequate ventilation without the need to open external windows. Therefore, the initial pre-commencement condition requiring the submission of a noise assessment has been amended to require the submission of the details of the MVHR plant prior to its installation.

Overall, the proposal is considered acceptable in terms of residential amenity.

6.5. Flooding mitigation

Para 174 of the NPPF (2023) states *“Applications for some minor development and changes of use should not be subject to the sequential or exception tests but should still meet the requirements for site-specific flood risk assessments set out in footnote 59.”*

The applicant has submitted a Flood Risk Assessment in line with the requirements as set out in Para 173 of the NPPF, and has outlined which mitigations will be implemented, inline with those set out in the NPPF and NPPG. A condition is recommended requiring implementation in accordance with those measures. The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in terms of managing flood risk.

6.6. Transport and parking

Policy TR5 requires all new development to provide appropriate levels of car parking, cycle parking depending on the location within the borough.

Local parking standards are set out in the RBC, Revised Parking Standards and Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which considers the accessibility of the site. The site is located just outside the Reading Town Centre and is close to Caversham Centre. It falls within the Zone 2, the primary core. This zone directly surrounds the Central Core and extends to walking distances of 2 kilometres from the centre of Reading. This zone is well served by public transport, with buses continuing either into or out of the Central Core Area via this zone and other local centre facilities. As such, a car-free development in this location is considered acceptable.

The proposed cycle parking storage is in line with the feedback from the Transport officers and is, therefore, considered acceptable.

Policy CC5 is also relevant and requires demonstration of good design to waste storage, reuse, and recycling. The proposed refuse storage is considered acceptable, while information regarding collection is recommended to be secured by condition prior to first occupation of the residential units.

6.7. Affordable housing and CIL

Policy H3 states *“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.”*

The applicant has agreed to enter into a legal agreement to secure a policy-compliant affordable housing contribution.

The proposal results in the creation of two new residential units and is therefore CIL liable. The total GIA proposed is 38.02 sq m, chargeable at a rate of £179.29/m² (as per RBC CIL Schedule of Rates 2024).

6.8. Landscaping

Policy EN12 requires all development to “Protect and wherever possible enhance features of biodiversity interest on and adjacent to the application site, incorporating and integrating them into development proposals wherever practicable”. The applicant has submitted details of integrated bat and Swift bricks, which are considered acceptable.

7. CONCLUSION

The proposal has been assessed in line with national and locally adopted planning policies and is considered to accord with those policies, following revisions made by the applicant at the request of the case officer.

8. RECOMMENDATION

GRANT PERMISSION

Recommended Conditions:

1. Time limit standard
2. Approved plans
3. Materials to match
4. Flood protection measures as specified
5. Habitat enhancement scheme as specified
6. HMO tenant management plan to be submitted
7. HMO communal space as specified



8. HMO parking permits notification to LPA
9. HMO parking permits notification to occupants
10. Noise assessment mechanical plant to be submitted prior to installation
11. Noise attenuation to be installed as per submitted documents
12. Obscure glazing of flat roof lights
13. Construction method statement as specified
14. Hours of construction/demolition
15. No bonfires
16. Cycle parking (as specified)
17. Refuse collection (to be approved)

Informatives:

1. Terms
2. Pre-commencement conditions
3. Building Control
4. Complaints about construction
5. Encroachment
6. S106
7. CIL
8. Noise between residential properties
9. HMO Management Plan
10. Positive and proactive - approval