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PLANNING STATEMENT

REVISION 2 - 04.07.25
TO BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH ALL
SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

LAND ADJACENT 524 NORTHUMBERLAND AVENUE



Map locating the application site
Accessed from Reading Planning Maps - iShare

KEY



 Site Boundary

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This statement sets out the background of the application, describes the proposed development, and demonstrates how it complies with the relevant national and local planning policies.

1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of the planning application for the Development of the Land adjoining to 524 Northumberland Avenue, Construction of an attached two storey building to create a ground floor retail unit and a self-contained 2 bed dwelling above with cycle and bin storage and external communal amenity space

1.2 The existing site is currently without use, the left over land alongside a terrace of shops with flats above, running along Northumberland Avenue. The site is visibly degraded with evidence of frequent anti-social behaviour, including graffiti and ongoing fly tipping. The site is predominately made up of low quality heavily warn grass, from pedestrian desire routes, alongside overgrown brambles to the rear of the site. There is an existing access across the site, providing entrance to the rear of the neighbouring properties (No. 524 & 530 flats above) and for refuse collection for the ground floor retail unit. The neighbouring property, comprising of ground floor retail unit (currently Londis) and flats 524 & 530 Northumberland Avenue are also owned by the applicant.

1.3 The proposal seeks to create new retail frontage at ground within the designation of the Whitley Wood Centre, alongside delivering much needed housing, within an established residential area. It is envisioned that the development will both improve the visual appearance of the site, with new public landscaping to the front, while also helping to mitigate the anti-social behaviour and fly-tipping currently present.

2.0 CONTEXT

2.1 The application site is located within the southern suburb of Reading, Whitley Wood, a predominately residential area which borders with the M4 motorway to the south. The site is positioned on the corner of Northumberland Avenue and Cooper Close, as indicated through the map opposite.

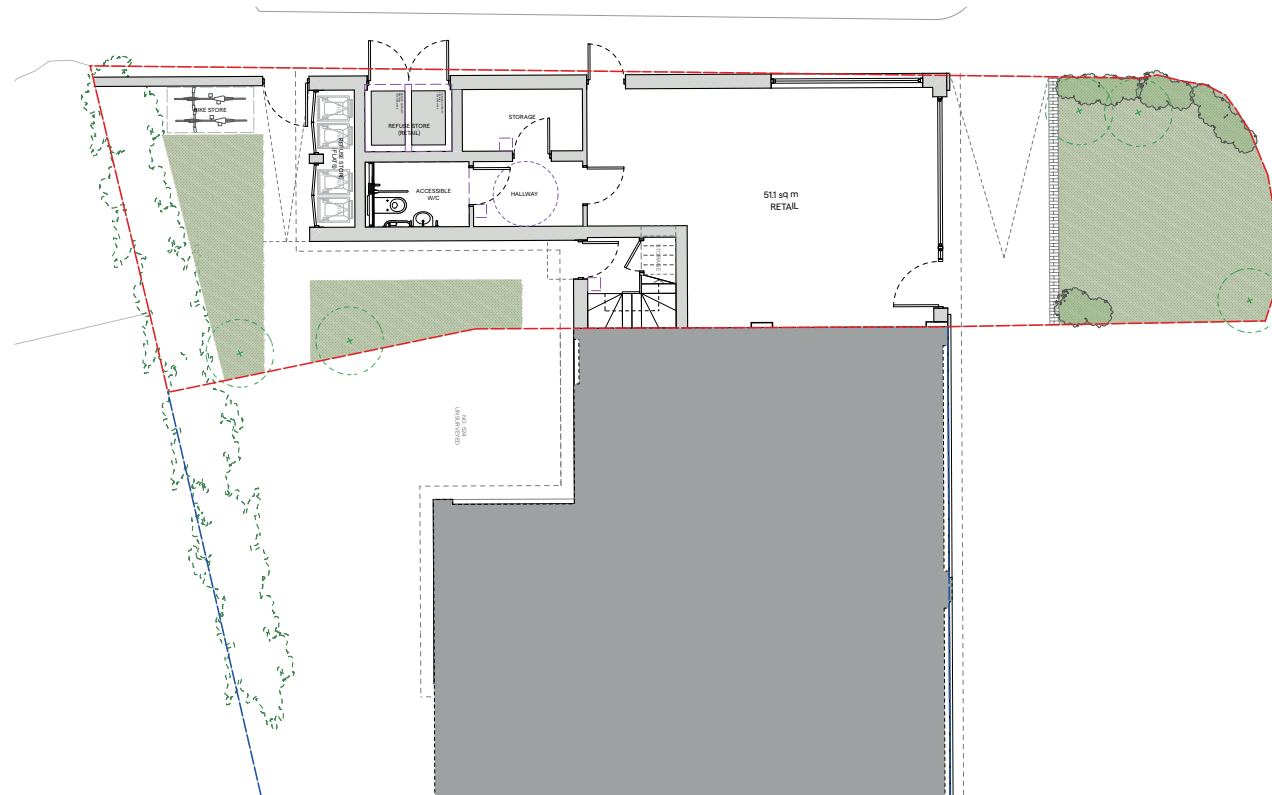
2.2 The site is not located within a conservation area or subject to any Article 4 directions.

2.3 The site is well located for both local and regional travel, with easy access onto the M4 to the south and a 18min commute via local bus to Reading Station.

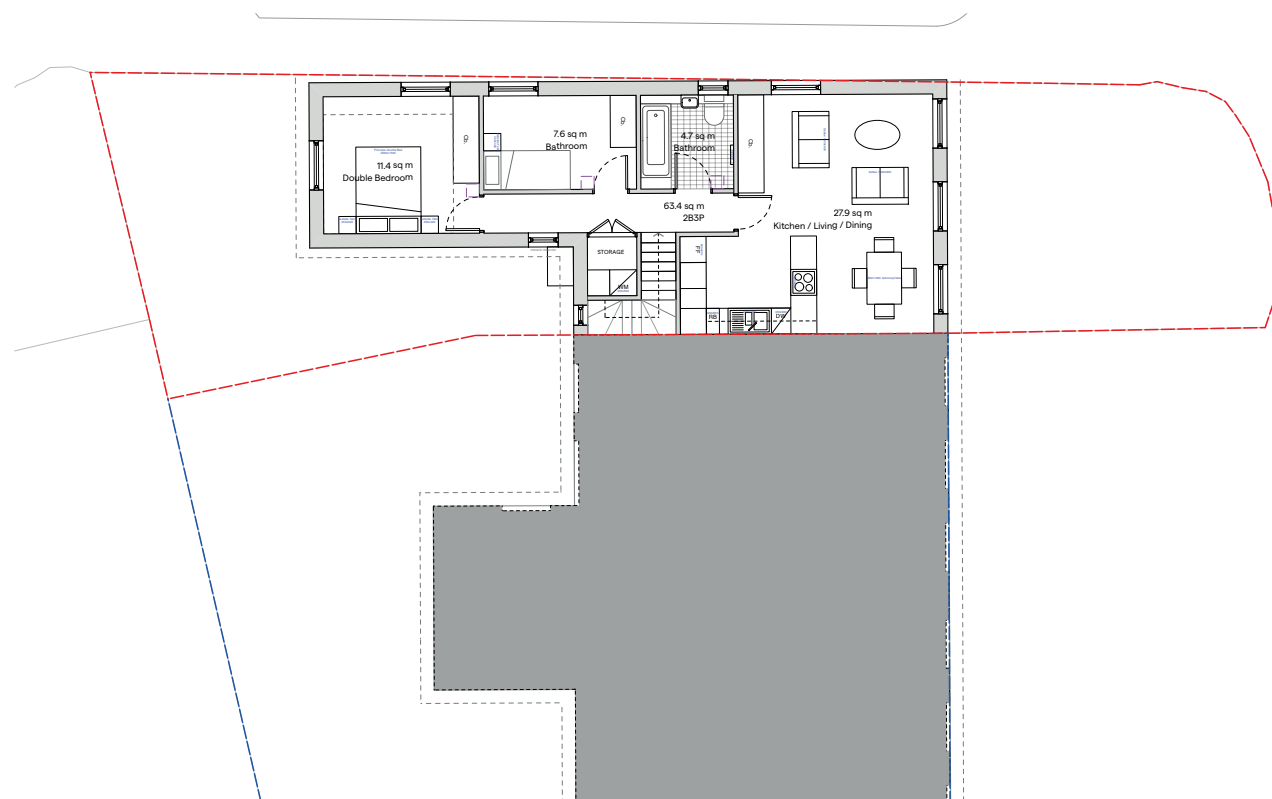
2.4 The location is well served by local amenities, most notably the designated retail units along Northumberland Road. The local school is a short 5min walk as well as numerous publicly accessible green spaces.

2.5 As previously discussed, the site is currently empty. It is located alongside a two-storey pitched roof terrace block, as shown below, which fronts onto Northumberland Avenue. The block accommodates numerous retail uses at ground, with walk up flats above, accessed via the rear of the properties. As shown, the building comprises of traditional tiled roof, with painted rendered gable wall, red brickwork front elevation and uPVC white windows.





Proposed - Ground Floor Plan



Proposed - First Floor Plan

3.0 PROPOSAL

3.1 The proposal is for the development of a two storey building, extending the existing terrace block, to create a ground floor retail unit (Use Class E) and self-contained, walk-up, 2B3P dwelling above the shop (Use Class C3). Including external residential bike store and new public landscaping to the front of the site.

3.2 The development will create a ground floor retail unit, including storage and accessible W/C (GIA - 51.1m²) alongside externally accessed refuse store, off Cooper Close.

The first floor accommodates, a 2B3P self-contained dwelling (63.4m²) accessed via a private entrance and stair from the rear of the property. At ground, a communal amenity space, shared with the existing residents of 524 & 530 (New 41m², Total 109m²), alongside secure resident refuse store and external bike store.

3.3 The layout of the proposal mirrors the existing condition of the neighbouring property, with ground floor retail unit accessed off Northumberland Avenue, and a walk-up flat above, accessed from the rear. The internal layout of the retail unit is designed to M4(3) standards, with accessible W/C and level access throughout. The 2B3P flat has been designed to M4(2) standards, and could be adapted for accessible use in the future. It provides high-quality generous living spaces, with dual aspect, exceeding the requirements of the National Described Space Standards.

3.4 The proposal will utilise materials to match the appearance and character of the existing terrace building, ensuring the new addition is in keeping with the existing.

3.5 The overall scale and massing of the proposed has been designed to align with the existing terrace block, matching key features like the roof ridge, eaves height, window proportions and shop frontage to the front elevation.

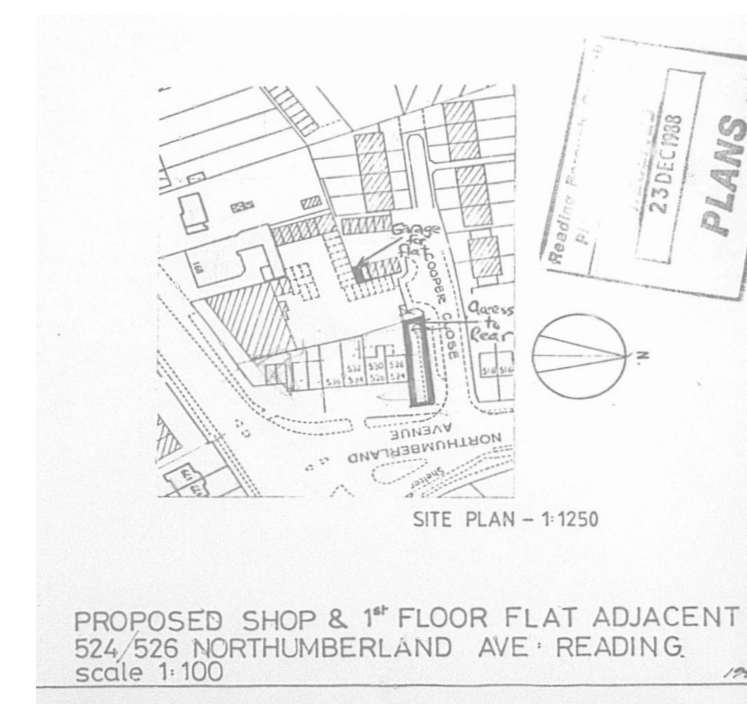
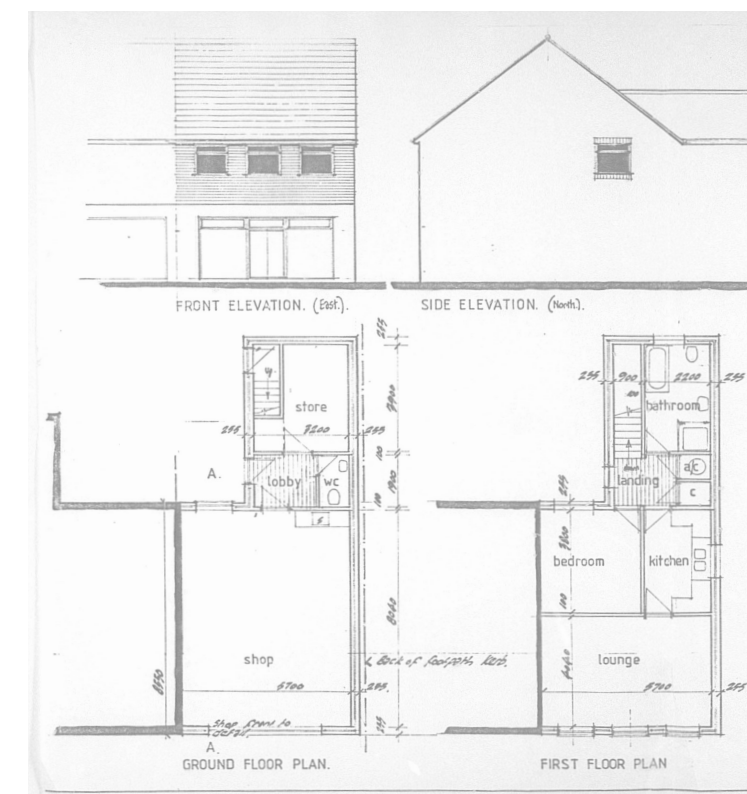
3.6 The first floor flat has been designed to provide good outlook and daylighting for the residents, whilst also considering privacy for the neighbouring residents. Privacy concerns are mitigated through the positioning of windows, and an opaque window facing internally, preventing any overlooking.

3.7 Provision has been accommodated within the flat for appropriate refuse storage, alongside secure resident refuse store at ground, set out in more detail later in this document.

3.8 Private amenity is provided through a communal resident garden, shared with the residents of the neighbouring flats, as previously outlined.

4.0 PLANNING HISTORY

4.1 The application site has been subject to a previous historic application, (89/43/FD) which was approved in 1989, but not implemented. This application proposed a two storey extension to the existing terrace, accommodating a new retail space at ground, with first floor flat accessed via the rear, in-line with the current proposal, and setting clear a precedent.



Drawings from historic application (89/43FD)

5.0 MATERIAL PLANNING POLICY

5.1 As a matter of established planning law, all applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the statutory development plan for the area, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. While accepted that development plan policies can pull in different directions, this legal duty can only be properly performed if the decision-maker establishes whether, or not, the proposal accords with the development plan when taken as a whole.

5.2 The statutory development plan for the area and therefore application site, comprises of the following, Reading Borough Local Plan (Adopted November 2019). The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF - December 2024), which sets out the Government's planning policies for England and associated national Planning Practice guidance (NPPG - February 2024), is also to be considered material to decision making. Additionally, regard must be had in planning assessment to the relevant provisions of Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents (SPG/SPD), specifically Reading's: Design Guide to Shopfronts SPD (January 2022), Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (December 2019, Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011) and Housing Needs Assessment (July 2024).

5.3 The application site is not subject to any Article 4 directions and is not located within a Conservation Area. The site is however, subject to a land-use allocation, as identified alongside key frontage in the local centre of Whitley Wood, and therefore subject to the relevant local planning policies as detailed later within this document.



Reading Borough Council Local Plan - Interactive Policy Map

Key:

- Key frontage in district and Local centres
- Cycle route
- Application Site

6.0 NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK (2024)

6.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how they should be applied. It advises that the primary purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. As set out within paragraph 8

Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):

a) an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;

b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and

c) an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

6.2 Chapter 5 outlines the Government's intentions to deliver a sufficient supply of homes across all housing tenures. The proposal site would deliver additional social rental tenure to the area, helping to contribute to a mixture of residential tenures for which there is a need and demand, as identified in the Borough's Housing Needs Assessment (July 2024).

6.3 In paragraph 73, the NPPF acknowledges the important contribution to meeting local housing requirements that small and medium sites make, for which this proposal would be considered. The proposal if approved is intended to be implemented immediately and would therefore contribute to this year's housing supply.

6.4 The NPPF supports the efficient use of land, particularly in urban areas, and encourages the conversion of under-utilised buildings or land to residential use where appropriate.

"Planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions."
Paragraph 124.

"Promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings, especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing where land supply is constrained and available sites could be used more effectively (for example converting space above shops, and building on or above service yards, car parks, lock-ups and railway infrastructure)"
Paragraph 125.

7.0 READING LOCAL PLAN

7.1 The Reading Local Plan supports and encourages the development of underutilized land to residential use where there are no significant impacts on the local economy, environment or public amenity.

7.2 The site is subject to the following local planning policies:

- CC1: PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
- CC2: SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION
- CC5: WASTE MINIMISATION AND STORAGE
- CC6: ACCESSIBILITY AND THE INTENSITY OF DEVELOPMENT
- CC7: DESIGN AND THE PUBLIC REALM
- CC8: SAFEGUARDING AMENITY
- EN12: BIODIVERSITY AND THE GREEN NETWORK
- H1: PROVISION OF HOUSING
- H2: DENSITY AND MIX
- H3: AFFORDABLE HOUSING
- H5: STANDARDS FOR NEW HOUSING
- H10: PRIVATE AND COMMUNAL OUTDOOR SPACE
- H14: SUBURBAN RENEWAL AND REGENERATION
- TR4: CYCLE ROUTES AND FACILITIES
- TR5: CAR AND CYCLE PARKING AND ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING
- RL2: SCALE AND LOCATION OF RETAIL, LEISURE AND CULTURE DEVELOPMENT
- RL1: NETWORK AND HIERARCHY OF CENTRES
- RL3: VITALITY AND VIABILITY OF SMALLER CENTRES
- OU5: SHOP FRONTS AND CASH MACHINES

10.0 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

10.1 The main planning considerations relevant to an assessment of this application are as follows :

Principle of Development
Local Centre & Retail Use
Quality of Accommodation
External Amenity
Sustainability
Biodiversity
Parking & Cycle Provision
Refuse

PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

10.2 The Principle of Development for the application site, must be considered with regards to housing need, optimising land use, the suitability of the location, and the impact upon the surrounding area and existing amenities.

10.3 Housing Need

The NPPF acknowledges the need for increasing housing supply (Policy GG1 and GG4), and is supported by the Reading Borough Local Plan (RBLP). Both of which attach significant weight to the importance of new housing delivery and the intensification of existing residential areas, particularly the use of small sites. To this end, the application site would align with the aspirations of the development plans, delivering a 2b3p self-contained dwelling, in a well connected location, that would positively contribute towards housing need within the local area. The proposal is intended to be for market rent

10.4 Conversion of Underused Land

The NPPF clearly “supports the efficient use of land, particularly in urban areas and encourages the conversion to residential use where appropriate” paragraph 125. This is supported through the RBLP, which aims to make the best use of underused land to meet housing needs (including in suburban areas) (H1 & H14). Therefore the proposal would align with both National and Local development plans, ensuring the suitable development of currently underused land.

10.5 Local Precedent

The proposed development would be in keeping with the existing use, scale and typology of the neighbouring properties, providing an addition to this already established condition. The existing properties provide evidence in support of the proposal for the suitability of this location in terms of accessibility and its use.

10.6 There is a significant need for new housing in Reading, as identified in the RBLP. This proposal makes a contribution towards meeting the borough's housing targets through

the development of underused land into residential accommodation, in accordance with national and local development plans. And therefore the principle of Development for the proposal should be considered acceptable.

LOCAL CENTRE & RETAIL USE

10.7 This application must consider the impact of the proposed development with regards to the designated local centre and the suitability of the proposed retail use within this location.

10.8 Local Centre

The application site is situated alongside the designated key frontage of the Whitley Wood Local Centre, as indicated on the previous page, and therefore the application is subject to RBLP policy RRL1 - Network and Hierarchy of Centres & RL3 - Vitality and Viability of Smaller Centres.

As set out within RL1, the vitality and viability of existing centres should be maintained and enhanced, and the following improvements will be acceptable in all centres

- Accessibility and transport improvements
- Broadening range of facilities
- Residential use of upper floors
- Environmental enhancements

The proposed development will result in a broadened potential range of facilities through the new retail space, alongside proposing significant environmental enhancements through the provision of a public landscaped area, in addition to the upper floor use as residential, aligning with the intentions of the policy.

10.9 Retail use

As set out within RL3, regarding sites within and adjacent to local centres, all new development should provide some ‘centre uses’ at the ground floor, and, on upper floors, uses including residential (living over the shops) will be acceptable. To this regard, the proposal fulfils the requirements of this policy.

QUALITY OF ACCOMMODATION

10.10 Nationally Described Space Standards

All self-contained dwellings, including conversions, are required to meet the minimum space standards as set out within the National Described Space Standards. This application proposes floor areas which exceed the NDSS requirements and are therefore compliant.

2b3p flat - 63.4m² (NDSS - 61m²)

10.11 Housing Design Standards

As set out within Policy H5, New build housing of this scale (minor development) should be built to the following standards,

- will comply with the nationally-described space standard
- built to the higher water efficiency standard under Regulation 36 of the Building Regulations
- achieve at a minimum a 19% improvement in the dwelling emission rate over the target emission rate, as defined in the 2013 Building Regulations.
- will be accessible and adaptable in line with M4(2) of the Building Regulations

The proposed new dwelling, as detailed within the planning drawings and accompanying design and access statement, will achieve the requirements set out within the H5 policy.

10.12 High-Quality Living Conditions

The residential accommodation has been designed to provide adequately sized rooms in accordance with regulations, which are comfortable, functional and fit for purpose. In addition, the flat layout maximises the provision of dual aspect, providing sufficient daylight levels to habitable rooms and avoiding overheating through natural ventilation, aligning with intentions of Policy CC3.

EXTERNAL AMENITY

10.13 Communal Outdoor Space

Policy H10 of the RBLP sets out the requirements for functional private and communal outdoor space for new dwellings. Which includes open space, including green space where possible, allowing for suitable sitting-out area, children's play areas, home food production, green waste composting, refuse storage, general outdoor storage and drying space. The design of outdoor areas will respect the size and character of other similar spaces in the vicinity, clearly identify whether they are private or communal spaces, ensure that they are appropriately related to main entrances, enhance safety and the perception of safety for future residents and the general public, and not be compromised by the relationship of other buildings which may be detrimental in terms of overlooking, overbearing or overshadowing.

10.14 The proposal sufficiently addresses these requirements, through the provision of a large communal external amenity space (41m²), to be shared with the neighbouring residents of No. 524 & 530 Northumberland Avenue, also owned by the applicant. Dedicated, secure refuse and bike stores are accommodated within this space, alongside new planting and trees enhancing the existing condition for all residents.

SUSTAINABILITY

10.15 Sustainable Design & Energy Efficiency

As set out within the RBLP Policy CC2, the construction of new buildings will be acceptable where the design of the buildings and site layouts use energy, water, minerals, materials and other natural resources appropriately, efficiently and with care, and take account of the effects of climate change. To achieve this, all minor non-residential developments are required to meet the most up-to-date BREEAM ‘Very Good’ standard as a minimum. New build homes are expected to meet the requirements of Policy H5, as previously discussed.

10.16 The proposal will comply and exceed the requirements for a new build dwelling, particularly Part L, with regards to the building envelope, windows and doors. The non-residential use will achieve a BREEAM rating of Very Good.

10.17 A detailed analysis of the required energy strategy for both types of uses will be conducted post-planning and inform an energy statement that aligns with the requirements of the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD.

10.18 Drainage

All development shall minimise the impact of surface water runoff from the development in the design of the drainage system Policy CC3. The design proposes permeable paving to all new external hardscaping areas, allowing for water to be absorbed through the soil, subject to a post planning soil infiltration test.

10.19 Renewable

Due to the scale of this development the provision for renewable energy sources, particularly photovoltaic cells, has not be accommodated. However, these could be integrated at a later stage under permitted development, aligning with the energy strategy for the neighbouring properties.

BIODIVERSITY

10.20 Biodiversity Net Gain

In England, under the Environmental Act 2021, all new relevant, non-exempt development must achieve a measurable 10% increase in Biodiversity, compared with pre-development conditions, Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). The proposal, as outlined within the accompanying supporting documents (Biodiversity Gain Plan, Small Site’s Metric & Baseline and Proposed Site Plans) achieves a BNG of 39.12%, well exceeding the requirement.

PARKING

10.20 Vehicle Parking Provision

Policy TR5 of the RBLB, states that new development should provide maximum car parking and cycle parking provision that is appropriate to the accessibility of locations within the Borough to sustainable transport facilities, particularly public transport. As set out within the Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011), the site is located within a zone 3 area, and therefore subject to the residential parking provision as presented in the table opposite.

10.21 The development does not propose any vehicular parking spaces, primarily due to the size of the site, and the subsequent impact upon the external amenity space, access to neighbouring properties and biodiversity. And secondly due to its proximity to the local centre of Whitley Wood and the accessibility of public transport in the from of the local bus service.

There is existing on-street parking for residents along Cooper Close, and it is envisioned that new residents of the 2b3p flat will able to utilise these spaces, as an alternative to the on-plot parking provision.

10.22 Cycle Parking Provision

Developments will be expected to make full use of opportunities to improve access for cyclists to, from and within the development and to integrate cycling through the provision of new facilities, as set out within Policy TR4. The proposal accommodates two cycle parking spaces within a secure and covered store positioned within the communal rear amenity space, exceeding the requirements of Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011).

REFUSE

10.23 Collection and Storage Strategy

The proposal will provide refuse and recycling storage contained within the new dwelling that will meet BS5906:2005 Code of Practice for Waste Management and all external bin stores have been designed in accordance with RBC’s Waste Management Guidelines for Property Developers, Architects, Planners and Contractors. Residential refuse provision - 4x 240L bins, Retail refuse provision 2x 1100L bins.

Secure residential and retail refuse stores are integrated into the design of the ground floor plan, ensuring appropriate travel distances for both the residents and collection services. Additional provision has been provided to accommodate neighbouring residents, helping to mitigate the use of the communal amenity space for bin storage.

	Residential Parking Provision			
	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Zone 4
Residential				
C3 Retirement Home with Warden (spaces per individual units)	0.5 + 1 space on site for staff	1 + 1 space on site for staff	1 + 1 space on site for staff	1 + 1 space on site for staff
C3 Dwelling Flat 1-2 bed	0.5	1	1.5	1.5
C3 Dwelling Flat 3+ bed	1	1.5	2	2
C3 Dwelling House 1 bed	0.5	1	1	1
C3 Dwelling House 2 bed	1	1	1.5	2
C3 Dwelling House 3 bed	1	2	2	2
C3 Dwelling House 4+ bed	2	2	2	3
Visitor Parking	0	1 space per 10 dwellings (Flats only)	1 space per 4 dwellings (Flats only)	1 space per 4 dwellings (Flats only)
Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)	0.25 per bedroom**	0.25 per bedroom**	0.25 per bedroom**	0.25 per bedroom**

Minimum cycle parking standards	
	Zone 1 - 4
Residential	
C1 Hotels	1 space per 6 staff
C1 Guest House and B&B	1 space per 6 staff
C2 Halls of Residence	1 space per 3 staff & 1 space per 5 students
C2 Hospitals (In Patients)	1 per 3 staff plus 1 space per 5 beds
C2 Hospitals (Out Patients)	1 per 3 staff plus 1 space per 3 consulting room
C2 Nursing Home	1 per 3 staff
C3 Retirement Home (Spaces per individual unit)	1 per 3 staff / 1 space minimum
C3 Dwelling Flat 1/2-bed	0.5*
C3 Dwelling Flat 3+-bed	1*
C3 Dwelling House 1-bed	1
C3 Dwelling House 2/3-bed	2
C3 Dwelling House 4-bed +	2

CONCLUSION

The proposed development of a two storey building, to create a ground floor retail unit (Use Class E) and self-contained, walk-up, 2B3P dwelling above shops (Use Class C3), is considered to be in line with national and local planning policies as outlined through this statement, The proposal represents a sustainable and appropriate use of under-utilised land within a well-connected location and would deliver much-needed housing within the local area. Finally, the proposal would deliver high-quality, sustainable residential development, which meets and exceeds residential space standards.

Therefore we believe, and respectfully request that planning permission may be appropriately granted for this application in accordance with planning policy.

Legal

This report has been produced by StudioMAC and is intended for the sole use of Opal Group, to support an application for a two storey building, extending the existing terrace block to create a ground floor retail unit and self-contained 2B4P dwelling above.

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Project Name: Land Adjacent to 524 Northumberland Avenue
Number: 913
Date of Issue: 04.07.25
Revision: R2
Author: SM