

DELEGATED REPORT

Application No. 220780/FUL

Site Address: 640 Oxford Road

Proposal: Provision of a mixed-use development comprising 3 x separate commercial units (one at basement level and two at ground floor level) and 2 additional self-contained dwellings (two at first floor and two at second floor) with associated extensions and alterations

Extended Target Date: 28/04/23

Case Officer: Connie Davis

Site Description

The application site relates to a detached property located on the northern side of Oxford Road, on the corner with Alma Street. The site comprises of a retail unit at ground floor level, with a residential unit at first floor level. An office building is located beyond the rear hardstanding of the site and is within the ownership of the applicant.



The surrounding area is primarily residential, with The Royal Albion pub immediately to the west. The site is not Listed, nor in a Conservation Area.

Proposal

Planning permission is sought for an extension to the building to facilitate two additional retail units (one at ground floor and one at basement level) and 2 additional dwellings at first floor level.

The extension would measure a depth of 7.5m, maximum height of 9.8m and expand the width of the original building.

Plans/Documents Submitted

R-22-0051-001 Rev A - Proposed Site Layout

Transport Note prepared by Evoke Transport dated 27 September 2022

Received 27th September 2022

1044_12 Rev A - Proposed Flank Elevation

1044_10 Rev A - Proposed Rear Elevation

1044_15 Rev A - Proposed First & Second Floors

1044_14 Rev A - Proposed Basement & Ground Floor

1044_13 Rev A - Proposed Side Elevation

Received 5th August 2022

Planning Statement

Application Form

CIL Form

1044_01 - Existing Basement & Ground Floor

1044_07 - Existing Block Plan

1044_02 - Existing First & Second Floors

1044_05 - Existing Front Elevation

1044 - Existing Rear Elevation

1044_07 - Existing Block Plan

1044_04 - Existing Flank Elevation

1044_05 - Existing Side Elevation

1044_06 - Proposed Block Plan

1044_11 - Proposed Front Elevation

1044_08 - Proposed Block Plan

1044_09 - Site Location Plan

Received 27th May 2022

Relevant planning history

None of relevance to this specific application.

Discussions with applicant/agent

The agent was advised of potential shortcomings of the scheme, notably the absence of rear amenity space and landscaping. There was also concern over the number of first floor side facing windows that face onto 638 Oxford Road. As a result, amendments were made to remove a number of side windows.

Consultations***Internal Consultees***

Transport - No objection subject to conditions

Environmental Health - No objection subject to condition

Ecology - No objection subject to condition

Natural Environment - Objection

Thames Water - No objection, informative to be included

Public Consultation

The following addresses were formally consulted via letter on 20/06/22:

13 Alma Street
638 Oxford Road
Royal Albion Public House

No representations have been received.

Planning policies

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

National Planning Policy Guidance

Reading Borough Council Local Plan (2019)

CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction

CC3: Adaption to Climate Change

CC5: Waste Minimisation and Storage

CC7: Design and the Public Realm

CC8: Safeguarding Amenity

CC9: Securing Infrastructure

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

TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters

TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging

EN16: Pollution and Water Resources

OU5: Shopfronts and Cash machines

Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents

Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)

Revised Sustainable Design and Construction (2011)

Planning Obligations Under S106, April (2015)

Adopted Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (2013)

Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (2021)

Design Guide to Shopfronts (2022)

Appraisal

The main issues to be considered are:

- a) Principle of development
- b) Design and impact on character of the area
- c) Residential amenity of proposed and existing neighbouring residents
- d) Transport matters
- e) The Natural Environment
- f) Sustainability
- g) Affordable Housing, S106 and CIL obligations

a) Principle of development

The [NPPF](#) 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. The proposal would see an extension to the building which is currently brownfield land (hardstanding). As such, the proposal would not compromise greenfield land.

The site is not located in a designated local or district centre, although given the site is currently already in commercial use at ground floor, the proposed additional commercial units would be acceptable. The proposed commercial units would be restricted to Class E uses, which are generally considered compatible with residential units.

The principle of additional retail and residential development is, therefore, accepted subject to meeting other policy matters.

b) Design and impact on the street scene

Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) states: *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.*

Policy OU5 states that shopfronts should provide an active frontage to the street at all times.

The Council’s Design Guide to Shopfronts SPD elaborates on Policy OU5 and outlines examples of good and high-quality shopfronts, with features that should be incorporated and strived for as part of planning applications. Following revised plans, the proposed shop front incorporates a traditional fascia location and front glazing. The shopfront is considered of a suitable quality and in line with features encouraged in the SPD. The nature of the basement retail unit means that it would have no frontage to the street, although there is not considered any resistance to this given the nature of basement facilities.

The proposed extension would extend into the current car park/ hardstanding. Whilst relatively large in depth, the extension would not be considered substantially overbearing when viewed from the street and gapping between the site and properties on Alma Road would remain. The extension has been set down from the roof of the main property and represents a suitable integrating roof form.

As such, the proposal is considered acceptable in relation to Policies CC7 and OU5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

c) Residential Amenity of Proposed and Existing Neighbouring Residents

Policy CC8 requires developments to not “*cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties..*” including “...in terms of: Privacy and overlooking; Access to sunlight and daylight; Visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development; Harm to outlook; Noise and disturbance;...”. At the same time, ensuring that new development creates a quality living environment for potential future occupiers is also required.

Future occupiers

Policy H5 identifies standards for new housing including internal space requirements for all developments outside of the Central Area as defined on the Proposals Map. The proposal complies with the standards. All dwelling would have suitable access to natural light and

outlook. However, Officers need to ensure future occupiers would not be subject to unreasonable noise (deliveries and hours of use), odour from the commercial units, and ensure they are not exposed to a harmful level of poor air quality given the site is located within an AQMA. As such, conditions to this effect will be attached, as advised by the Environmental Health Officer.

The dwellings would not have any amenity space. Within Policy H10 states that dwellings located outside of central Reading (which is the case with the application site) each flat should have a minimum of 25 sqm. The current site has an area of hardstanding used as informal parking. There is no meaningful amenity space for recreational purposes for existing residents. Whilst this proposal would not see the introduction of amenity space, it would not be degrading the existing situation. Furthermore Kensington Park (public open space) is located a 12 minute walk from the site. On balance, there is not considered robust justification to warrant refusal based on an absence of amenity space.

Existing occupiers

In terms of impact on neighbours, those most potentially impacted by the proposal are the Royal Albion pub to the south-west, 638 Oxford Road to the south-east and 13 Alma Street to the north.

Both the Royal Albion Pub and 13 Alma Street are in commercial use as opposed to residential use. Whilst the extension would protrude beyond the rear elevation of the public house, the pub is set off the shared boundary, and the extension would run alongside the pub car park. It is noted that first floor windows of pubs are often residential accommodation. The first floor windows of the pub are set off the site boundary and so it is not considered that these would be impacted by a loss of light.

638 Oxford Road is set off the application site, with Alma Street separating the two. Following revised plans, the number of side windows facing into the rear amenity space of 638 Alma Street were reduced following concern that from upper levels, views into the garden would be long and uninterrupted. Following amended plans, the proposal is considered acceptable in this regard and no further substantial impact on this neighbour has been identified.

The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in relation to existing neighbours, in accordance with Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

d) Transport Matters

A rear gated parking area is provided at the site, which is accessed from Alma Street and provides informal parking for circa 4-5 vehicles. The car park is shared with the offices unit occupied by Rapid Personnel.

As part of the proposals the parking arrangements at the site will be formalised with a total of three parking spaces retained and marked out.

Access to the site is to be in the form of a revised vehicular access which is located from Alma Street. This in principle is deemed acceptable given that this is only a minor change to the existing layout. The applicant will however require a dropped crossing licence to provide for the widened vehicular access point.

The Highway Authority are happy to accept a car parking provision of 0.62 vehicles per dwelling which is in line with the car ownership data presented by the applicant, which is an approach promoted through the NPPF. This would equate to a provision of 2 spaces. The total commercial element across the site would require a car parking provision of 3 spaces

in line with the Council's car parking SPD. The development as a whole would, therefore, require a total provision of 5 spaces. This would equate to a shortfall of 2 spaces however, given the improved car parking layout on the site that will remove tandem parking and subsequent reversing out into the carriageway, the extensive car parking restrictions surrounding the site and the non-entitlement to car parking permits for residents Th Highway Authority are happy that the parking for the proposed development is acceptable.

A car parking layout has been provided which does require a number of convoluted movements but given the proposed development will remove any possibility for tandem car parking and subsequent reversing into the carriageway this is deemed acceptable.

There is currently no on-site cycle parking for the existing uses and therefore cycle parking can only be requested for the proposed uses. With this in mind, the two additional residential units would require a provision of 0.5 spaces per unit, resulting in a requirement for 1 cycle space. The applicant has however provided a provision of 4 cycle spaces which has been deemed acceptable.

Cycle parking must also be provided for the commercial units on the site so as to promote alternative modes, it is acceptable that a provision of 2 spaces would be sufficient as indicated at paragraph 3.4.3 of the Transport Statement. The revised drawing has indicated a provision of 1 Sheffield stand (2 cycle spaces) to the frontage of the site and this has been deemed acceptable.

Refuse storage has been illustrated in the rear parking area and is deemed an acceptable location.

The applicant has undertaken an assessment of the trip rate generation proposed for the development and this has identified that a net increase of 4 vehicle movements in the AM peak, 4 vehicle movements in the PM Peak and an increase of 61 vehicle trips over the course of a full day. The applicant has suggested that these number of vehicle movements are unlikely with many resulting in diverted or pass by trips to other facilities along the Oxford Road. Given that the proposal is for a minimal increase in commercial floor space and that the assessment has been based on a retail shop it is accepted that the assessment undertaken is robust and as such is deemed acceptable.

In the circumstances there are no transport objections to the development subject to the following conditions.

Conditions

C2 CONSTRUCTION METHOD STATEMENT (TO BE SUBMITTED)

DC1 VEHICLE PARKING (AS SPECIFIED)

DC3 VEHICULAR ACCESS (AS SPECIFIED)

DC5 CYCLE PARKING (AS SPECIFIED)

DC8 REFUSE AND RECYCLING (AS SPECIFIED)

DC20 PARKING PERMITS 1

DC21 PARKING PERMITS

e) The Natural Environment

Trees

The site is part of Battle Ward which is the lowest canopy cover areas in the Borough (~6.72% canopy cover based on old ward boundaries) - the aim is that all wards benefit from at least 12% canopy cover by 2030. In addition, Oxford Road is part of the Air Quality Management Area and

is a designated Treed Corridor in our adopted Tree Strategy. This context should give more weight to tree retention and planting criteria when assessing this application.

Upon consultation with the Natural Environment Officer, it was noted that a number of Cypress trees at 642 Oxford Road are adjacent to and overhang the site, but these are not shown on the plans. It was considered that it likely that they will be pruned back to boundary during construction site operations and so plotting these on a plan is required. However, upon discussion with the agent, it was confirmed that the existing Cypress trees are at No 642 are outside of the site boundary and not within the ownership of the applicant. It would therefore, be inappropriate to label the trees as retained given that it is not within the applicant's gift to ensure their retention and this is a separate matter concerning the adjacent landowners. It would also be inappropriate for the applicant to prune the trees given that they are not within their ownership (again, this would be a job for the adjacent landowner).

Due to the absence of amenity space, opportunities for soft landscaping are also limited, which was raised by the Natural Environment Officer. As an alternative planting or modern greening solutions were suggested to be incorporated into the design, such as green walls/ roofs. These have not been forthcoming within the scheme. It is noted that there is no existing landscaping on site and as such, the proposal would see the status quo maintained. Given the existing constraints and condition of the site, , it is not considered necessary to warrant landscaping on this occasion.

Ecology

Considering the condition of the building, and the poor suitability of the surrounding habitat for use by foraging and commuting bats, the proposals are unlikely to affect bats or other protected species. As such, there are no objections to this application on ecological grounds.

However, in accordance with the general thrust of Policy EN12 of the Reading Borough Local Plan, along 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 new development. In this case it would also be appropriate for the applicant to install swift bricks.

f) Sustainability

As per Policy H5 of the Local Plan, the new dwellings should:

- Higher water efficiency standards of 110 litres per person per day; and
- A 19% improvement over building regulations energy requirements

For the new retail units, they should meet a BREEAM 'Very Good' standard.

Appropriately worded conditions will be attached to comply with Policy H5, and sustainability Policies CC2 and CC3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

g) Affordable Housing, S106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

In accordance with Policy H3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) it states that *'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.'*

Three valuations of the scheme have been provided to calculate the policy compliant affordable housing contribution. The contribution equates to £8,499 and this will be secured via a S106 legal agreement in line with Policy H3 of the Local Plan.

The proposal would be CIL liable.

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.

Conclusion

The proposal is deemed acceptable for the reasons outlined in the report.

Recommendation: GRANT permission subject to a S106 legal agreement and the following conditions:

The applicant has agreed to all pre-commencement conditions

1. Time Limit
2. Plans
3. Materials to be submitted
4. CMS (Pre-commencement)
5. Vehicle parking (as specified)
6. Vehicle access (as specified)
7. Cycle parking (as specified)
8. Refuse and recycling (as specified)
9. Parking Permits 1
10. Parking Permits 2
11. **[Pre-commencement]** - Biodiversity enhancements
12. **[Pre-commencement]** Noise assessment

13. Hours for deliveries
14. Hours of use
15. Mechanical plant
16. Odour assessment
17. Air quality assessment
18. **[Pre-commencement]** SAP - As Designed
19. SAP - As Built
20. **[Pre-commencement]** BREEAM - As Designed
21. BREEAM - As Built

Informatives

1. Terms
2. Building Control
3. Complaints about construction
4. Encroachment
5. Pre-commencement conditions
6. S106
7. CIL
8. A build over agreement will be required if the work is within three metres of a public sewer or one metre of a lateral drain. Thames Water should be contacted for more information.
9. Positive and Proactive