

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Caversham

App Ref: PL/25/0501 Full planning permission

Address: 62 PROSPECT STREET, CAVERSHAM, READING

Proposal: Proposed change of use of the building to a 6 bedroom 6 person HMO (Class C4) and proposed erection of a single storey rear extension

Applicant: Mr A Varban

Received date: 31/03/2025

Target Decision date: 21/11/2025 (ext)

Case Officer: Alison Amoah

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The proposal site is a three and half storey (including basement and loft space) mid terrace property which is currently in use as 3x 1 bed flats at ground, first and loft levels. The basement space is currently used for storage. The property is located on the western side of Prospect Street and there are other HMOs along this section of the street. It has a low brick built boundary wall and there is stepped access at the front to the basement. To the rear is an existing single storey mono-pitch roofed extension of ca 2.7m wide, 4.7m deep and 3.4m to the ridge and a brick outbuilding towards the rear of the garden. There is rear access from an alleyway leading from Oxford Street

The immediately adjacent properties have been extended at ground and first floors.

The immediate area largely comprises terraces both commercial and residential uses.

The site visit was undertaken on 27/1/2025 (*when reviewing previous withdrawn application ref: 24/1475*)

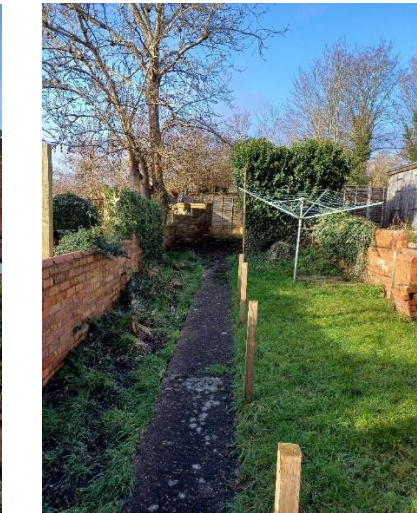


Location Plan

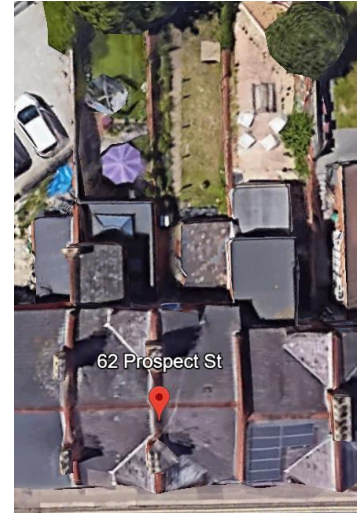


Front





Rear



Aerial View – Google Earth (7/6/22)

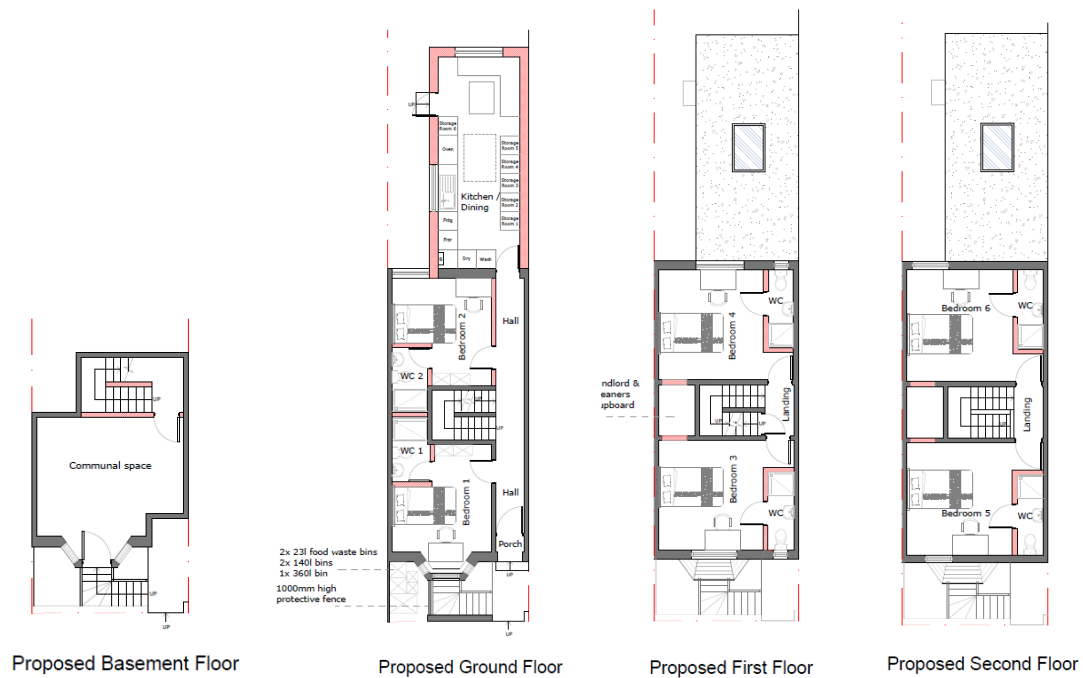
The site is outside of the Article 4 area for change of use from C3 to C4 small HMOs.

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

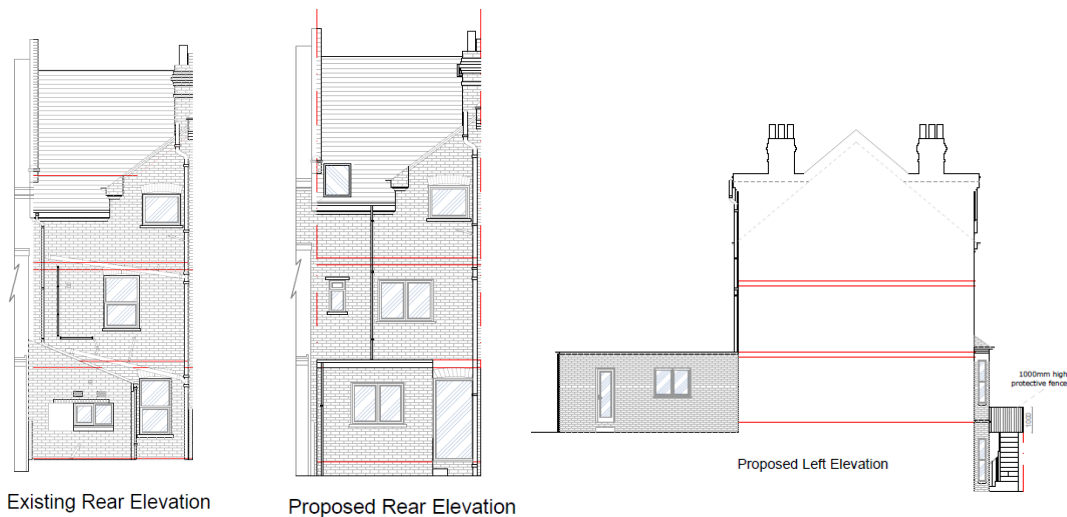
The amended proposal is to change the existing three, one bedroom flats to a 6 bedroom, 6 person C4 small HMO, across ground, first and second floors with a basement communal space. The proposal also includes an enlarged rear single storey extension with flat roof of 3.1m wide, 6.8m deep and 3.1 m high, to house the proposed communal kitchen/ dining area. There would be some limited changes to the fenestration. The remaining rear garden would be retained and would include a proposed covered cycle storage area within an existing brick outbuilding, with access from the rear of the property and from an existing alleyway leading from Oxford Street.

Plans and other information considered as received 31st March 2025, unless otherwise stated:

- Drawing no: 00 – Location Plan, dated September 2024.
- Drawing no: 01 – Existing Floor Plans, dated September 2024.
- Drawing no: 02 - Existing Elevations [Front and Right], dated September 2024.
- Drawing no: 03 - Existing Elevations [Rear and Left], dated September 2024.
- Drawing no: 04 - Existing Block Plan, dated September 2024.
- Drawing no: 05 - Existing Basement Plan, dated September 2024.
- Drawing no: 13 Rev C – Proposed Site Plan, dated October 2025, received 16th October 2025.
- Drawing no: 14 Rev D – Proposed Floor Plans [Basement, Ground and First], dated November 2025, received 10th November 2025.
- Drawing no: 15 Rev A – Proposed Floor Plans [Second and Roof], dated March 2025.
- Drawing no: 16 Rev B – Proposed Elevations [Front and Right], dated October 2025, received 16th October 2025.
- Drawing no: 17 Rev B – Proposed Elevations [Rear and Left], dated October 2025, received 16th October 2025.
- Drawing no: 18 Rev C – Front Boundary Wall [Existing and Proposed], dated October 2025, received 16th October 2025
- HMO Management Statement, prepared by 1 Right Plan
- Noise Statement, prepared by 1 Right Plan
- Planning Statement, prepared by 1 Right Plan
- Sustainability and Air Quality Statement, prepared by 1 Right Plan



Existing and Proposed Floor Plans





3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

07/00890/CLE (PL/07/0867) - Certificate of Lawfulness for existing use of property as 1 x 1 bedroom flat and 2 bedsits – Refused

08/01430/CLE (PL/08/1151) - Certificate of lawfulness for existing use of property as 3 self-contained flats (Resubmission of application 07/00890/CLE) – Refused 31st December 2008

09/00424/CLE (PL/09/0814) - Certificate of lawfulness for existing use as 3 self-contained flats – Approved 26th October 2009

PL/24/1475/FUL - Proposed change of use of the building to a 6 bedrooms HMO, studio flat and proposed erection of a single storey rear extension – Withdrawn 5/3/25

4. CONSULTATIONS

A site notice was erected on 13th May 2025. The site visit was undertaken on 27th January 2025 when reviewing the previous withdrawn application ref: PL/24/1475.

A letter of representation was received from 60 Prospect Street summarised as follows:

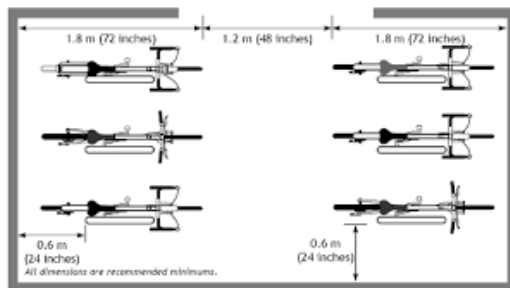
- There are already 2 HMOs in this group of terraces, and the rest are flats (apart from no. 60).
- How does this form of housing provision meet demand; there are vacancies in existing HMOs.
- Concerns in other areas regarding how HMOs destroy the character of the local areas.
- Drainage issues with more demand on Victorian drainage systems.
- Issues of water pressure and leaks.
- Spaces that would have been designed as sleeping spaces becoming living spaces abutting my bedrooms. Together with poor sound insulation results in noise from day to day activities and multiple locations of running water etc at all times of the day and night.
- Property already poorly maintained with rubbish dumped and ending up on my property. With more tenants I am concerned this will worsen.
- Negative impact on parking spaces if residents have access to parking permits.

The following internal teams were consulted:

Transport Development Control, RBC - The application property currently does not benefit from an off-street parking for vehicles; a car free development is proposed. 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. A car free development could be considered given that unauthorised parking can be controlled and monitored.

In accordance with the Council's Parking Standards and Design SPD, cycle storage for a 6 bedroom HMO should be provided at a ratio of 0.5 secure cycle storage spaces for each letting room in the form of a Sheffield type stand within a lockable store. This equates to 3 cycle storage spaces. Plans illustrate a storage unit at the rear of the property, accessed via Oxford Street but do not illustrate the Sheffield stands within the storage unit.

Below is an example of a layout for cycle storage and the required dimensions.



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 located at the front of the site. This is reflective of the arrangements for other residential properties on Prospect Street and would allow for kerb side collection. It is recommended that the Council's Waste and Recycling team are contacted to ensure the correct type and capacity of bins are provided.

Given the site's location a CMS will be required to ensure there is no disruption or impact on the highway and to pedestrians.

Suggested conditions Construction Method Statement, HMO Cycle Storage, and HMO Parking Permits.

Waste Team, RBC - A single HMO dwelling would need to have space for at least 1 x 240L general waste bin which is the standard size for one HMO licence. The bins would be provided communally – rather than individual bins per flat which appears to be what they have now.

We would remove the 4 x 140L bins and replace it with 1 x 240L general waste bin. Any additional waste collection required after this would need to be set up by the HMO license holder through a trade waste contract. This would be set out in HMO licence conditions.

I would recommend that they keep the existing recycling bins and they would need to have 1-2 x 23L food waste bins.

Developers should also take into consideration upcoming changes to residential waste collection services as per Simpler Recycling requirements in the future. These requirements will increase the amount of material recycled/collected at the kerbside (i.e. addition of glass & soft plastics) and so additional refuse space should be allocated to allow for this. Note: glass can currently only be recycled at local glass bottle banks or the tip.

The bins would need to be presented at the pavement as crews would not lift the bins up and over the brick wall.

Discussions with the agent

The original case officer raised concern over the provision of a front basement staircase and requested that this was removed, that bin storage to the front be clearly shown and that consideration be given to raising the height of the front boundary wall and the creation of a more secure bin storage area.

Amendments were provided and further discussed with the agent. On the basis that the front steps are existing (covered up) and it was agreed that this basement space should be used for a communal space for residents, the steps and basement windows have been retained; this allows for secondary access to the property, with an improved internal staircase from it. An amended bin storage area is sited within part of the frontage with a small loss of the front boundary wall to enable pulling of the bins directly onto the pavement. Increasing the height of the front boundary was not considered necessary in the context of the retention of the front steps and that the low boundary is considered to be a more original feature, and increasing its height would not serve to obscure the bin storage, which practically should be at the front as existing.

5. 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. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

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'. The following local and national planning policy and guidance is relevant to this application:

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework 2021
National Planning Guidance 2014 onwards

Reading Borough Local Plan (Adopted November 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
H7: Protecting the Existing Housing Stock
H8: Residential Conversions
H10: Private and Communal Outdoor Space
TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging

Supplementary Planning Documents

Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)

Residential Conversions (2023)

Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2019)

Guide to Amenity Standards applicable to Houses in Multiple Occupation that require a Licence, RBC

7. APPRAISAL

- 7.1 For conversions to flats or for multiple occupation the main planning policy is Policy H8 (Residential Conversions), which states that: *“Proposals to convert buildings into self-contained flats or for multiple occupation will be assessed against the impact on the amenity and character of the surrounding area, particularly in terms of intensification of activity, loss of privacy, loss of external amenity space, the provision and location of adequate on-site car parking and the treatment of bin storage areas and other related servicing.*

Proposals to convert properties into self-contained flats or for multiple occupation will only be acceptable where:

- *The proposal respects the physical character of the area in terms of scale, location, materials and design, the arrangement of doors, windows and other principal architectural features;*
- *The proposal would not, either individually or cumulatively, unduly dilute or harm an existing mixed and sustainable community through the significant loss of single family housing;*
- *There are no unacceptable adverse impacts to residents of the scheme or surrounding properties arising from noise and disturbance in terms of the number and layout of units proposed and the proximity to other properties;*
- *There is no inappropriate stacking and location of rooms between units;*
- *Bin and cycle storage is of an appropriate size and standard for the units proposed and should be located at ground floor level with easy access; and*
- *The resulting property or properties would provide adequate internal floorspace and headroom for residents.....”*

- 7.2 In addition Policy CC8 requires development to not cause *“a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties, 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;*
- ☐ *Artificial lighting;*
- ☐ *Vibration;*
- ☐ *Dust and fumes;*
- ☐ *Smell;*
- ☐ *Crime and safety;”*

“...Where an otherwise acceptable development could change its character to a use that would have a greater impact on amenity without needing planning permission, conditions will be applied to restrict such changes.”

- 7.3 Policy H10 is with regard to ensuring that dwellings will be provided with functional private or communal open space.
- 7.4 Together with the relevant adopted local planning policies, the appraisal of this application has been assessed against the adopted Residential Conversions SPD (2023), which provides further

guidance on the interpretation of the adopted policies. Section 2 of the SPD deals with 'All Conversions'. The SPD sets assessment matters against checklist items and the relevant ones have been referred to below.

Main considerations:

7.5 The main issues to be considered are:

- i) Principle of development
- ii) Design
- iii) The impact on amenity of existing and future residents of the property and neighbouring properties;
- iv) Car/ Cycle Parking;
- v) Bin Storage;
- vi) Other Matters

(i) Principle of development

- 7.6 Under Policy H8 and the SPD Checklist item 3 any residential conversion must contribute to achieving an appropriately mixed and sustainable community by providing an acceptable housing mix, ensuring that, as appropriate, single family housing remains the dominant form of dwelling in the vicinity of the application.
- 7.7 The Residential Conversions SPD sets out a threshold approach with the 'tipping point' defined as the point above which the concentration of HMOs becomes over-dominant and the community is no longer considered to be mixed and sustainable. The property is not within the Article 4 direction area, which restricts the permitted change from C3 to C4 and as the property has already been converted to flats its change to HMO use would have no differing effect with regard to a mixed and sustainable community in terms of the loss of single family house having already taken place. There is no requirement to undertake the 'tipping point' calculation in this instance.
- 7.8 Checklist 4 of the SPD states that proposals for conversions should not result in a dwellinghouse being located directly between two HMOs and focusses (para 2.12) on the issues of "*the particular potential for noise and disturbance impacts as a result of HMO accommodation, particularly in locations of older housing where there are thin party walls without sound insulation. This can be magnified in a situation where a dwellinghouse shares a party wall with HMOs on either side.*" It also refers to avoiding sandwiching as a means to contributing "*towards maintaining a mixed and balanced community.*" However, as set out above the dwelling has already been converted to flats. The current proposal would require building regulations approval, which would include sound insulation measures to comply with Part E. An informative is included reminding the applicant of the requirement for building regulations and a condition requiring the scheme to implement insulation measures to accord with Building Regulations and other mitigation measures as set out with the submitted Noise Statement (to form one of the approved documents). In addition, there will be a condition requiring the submission and approval of a management agreement, which would include how issues of noise would be controlled. This proposal, therefore, represents an opportunity to improve the current conditions. In any case it is considered that the proposed HMO for 6 people would have an occupancy which would be similar or equivalent to what would be possible for 3 flats, if one assumes double occupancy of each flat, therefore the level of additional noise and disturbance is unlikely to be significantly different to its current use. Also, the proposed communal areas would be within the basement and within the extension so would have limited impact compared to the current situation of the living spaces of the flats being adjacent to the party wall at ground, first and second floor levels.
- 7.9 Policy H7 states "*Planning permission will not be granted for any loss of residential accommodation or land unless there are exceptional circumstances. Planning permission will not be granted for a net loss in the number of residential units or gross floor area.*" The proposal would result in the loss of three one bed flats but the creation of one dwellinghouse in C4 HMO use. The proposal

would be retained in residential use and would likely provide a more affordable type of residential accommodation for up to 6 people. The redevelopment of the site would also enable upgrades to the property and would return the property to being one dwelling unit, which could be converted back to one C3 use family dwelling without any further planning permission. The existing one bed flats are unlikely to have contributed to meeting the needs for family housing and so the conversion to an HMO is unlikely to have a significant impact within the overall housing market such that it would warrant refusal on this basis. It is not considered that the change of use would be significantly materially different, therefore, to the three, relatively poor quality, y one bed flats.

The principle of a small HMO is, therefore, considered acceptable in principle.

(ii) Design (Policies CC7, CC8, H8, H9, H10 and SPD Checklist items 1 and 2)

- 7.10 Policy CC7 requires all developments to be of a high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located.
- 7.11 The proposal includes an enlargement of the rear single storey extension and a change to the roof from mono-pitched roof to flat roof, however this would not be out of character with other extensions within the immediate area.
- 7.12 There would be a small reduction to the length of the front boundary wall to enable practical movement of bins to the pavement and there would be a reopening of the front stairs to the existing basement. Having bins to the front would retain the existing position and would be the most practical solution to waste management. There would be a low metal fence between the bin area and the steps for safety purposes. Overall, it is not considered that there would be a significant detrimental effect with regard to the appearance of the property from the front.
- 7.13 There would be some limited changes to fenestration including some small bathroom windows and roof lights to the front and rear, which are not considered to detrimentally harm the appearance of the property overall.

(iii) The impact on amenity of existing and future residents of the property and neighbouring properties (Policies CC8, H8 and H10 and SPD Checklist items 2, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10 and 11)

Room Sizes

- 7.14 The proposed ensuite HMO rooms would have an internal dimension of 9 up to 11.7sqm and this would meet the nationally described space standards (Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard', 2015, DCLG) and would accord with Regulation 2 of the 'The Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (Mandatory Conditions of Licences) (England) Regulations 2018', which refers to national minimum standards for sleeping accommodation as:
- 6.51 square metres for one person aged 10 years or over;
 - 10.5 square metres for two persons aged 10 years or over;
- 7.15 The bedrooms are proposed for single occupancy and exceed the above national minimums and are, therefore, acceptable in terms of size. The number and occupancy of each room will be restricted by condition.

Communal Space

- 7.16 The SPD identifies that the amount of communal space that is considered appropriate in a large HMO would be dependent on the number and size of bedrooms. The standard set out is for one communal room for every 4-6 bedrooms depending on the sizes of the bedrooms. The scheme has a proposed combined kitchen/ dining room at ground floor. A communal room at the basement level is also proposed. This would have external windows and some outlook and combined with the kitchen/ dining area and the external amenity space is on balance considered acceptable. A condition is recommended to ensure that the communal areas are retained for communal use only.

Amenity Space

- 7.17 The application includes a good sized rear garden area, which is considered to provide a good level of space for functional communal space and sitting out. This is considered to be in accordance with Policy H10.

External windows

- 7.18 All proposed bedrooms and habitable rooms would benefit from an external window.

Loss of Light/ Overbearing

- 7.19 The proposed enlargement of the single storey rear extension would project a further 2.1m and this would in turn project further past the rear of the existing extension at number 64. However, there would be no breach of the 60-degree line from the centre of the nearest habitable windows. The maximum height would be reduced. The proposal would extend a limited amount past the rear building line of no. 60. and overall it is considered that there would not be any significant detriment with respect to loss of light or being overbearing to the adjoining residents.

Overlooking

- 7.20 The limited rear additional windows for bathrooms and roof lights would not be considered to cause an unacceptable impact upon the adjacent occupiers' amenity.

Layout/Stacking of Rooms

- 7.21 The Council's SPD seeks to avoid layouts which locate living rooms, bathrooms and kitchens, next to, above, or below, proposed or neighbouring bedrooms. The layout largely achieves this with only the proposed bedroom at ground floor located next to the communal living/kitchen/dining room.

Noise and Disturbance and Pollution

- 7.22 The proposal would include enhancement in terms of insulation between units, in accordance with Part E of Building Regulations. In any case the level of noise from six people would not be significantly different to its existing flat use which could have housed 6 people. As stated above a condition is recommended to require the submission and approval of an overall HMO Management Plan and implementation of measures to accord with Building Regulations. Additionally, disturbance or nuisance is also controlled by civil enforcement (police) and statutory nuisance legislation (Environmental Health).

iii) Car/Cycle parking (Policies H8, CC8 and TR5 and SPD Checklist items 14, 15 & 17)

- 7.23 Policy TR5 states that parking standards for all residential conversions should be in accordance with the Council's adopted Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD.
- 7.24 The proposal is presented as car-free and as there are extensive parking restrictions in place in the vicinity of the site, conditions and an informative are included advising that any future occupants of the proposed HMO will not be issued with resident or visitor parking permits.
- 7.25 In accordance with the SPD, cycle storage for an HMO should be provided at a ratio of 0.5 secure cycle storage spaces for each letting room, in the form of Sheffield type stands within a lockable store. Covered lockable cycle storage would be in an existing building within the rear garden. A compliance condition is recommended to ensure that this facility is provided and retained for bicycle parking at all times.

iv) Bin Storage (Policy H8 and SPD Checklist item 18)

- 7.26 Bins would be retained to the front of the property as existing, but in a smaller area. A condition is included requiring the provision and retention of this bin storage area.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 The proposal has been considered in the context of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and relevant SPDs and is considered acceptable. The proposal is not considered to result in any material harm over and above the existing use. An HMO management condition is included. The recommendation is, therefore, to GRANT, subject to the following conditions and informatives:

Conditions

- Standard 3-year time limit
- Approved Plans
- Materials to match
- HMO Communal Space to be Retained and basement to not be an independent unit
- HMO Occupation
- HMO Refuse and Recycling – as approved
- HMO Cycle Storage – as approved
- Parking Permit Restrictionx2
- Construction Method Statement
- HMO Management Plan
- Removal of PD rights
- No use of flat roof

Informatives

Terms and conditions
Pre-commencement conditions
Building Control
Highways
Complaints about construction
Encroachment
Parking permits
HMO Management Plan
Positive & proactive