

## DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Park Ward

App Ref: PL/24/1161 Full planning permission

Address: Webbs Court, 8 Holmes Road, Earley, Reading, RG6 7BH

Proposal: Conversion of existing Dance Studio premises to 1 x dwelling

Applicant: Mr J. Talfourd-Cook

Received date: 04/09/2024

Target Decision date: 28/06/2026 (agreed extension of time)

Case Officer: Marcelina Rejwerska

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### 1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site comprises a commercial premises at the rear of Wokingham Road Fire Station. The site was previously in use as The Lodge School of Theatre Dance but is now vacant. The property is set back from the road accessed by a private paved driveway and is part two-storey, part single-storey in form.

Holmes Road is comprised of residential dwellings in varying character. The site is within an Air Quality Management Area.



Figure 1 Aerial view of the application site. Taken from Google Maps.

### 2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Planning permission is sought for the conversion of the existing dance studio to 1 x 3-bedroom dwelling (C3 Use Class). Minimal external alterations are proposed comprised of minor changes to the fenestration layout, internal layout changes and a new electric entrance gate.

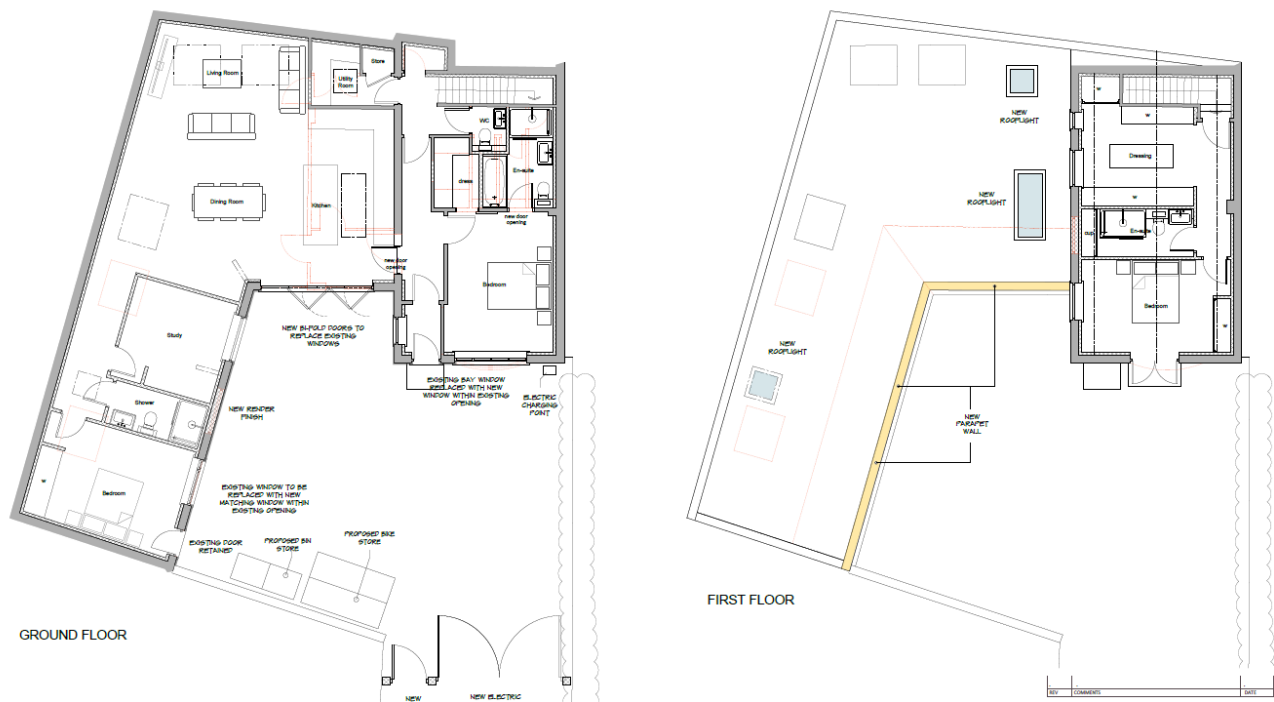


Figure 2 Proposed floor plans

### 2.1. Information submitted:

- 3934 – Planning Design and Access Statement
- 3934 - RBC Sustainability Statement
- 3934 – Planning Affordable Housing Statement
- 304746 - Energy Statement Rev A
- 3934 - 200A - BLOCK AND LOCATION PLAN
- 3934 - 201D - PROPOSED FLOOR PLANS
- 3934 - 202A - PROPOSED ELEVATIONS
- 3934 - 203B - PROPOSED SITE PLAN
- 3934 - 204 - PROPOSED ENTRANCE GATE
- 3934 - 205 - SECTIONS
- 0000 - 101 - EXTG FLOOR PLANS
- 0000 - 102 - EXTG ELEVATIONS

Received by the LPA on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2024

- Affordable House Viability Statement, dated March 2025, received 21<sup>st</sup> March 2025
- Noise Impact Assessment, Clarke Saunders Acoustics, dated 16 June 2025, received 16<sup>th</sup> June 2025
- Bike Shed Details, received 8 October 2025
- Habitat Enhancement, received 9 October 2025
- Parking Layout, received 28 October 2025
- Construction Method Statement, received 28 November 2025
- Garden Plan, received 8 January 2026

## 3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

PL/11/1772 - Change of use from B1 (office) to D2 (ballet studio). Application permitted.

#### **4. CONSULTATIONS**

The following were consulted:

- RBC Transport Development Control – No objections subject to conditions.
- RBC Environmental Protection – No objections subject to conditions.
- Ecology – No objection subject to conditions.

Nearby properties were consulted via letter. Letters of representation have been received as follows:  
2 objections, citing concerns:

- Uncontrolled risk of HMO conversion, the application site should be subject to an Article 4 Direction to remove permitted development rights relating to C3-C4 changes of use.
- Positioning of the application site to the back of the existing line of dwellings on Holmes Road presents risk of overlooking and loss of privacy.
- Submitted site photographs are misleading.
- First floor windows should be obscure glazed and fixed shut
- There should not be any habitable room windows on the first floor.
- Proposal contains no outdoor amenity space.
- External walls of the existing building are unsuitable for a residential conversion.
- Backland development is out of character for Holmes Road and would be an eyesore.
- Large bulky gates would be out of keeping with the road.
- No landscaping or greenery has been considered.

#### **5. 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'. 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

CC5: WASTE MINIMISATION AND STORAGE

CC7: DESIGN AND THE PUBLIC REALM

CC8: SAFEGUARDING AMENITY

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

TR3: ACCESS, TRAFFIC AND HIGHWAY-RELATED MATTERS

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)

#### 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 Matters**

Paragraph 123 of the NPPF states *“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. Strategic policies should set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously developed or ‘brownfield’ land”*.

The definition within the NPPF states that brownfield land (previously developed land) is defined as: *“Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure.”*

The proposal comprises of conversion of a vacant dance studio, and is considered acceptable in this respect, subject to acceptable design, layout and no harm posed to nearby residents.

### **6.2. Design and Character**

Policy CC7 requires all development to be of high-quality design and maintain and enhance the character and appearance of the surrounding area. Policy H5 is also relevant and sets out standards for new housing, including minimum space standards.

The proposed dwelling exceeds the nationally described minimum space standards. There are minimal external alterations proposed, mostly to facilitate the change of use to residential. A new render finish is proposed, which is considered acceptable, as it is typical of the dwellings on Holmes Road.

Objections have been received in relation to the siting of the property at the rear of the established line of dwellings on Holmes Road and the impact of the development on the wider character of the street. As the property is existing and the proposal external alterations fairly minimal, it is not considered that the wider character of the area would be impacted negatively by this proposal.

### **6.3. 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.

Objections have been received from neighbouring properties citing concerns regarding overlooking and loss of privacy due to the unusual siting of the building at the rear of the building line on Holmes Road. The windows on the first floor would raise the biggest risk of harm. The proposed layout shows that there

is one habitable room (a bedroom) on the first floor, which would be served by two windows, one on the south/front elevation and a secondary on the west/side elevation. The distance between the façade of the building and the rear of no. 10 Homes Road is approx. 15m, while the distance between the side elevation and the rear garden of 8 Holmes Road is just under 10m. Overall, it is not considered that there is an unreasonable risk of harm of overlooking or loss of privacy either to neighbouring properties or the future occupants. A condition is recommended to remove permitted development rights in relation to new window openings and roof alterations, to ensure that any proposed future window openings are assessed against the impacts on the neighbouring properties.

The RBC Environmental Protection Team have raised concerns regarding potential unreasonable internal noise levels due to the property being situated directly next to Wokingham Road Fire Station. A noise assessment was carried out and submitted to demonstrate that the risk is relatively low, and no specialist mitigation is required apart from standard double glazing and non-acoustically rated trickle vents. This has been reviewed by the Environmental Protection officer and is considered acceptable.

There are no other identified risks of harm to the future occupiers identified. The fenestration layout allows adequate access to natural sunlight/daylight. There are also no other identified risks to neighbouring properties.

Policy H10 is also relevant and seeks to secure functional private or communal open space, including green space where possible, for all new dwellings. The proposed garden space is small compared to the size of the house and the local pattern of garden sizes, however, this is considered acceptable in this case due to the unusual layout of the site.

#### 6.4. Transport Matters

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 in Zone 3, Secondary Core Area and in accordance with the SPD, the development would require 2 parking spaces. These have been demonstrated on the submitted parking layout plan, which is considered acceptable. A condition is also recommended to inform the applicant that future occupiers may not be eligible for on street parking permits as there is sufficient provision on site.

In accordance with the SPD, the development would be required to provide 2 cycle parking spaces. In a development of this nature this can be provided within an individual store such as a garden shed. A separate bike store has been illustrated on plans, and the details of an enclosed and lockable timber bike shed have been submitted and are deemed acceptable. Furthermore, all new developments are required to provide electric vehicle charging points. A condition is recommended to secure the details prior to first occupation.

The applicant has also submitted a construction method statement which has been reviewed by the RBC Transport Development Control team and is considered acceptable.

#### 6.5. Habitat Enhancement

Policy EN12 requires all development to create new opportunities for Green Links, and to improve where possible the biodiversity of sites.

There is no open green space on the site as existing, and a small lawn area proposed for a private garden. As such, habitat enhancements have been submitted in the form of integrated bat and bird boxes. This is considered acceptable.

#### 6.6. Affordable Housing & 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 submitted a Viability Statement to demonstrate that the development is not viable. This has been reviewed by external viability assessors, and the RBC Valuations team and officers are satisfied that the development is not viable. However, as no exceptional costs have been demonstrated, an upfront contribution with a deferred payment mechanism has been agreed with the applicant. This is considered satisfactory in meeting the requirements of Policy H3.

### **7. CONCLUSION**

The proposal has been assessed in accordance with national and locally adopted policies and is considered in accordance with those policies.

### **8. RECOMMENDATION**

#### **GRANT PERMISSION**

Recommended conditions:

1. Time limit (standard)
2. Approved plans
3. Materials as specified
4. Noise mitigation as specified
5. SAP assessment to be submitted prior to first occupation
6. Habitat enhancement scheme as specified
7. Construction method statement as specified
8. Vehicle parking as specified
9. Cycle parking details as specified
10. Refuse collection to be approved (prior to first occupation)
11. EV charging points (prior to first occupation)
12. Parking permits 1
13. Parking permits 2

Informatives:

1. Terms
2. S106
3. Building Control
4. Complaints about construction
5. Encroachment
6. Contaminated land
7. Highways
8. PD rights removed – new windows
9. CIL