

**COMMITTEE REPORT**  
**BY THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES**  
**READING BOROUGH COUNCIL** **ITEM NO. 7**  
**PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 11<sup>th</sup> January 2017**

**Ward:** Abbey  
**App No.:** 161336 FUL and 161337/LBC  
**Address:** 36 Russell Street, Reading  
**Proposal:** Proposed loft conversion with three dormers on the rear roof elevation.  
**Applicant:** Reading Real Estate Co. (UK) Ltd  
**Date valid:** 09<sup>th</sup> August 2016  
**Agreed Extension date:** 14<sup>th</sup> December 2016  
**26 week date:** 16<sup>th</sup> January 2017

**RECOMMENDATION**

Is to GRANT planning permission 161336/FUL and GRANT Listed Building Consent 161337/LBC.

PLANNING PERMISSION 161336/FUL

CONDITIONS TO INCLUDE:

1. Time
2. Approved Plans
3. Materials to Match
4. Plans at 1:10 with Material Details Annotated of Dormer Windows
5. Details of Proposed Staircase/Method Statement
6. Bicycle Storage
7. Parking Permits - Notification of Postal Address
8. Parking Permits - Prospective Occupiers
9. Control of Noise and Dust During Demolition and Construction
10. Hours of Construction Working

INFORMATIVES TO INCLUDE:

1. Terms and Conditions
2. Building Regulations
3. No Parking Permits
4. Damage to Highway
5. Works Affecting the Highway
6. Positive and Proactive

LISTED BUILDING CONSENT 161337/LBC

CONDITIONS TO INCLUDE:

1. Time
2. Materials to Match
3. Plans at 1:10 with Material Details Annotated of Dormer Windows
4. Details of Proposed Staircase/Method Statement
5. Control of Noise and Dust During Demolition and Construction
6. Hours of Construction Working

INFORMATIVES TO INCLUDE:

- |  |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Plans</li><li>2. Positive and Proactive</li></ol> |
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This site, as illustrated on the location plan below, relates to the Grade II Listed 36 Russell Street. This is a two storey building with basement located on the western side of Russell Street and on the corner with Baker Street. 36A Russell Street is located to the rear of the house, a two storey annex to the house and a former stables and hay loft.
- 1.2 No.36 Russell Street was listed on 14<sup>th</sup> December 1978. The list description reads: 'Early-mid C19. 2 storey brick house. Slate roof. 3 bays, plate glass sash windows. Central door with contemporary patterned fanlight and delicate wire porch of curved 'Dutch' gable design with lotus pattern finial. Stable to left continuing elevation with garage doors on ground floor, and loft over'.
- 1.3 The site is within the Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area, as well as an Air Quality Management Area. The surrounding area is predominantly residential
- 1.4 The proposal is to be determined at Planning Applications Committee as it has been called in by Cllr Page due to possible impact on the Listed Building.

Location Plan (not to scale)



- 2.4 The application is supported by the following documents:
- Design and Access Statement - Roof Alterations Proposal
- 2.5 No Pre-Application advice was sought prior to the submission of this application.

3. **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

01-01188-FUL Conversion of first floor (3 bed-sits) into 2 no. one bedroom flats. Permitted.

01-01187 - LBC Conversion of first floor (3 bed-sits) into 2 no. one bedroom flats. Permitted.

4. **CONSULTATIONS**  
**Non-statutory**

- 4.1 Councils Conservation Consultant - No objection in principle, subject to conditions
- 4.2 RBC Transport Strategy - No objection subject to conditions and informatives.
- 4.3 RBC Environmental Protection - No objection subject to informatives.

5 **PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 Notification letters were sent to properties at 38, 38a, 41, 43 Russell Street and 32 and 61 Baker Street and a site notice was displayed.

As a result of the consultations:

Two letters of concern received from the Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee and The Reading Civic Society on the following grounds:

- Use of building
- Works already undertaken to the building
- Size of windows
- Surrounding Wall
- Undesirable Precedence

**SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS WITH APPLICANT/AGENT**

- 5.1 The agent was advised about concerns relating to lack of outlook and daylight to the proposed bedroom. Revised plans were received incorporating a third dormer window to the rear elevation, which would serve the bedroom. The Heritage Officer had no objection to the additional dormer window, which also overcomes concerns relating to suitable residential accommodation for future occupiers.

6 **RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE**

**National and Local Policy**

- National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
- National Planning Policy Framework (2012)

**Reading Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy Document, 2008**

- Policy CS1 (Sustainable Construction and Design)
- Policy CS7 (Design and the Public Realm)

- Policy CS15 (Housing Provision)
- Policy CS20 (Implementation of the Reading Transport Strategy)
- Policy CS24 (Car/Cycle Parking)
- Policy CS33 (Protection of the Historic Environment)
- Policy CS34 (Pollution and Water Resources)

Sites and Detailed Policies Document, (SDPD), Adopted 2012 Revised 2015

- Policy DM1 (Adaption to Climate Change)
- Policy DM4 (Safeguarding Amenity)
- Policy DM5 (Housing Mix)
- Policy DM6 (Affordable Housing)
- Policy DM8 (Residential Conversions)
- Policy DM10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space)
- Policy DM12 (Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters)
- Policy DM19 (Air Quality)

Relevant Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents

- Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)
- Sustainable Design and Construction (2011)
- Planning Obligations under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, (Revised 1/4/2015).

## 7 APPRAISAL

The main issues in consideration of this application are:

- Principle of development
- Design Considerations / Impact on the Listed Building and Conservation Area
- Impact on Neighbouring Amenity
- Amenity of Future Occupiers
- Housing Mix
- Highways and parking
- Affordable Housing
- Other matters

### Principle of the Development

- 7.1 Application 01-01188-FUL established the use of the property as 5 self-contained residential flats. Therefore the principle of the conversion and extension of the property to form an additional flat is considered acceptable subject to the relevant material planning considerations set out below.
- 7.2 The property is already in use as 5 flats and therefore there are no concerns with regards to the loss of single family housing or dilution of the existing mixed/sustainable community. This, together with ensuring only suitable properties are converted to flats are the main aims of Policies DM8 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012, altered 2015) and Policy CS18 of the Core Strategy (2008, altered 2015). Given the property already has a lawful use as 5 flats and the officers' site visit confirmed that it remains in that use, many of the aims of the above two policies are not directly relevant to this proposal. Nonetheless, a number of the elements provide useful additional criteria against which the proposal can be considered.

### Design Considerations/ Impact on the Listed Building and Conservation Area

- 7.3 The concerns raised regarding the acceptability of dormer windows on a Listed Building are noted. The fact that a building is listed should not, in itself, be used as the reason for not allowing alterations or extensions. The opportunities for alterations and extensions to a listed building will largely depend on its age, style and location and how much it has previously been altered. Dormer windows have been in existence on listed buildings since at least the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Century and if designed appropriately, do not represent alien features .
- 7.3 Due to the nature of the proposals, there would be no increase in the footprint of the building and the scale of the building would not change. Further to revised plans, three small dormer windows are proposed on the rear elevation to facilitate the conversion. Whilst they would not fully align with the windows below, this is already the case with the existing windows on the rear elevation. The dormer windows would be small in scale and set well down below the main roof ridge. Whilst they would not be symmetrical, due to their scale they would be unobtrusive and would not clutter the roofspace. The use of matching tiles would assist in blending the appearance of the dormer windows with that of the existing roof.
- 7.4 The Case Officer and Heritage Officer undertook a site visit. Further to this, the Heritage Officer confirmed that there was no objection to the proposed loft conversion and three dormer windows to facilitate the proposal, subject to acceptable detailing of the dormer windows and details of the proposed staircase. It is noted that the proposed staircase would re-use some of the materials of the original staircase and this element of the proposals is not considered a significant intrusion into the original arrangement of the house, with the layout keeping the majority of the original main staircase. The Heritage Officer considers these could be secured by way of an appropriate condition. The proposed dormer windows are not considered to have any harmful effect on the setting of the listed building that would detract from its legibility and significance.
- 7.6 Given the site's corner plot location, the proposed dormer windows would be visible from Baker Street. However, as stated above, they are unobtrusive. Dormer windows do feature within the vicinity, including to the adjacent No.32 Russell Street and No's 48 and 50 Russell Street further to the south, the latter of which are Listed Buildings. Given the small scale of each dormer window, and the pitched gable roof design, they are considered to integrate relatively well with the host building. Given this, and the above, they are not considered to have an adverse effect on the integrity and setting of the listed building, the character or appearance of the host building, the visual amenities of the street scene or the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. As such, in this specific instance, the proposal is considered to comply with Policies CS7 and CS33 of the Core Strategy (2008, altered 2015).

### Residential on Neighbouring Amenity

- 7.7 SDPD DM4 'Safeguarding Amenity' seeks that development will not cause a significantly detrimental impact to the living environment of existing and new residential properties. Due to the nature of the proposals, position and small scale nature of the dormer windows on the rear roof slope, it is not considered there would be any material loss of light or overbearing impact to any neighbouring property. The proposed dormer windows would face down the applicant's site and any views of the neighbouring garden would be at an oblique angle. Given the

existence of first floor windows it is considered that any additional loss of privacy would not be unacceptable.

### Amenity of Future Occupiers

- 7.8 Concerns were raised that the proposed bedroom would not have any outlook or access to daylight. Further to this, a revised plan was received showing a third dormer window which would afford outlook and daylight to this bedroom. Given this, the resultant unit would be served by adequate daylighting and outlook. The Council does not have adopted minimum room sizes for residential conversions. Certain standards are referred to in the Council's Residential Conversions Supplementary Planning Document; however, this document specifically relates to conversion of existing residential properties to HMOs. Nonetheless, this and nationally prescribed technical housing standard document (also not adopted) provide a useful guide.
- 7.9 The national technical housing standards advise that the minimum gross internal floor area for a 1 storey 1 person dwelling is 39m<sup>2</sup>. The overall internal floor area would exceed this recommendation and in this respect the unit size is considered acceptable.
- 7.10 With regard to ceiling height there is no statutory minimum requirement, although Building Regulations requires a 2m headroom clearance for staircases. It is, nevertheless, generally recommended that residential accommodation should have a 'good practice' minimum floor to ceiling height of 2.15m. In this instance a sectional drawing has been provided and in relation to the proposal, with dormer window additions, the central part of the room would achieve the minimum height of 2.15m. In terms of usable space it is acknowledged that the edges of the room, due to the sloping ceilings where this drops below 1.5m, does not reflect the footprint of the loft but on balance, what is considered to be useable space would roughly accord with guidance on floor standards .
- 7.11 Given this, and given the reasonable outlook and daylighting, in respect of providing a suitable level of residential accommodation, it is considered that it would be difficult to sustain a reason for refusal based upon the proposed room sizes in this instance. The proposal would have to meet all relevant requirements under building regulations.
- 7.12 Environmental Protection Officers have no objection to the proposal subject to informatives relating to the demolition and construction phase.
- 7.13 Given the location of the site and access to nearby public amenities, it is considered that in this specific instance the limited provision of amenity space is acceptable.

### Housing Mix

- 7.14 Policy CS15 of the Reading Core Strategy 2008 (2015) states that "Developments should provide an appropriate range of housing opportunities in terms of a mix of housing types, sizes and tenures, in accordance with the findings of a housing market assessment." The supporting text to this policy states that the provision of at least an element of family housing in all developments is a priority, based on the findings of the Berkshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2007) (SHMA). The policy also states that the appropriate density and mix of residential development will be informed by the characteristics of the area in which it is located and accessibility. Given the sites location it is considered that the proposed change

from four x one bed and one x two bed units to five x one bed and one x two bed units would be appropriate.

### **Highways and Parking**

- 7.15 The site is located within the Zone 2, the primary core area but on the periphery of the central core area which lies at the heart of Reading Borough, consisting primarily of retail and commercial office developments with good transport hubs. This zone is well served by public transport, with buses continuing either into or out of the Central Core Area via this zone.
- 7.16 In accordance with the adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD, the development would be required to provide a parking provision of 1 parking space.
- 7.17 The agent has confirmed to the planning officer that this development is to be a car free development. Given the close proximity to the town centre, and an appropriate informative being placed on the proposal, the non-provision of car parking would be acceptable in this instance.
- 7.18 The development site is located in an area designated as a Residents Parking Permit Area; Zone 08R. Under the Borough's current parking standards, this proposal would generate additional pressure for parking in the area. Therefore if this application is approved there should be an assumption that any future occupants of the proposed dwelling will not be issued with a resident parking permit which should 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.
- 7.19 In accordance with the adopted Parking SPD, the development is required to provide a minimum of 1.0 cycle parking spaces for the dwelling which should be in a conveniently located, lockable, covered store. Plans submitted do not illustrate cycle parking provision, no details about the type of storage have been provided. The applicant will be required to illustrate the type of secure provision planned, however this can be secured by way of an appropriate condition.
- 7.20 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.

The Council's Transport Officers have no objection to the proposal, subject to conditions and informatives.

### **Sustainability**

- 7.21 Whilst proposals previously needed to fully demonstrate how developments meet the requirements of policy CS1 in the adopted Core Strategy, policies DM1 and DM2, it should be noted that energy requirements for new developments have been recently streamlined by the Government. The application does not constitute a major development and these matters can be controlled by condition; as such the development is not considered to have an adverse effect on the environment and will take account of the effects of climate change. Notwithstanding the above, the appropriate level of sustainable construction would be secured the appropriate building regulations requirements.

## Affordable Housing

- 7.22 West Berkshire District Council and Reading Borough Council applied for a judicial review of the Secretary of State's Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) to Parliament in 2014 on changes to national planning policy. Those changes sought to exempt developments of 10 or less dwellings from planning obligations for affordable housing and social infrastructure contributions and to introduce a new measure known as the Vacant Building Credit.

The High Court handed down its judgment on the case on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2015. The High Court found in favour of the challenge by the local authorities and quashed the amendments to the NPPG. The Secretary of State appealed the judgment and the Court of Appeal then quashed the decision of the High Court.

Reading Borough Council has been considering its options for implementing its affordable housing policy in the light of this decision. At its meeting of the Strategic Environment Planning and Transport Committee on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2016, the Council discussed the outcome of the Court of Appeal's decision on its challenge ([http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/5651/Item09-SEPT-C-Report-on-C-of-Appeal-judgement-05-16/pdf/Item09\\_SEPT\\_C\\_Report\\_on\\_C\\_of\\_Appeal\\_judgement\\_05\\_16.pdf](http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/5651/Item09-SEPT-C-Report-on-C-of-Appeal-judgement-05-16/pdf/Item09_SEPT_C_Report_on_C_of_Appeal_judgement_05_16.pdf)).

Having considered its options, the Committee agreed the following as the basis for determining planning applications where Policy DM6 of the SDPD is relevant:

*To implement Policy DM6 as currently adopted in the SDPD but excluding proposals that solely involve the conversion of an existing property, where the conversion involves the provision of 10 or less dwelling units (i.e. not HMOs), or the replacement of dwellings by the same number of replacement dwellings where there is no net increase.*

The proposal relates to the conversion of an existing property and the three rear dormer roof extensions are not considered to be significant extensions to the property. Therefore, on the basis of the above amendment to Policy DM6 the proposal is not considered to require an affordable housing contribution in this instance.

## CIL

Given the nature of the proposals the scheme is not liable to any CIL contribution.

## Representations

- 7.23 Concern has been raised about the usage of the building. The building's authorised use is for self-contained flats, 3 on the ground floor and 2 on the first floor. The site visit confirmed that the premises remain in such use and the Council Tax department have confirmed their records show the flats (which were granted permission in 2001) banded as such since 2002. It is considered that the building is being used as flats and not an HMO.
- 7.24 Concern has also been raised about works already undertaken to the building. Further to the site visit by the Case Officer and Heritage Officer, which included access to the basement, ground and first floor and garden, it appeared that the works were confined to internal re-decoration and replacement of carpets/vinyl

floor coverings as well as updating of kitchen units. These elements would be considered de minimis in terms of planning.

- 7.25 No works are proposed to the surrounding brick wall, nor have they been undertaken.
- 7.26 Any planning applications received for similar developments would be considered on their merits. Similarly, a previous refusal on another property does not automatically mean that a similar proposal would not be acceptable elsewhere.
- 7.27 All other material considerations covered in the above report.

### Equality

- 7.28 In determining this application the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the current application) that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application.
- 7.29 In terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

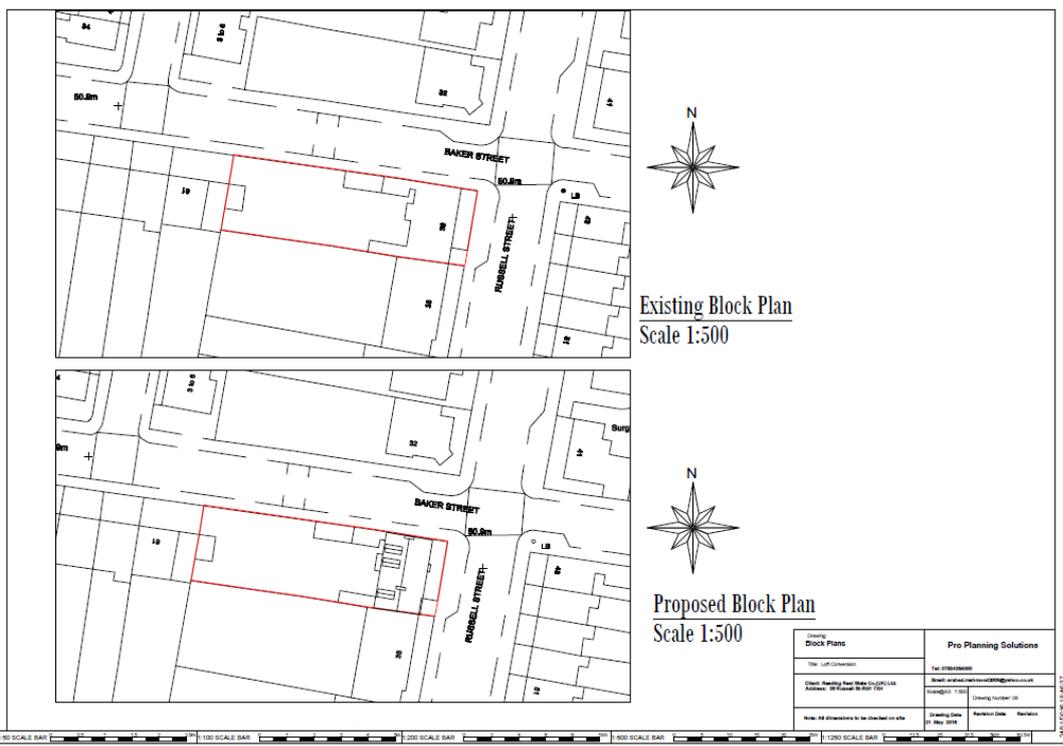
### CONCLUSION

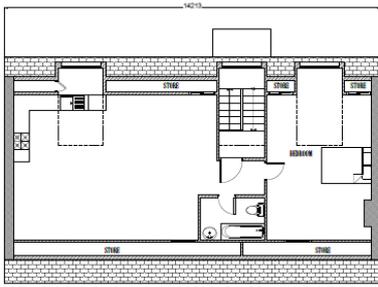
- 8. On the basis of the above, the proposal is considered acceptable in principle and with regard to the impact on the Listed Building, character and appearance of the Conservation Area, impact on neighbouring properties, future occupiers and parking. The planning application is accordingly recommended for approval subject to the conditions and informatives listed.

Plans:

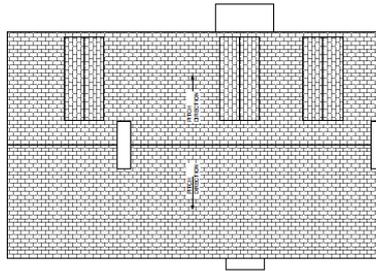
To be advised in an update as amended plans are expected.

Case Officer: Ethne Humphreys

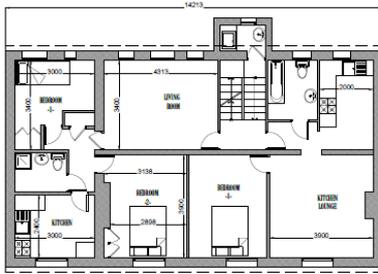




**PROPOSED LOFT PLAN**  
Scale 1:100



**PROPOSED ROOF PLAN**  
Scale 1:100



**EXISTING FIRST FLOOR PLAN**  
Scale 1:100



Client		Pro Planning Solutions	
<b>Proposed Plans</b>		Tel: 01753 655555	
The Loft conversion		Email: <a href="mailto:info@proplanning.com">info@proplanning.com</a>	
Client: Mr & Mrs Paul & Susan Lark Address: 10 Church Lane, Lark		Drawing Number: 001	
Drawing Date: 01 May 2018		Revision Date: 01 May 2018	
Note: All dimensions to be checked on site.			

PLAN 001 - 01/05/18