

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Abbey

App Ref: 211696/FUL

Address: 34 St Marys Butts, Reading, RG1 2LQ

Proposals: Alterations to rear of ground floor commercial premises to remove strong room and incorporating new door and window openings.

Case Officer: Mr David Brett

Applicant: RPS Property Services

Date received: 14/10/2021

Valid from: 14/10/2021

Target Decision date: 14/01/2022, extension of time agreed on decision from 09/12/2021

1. INTRODUCTION

The proposal site is a three-storey middle terraced property located on St Marys Butts. The ground floor, first floor and second floor consist of a vacant Class E unit, which was previously occupied by the Cooperative Bank, which closed on 22nd May 2018. The proposal site is located within the St Mary's Butts / Castle Street Conservation Area and is located within the High Street Heritage Action Zone.

34 St Marys Butts adjoins 35 & 37 St. Mary's Butts, which is a Grade II Listed Building.

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The proposed development seeks the following:

- Replacement doors and openings to the ground floor rear of the building.
- Rooflight to the ground floor office to the rear.
- Insertion of two side facing windows to the first-floor side elevation.
- Insertion of two side facing windows to the second-floor side elevation.

Plans considered (plans with double strikethrough denote superseded plans):

- ~~Planning Statement - 9063-21~~
- Heritage Statement - 9063-21
- Location Plan - 9063-PL-01
- Existing Plans - 9063-PL-05
- Existing Elevations - 9063-PL-06
- Proposed Plans GF Alterations - 9063-PL-08
- Proposed Elevations GF Alterations - 9063-PL-10

Received on 14/10/2021

- Planning Statement - 9063-21-Rev-1

Received on 11/01/2022

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

010080/FUL - (Retention of) installation of 1.0m satellite antenna wall mounted on rear elevation - Application permitted on 08/11/2001

070146/ADV - 1 X internally illuminated fascia sign, 1 X double-sided internally illuminated projecting sign - Application permitted on 23/01/2008

190364/FUL - Change of Use of first and second floors from A2 (financial services) to C1 (providing four serviced apartments) and of the ground floor from A2 (financial services) to A1 (providing for a coffee shop/café) with changes to the ground floor frontage - Application Permitted on 28/11/2019

201349/FUL - Change of Use of first and second floors from Class E to 4 x flats (C3 use) (2 x 1-bed, 2 x 2-bed) including rear extension, retention of E use class at ground floor and changes to the ground floor frontage. (amended) - Application permitted on 05/03/2021

210556/APC - Application for approval of details reserved by condition. (201349) - Application Closed on 18/06/2021

211328/OPA - Change of use of 1st and 2nd floors from Class E (Commercial, Business and Service) to C3 (dwelling houses) to comprise 4 1-bed flats. Prior Notification under Class MA, Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (Amended Description). - Application Permitted on 28/10/2021

4. CONSULTATIONS

4.1 *The following addresses were consulted by letter.*

Neighbours:

32 St Marys Butts, Reading, RG1 2LS - No response received.
32a St Marys Butts, Reading, RG1 2LS - No response received.
35 St Marys Butts, Reading, RG1 2LS - No response received.
36 St Marys Butts, Reading, RG1 2LS - No response received.
37 St Marys Butts, Reading, RG1 2LS - No response received.

Reading Borough Council, Conservation & Urban Design Officer CUDO - Response received on 06/01/2022

- Apart from the material of the windows (no UPVC to be installed) and ensuring they are painted with an oil-based paint, there are generally no objections to the approval of the proposed works as they will not be seen from the street and will not have a material effect on the character and significance of the conservation area.
- There are no objections subject to materials condition.

Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee - No response received.

A site notice was displayed from Sunday 7th November 2021, expiring on Sunday 28th November 2021. A press notice was published on 11th November, expiring on 2nd December 2021. No further responses have been received.

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

Reading Borough Local Plan (Adopted November 2019)

CC1 Presumption in favour of sustainable development
CC2 Sustainable design and construction
CC7 Design and the public realm
CC8 Safeguarding amenity
EN1 Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
EN3 Enhancement of Conservation Areas
EN6 New Development in a Historic Context
EN15 Air Quality

SPG/SPD

St Mary's Butts / Castle Street Conservation Area Appraisal (March 2008)

7. APPRAISAL

7.1 Principle of Development / heritage policy context

The proposed development seeks the insertion of new and replacement openings to the rear of 34 St Marys Butts. The proposed windows and openings will be largely obscured from the street scene and are considered relatively minor alterations in the context of the building as a whole.

In line with Policy EN3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan; development within a Conservation Area should make a *“positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. Positive consideration will be given to proposals which take opportunities to enhance the character of conservation areas.”* Policy EN3 also give positive consideration to development that removes *“inappropriate additions or alterations to buildings;”*.

The St Mary's Butts / Castle Street Conservation Area Appraisal (March 2008) describes 34 St Mary's Butts as having a negative impact on the historic character and appearance of the Conservation Area. This is due to the poor relation of the building to nearby Listed Buildings and the setting of the Conservation Area. The appraisal document also goes on to say that 34 St Mary's Butts is an example of a development within the Conservation Area that *“display[s] a greater variety of fenestration and wall treatments, detracting from the character and appearance of the Conservation Area”*. It is therefore considered that this application should seek to enhance the existing building and Conservation Area through the use of quality materials and treatments.

Whilst 34 St Marys Butts is not a listed building, the adjoining property 35 & 37 St Marys Butts is a Grade II Listed Building. Therefore, it is considered appropriate to consider Policy EN1, which states that *“Applications which affect Listed Buildings will not have an adverse impact on those elements which contribute to their special architectural or historic interest including, where appropriate, their settings”*. It is important to consider that any alterations taking place at 34 St Marys Butts may harm the setting of the nearby Grade II Listed Building.

7.2 Design and impact on historic environment

The windows and openings proposed to the ground floor consist of new doors and openings to the rear of the office. These are exterior doors which open out to a small courtyard to the rear of 34 St Marys Butts. The windows proposed to the first and second floor will also not be viewable from the street scene along St. Mary's Butts, Castle Street or Hosier Street.

The windows and openings were originally proposed as uPVC, however, this material is not considered acceptable within a Conservation Area in light of the policy/guidance context detailed above. In order to improve and enhance the setting of the Conservation Area in accordance with Policy EN3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan it was suggested that the materials of the proposed openings be amended to timber, with an oil-based paint finish in a colour to match the existing building (see CUDO comments at section 4). The Planning Statement

was subsequently amended to confirm that the materials will consist of timber frames, and oil-based paint will be used in their finishing. This is welcomed and supported.

Overall, the proposed development is considered minor in scale and impact and is therefore in accordance with Policies CC7, EN1 and EN3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan in terms of design and impact on the Conservation Area and nearby Grade II Listed Building. The use of timber frames is considered a minor enhancement of the Conservation Area.

7.3 Safeguarding Amenity

No nearby occupiers are considered to be significantly impinged by the proposed development in relation to any amenity consideration. This includes the adjoining properties at 32, 35, 36 and 37 St Mary's Butts.

The proposed first and second floor openings will look out to the rooftops of 35 to 37 St Mary's Butts and the rear of buildings along Castle Street. There would be some limited overlooking to and from rear upper floor windows of properties on Castle Street, but there is sufficient distance between buildings, and such an arrangement would not be unusual within a confined urban site. The outlook from the proposed first floor openings is considered typical of a dense urban area.

Overall, the proposed development is not considered to harm the living conditions to neighbouring properties or the surrounding area. Therefore, the proposed development is considered in accordance with policies CC7 and CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

7.4 Air Quality

This proposal has been considered against Reading Borough Local Plan policy EN15, as the proposal site is within an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). As demonstrated in the policy, this proposal does not meet the requirements for an Air Quality Assessment (AQA) and is considered not enough of a detrimental impact air quality to warrant such an assessment due to the size and scale of the proposal.

8. CONCLUSION

The proposed development has been assessed and the proposed works are considered to be in accordance with the above relevant policies and planning permission can be granted.

9. RECOMMENDATION

GRANT

10. CONDITIONS

TL1: Time Limit (Standard)

The development hereby permitted shall begin no later than three years from the date of this planning permission.

REASON: In pursuance of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004) in order to prevent an accumulation of unimplemented planning permissions.

AP1: Approved Plans

The development hereby permitted shall ONLY be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

Plans considered:

- Location Plan - 9063-PL-01
- Proposed Plans GF Alterations - 9063-PL-08

- Proposed Elevations GF Alterations - 9063-PL-10
Received on 14/10/2021

- Planning Statement - 9063-21-Rev-1
Received on 11/01/2022

REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is carried out and adhered to in accordance with the application form and associated details hereby approved.

M3: Materials (As Specified)

The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of this development shall be as specified on the plans and unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. The doors and openings hereby approved shall be timber framed and use oil-based paint in a colour to match existing.

REASON: In the interests of visual amenity and ensuring the new development responds positively to the local context and character in accordance with Policy CC7 and EN3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

11. INFORMATIVES

Standard Informatives