

**Ground and
Lower Ground Floors
Abbey Mill House
Abbey Square
Reading
RG1 3BE**

Proposed Change of Use to allow flexible use
Including
Class E and Class F(1) Non-residential Institutions

Design and Access Statement

July 2023



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.01 **This Statement** – Danks Badnell Architects. Ltd have prepared this Supporting Statement to accompany a Full Planning Application for alternative planning Uses for the Ground and Lower Ground floors of Abbey Mill House, with minor external amendments.

1.02 **Client Brief** – The ground and lower ground floors of the existing building have remained vacant since construction in 2005 over 18 years ago.

Despite continuous marketing of the unit, and multiple planning applications to vary the uses to include restaurant, office and assembly and leisure, the ground and lower ground floors remain vacant.

This application seeks to establish a flexible use of the building under Class E a) – g) (i) and Class F1 Learning and Non-residential institutions, to ensure the building is finally brought into meaningful.

1.03 **Permission Sought**

- Change of Use: The application is for a change of use with minor external alterations to facilitate the occupation of the building.

The flexible mixed Use classes sought are:

- i) Retention the Class E Use Commercial Business and Service (Parts a) to g(i))
- ii) Class F1 Learning and Non-residential institutions

1.04 **Executive Summary** - This statement confirms that:

- i) The proposals will not have a detrimental impact upon the residents of Abbey Mill House. It will improve the outlook for the local residents and occupiers by creating an active frontage, bringing the ground and lower ground floors into meaningful use.
- ii) If mitigation measures are required for a particular specific use those measures can be controlled through Planning Condition.
- iii) Reaffirms that the general arrangements regarding Highways and safe access were approved through the original 'extant' permission
- iv) The site sits on the edge of flood zone 3. The lower ground floor is constructed to be 300mm above the 1 in 100 annual probability +25% allowance.

2.0 THE EXISTING BUILDING AND SURROUNDINGS

2.01 The Existing Building.

Abbey Mill House sits next to the Blade and forms part of the Abbey Square development. The building consists of apartments above first floor with a separately accessed ground and lower ground commercial unit.

The existing building comprises of two floors of vacant commercial, with 8 no. floors of residential apartments above, with a large roof space for plant.

The apartments are fully occupied under the management of Southern Housing Association. The commercial unit, which is the subject of this application, remains vacant having never been fitted out or occupied since it was constructed in 2005.

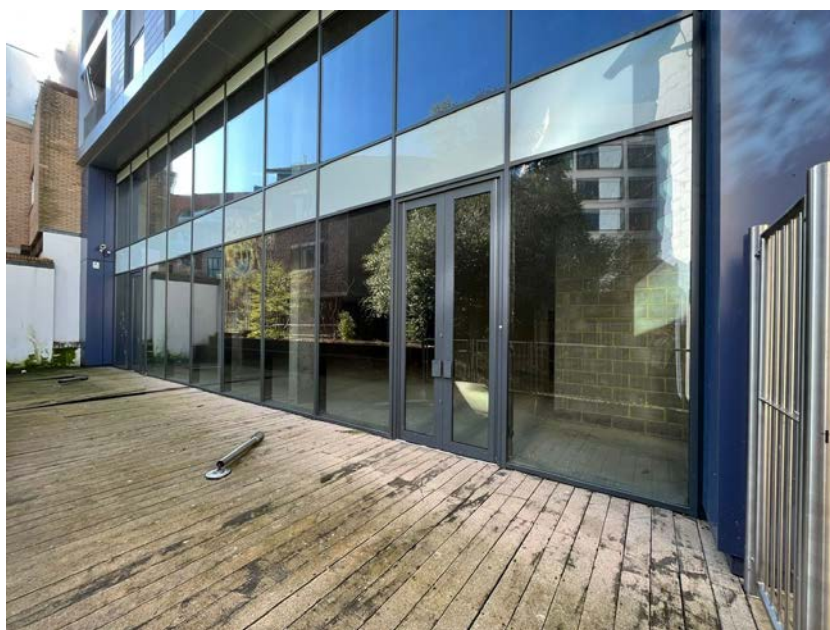
2.02 The Commercial Unit

The commercial unit is adjacent to the Abbey Ruins and is set along Holy Brook canal. The ground floor is dual aspect, the lower ground floor single aspect overlooking Holy Brook to the south.

The ground and lower ground floors are currently separate. The structure includes provision for a lift and connecting staircase to be installed by an incoming Tenant.

The lower ground floor has a flue to the top of the building to allow for an extract system, and supplies for gas and water.

The acoustic mitigation referred to in a previous change of use application has been completed ensuring separation between the ground floor and first floor residential use.



View across the rear decking at Lower Ground Floor



Photograph of the front of the unit at Ground Floor

Interior Photographs



Photograph of the Ground Floor showing the acoustic separation between the ground and first floors completed to satisfy a planning condition.



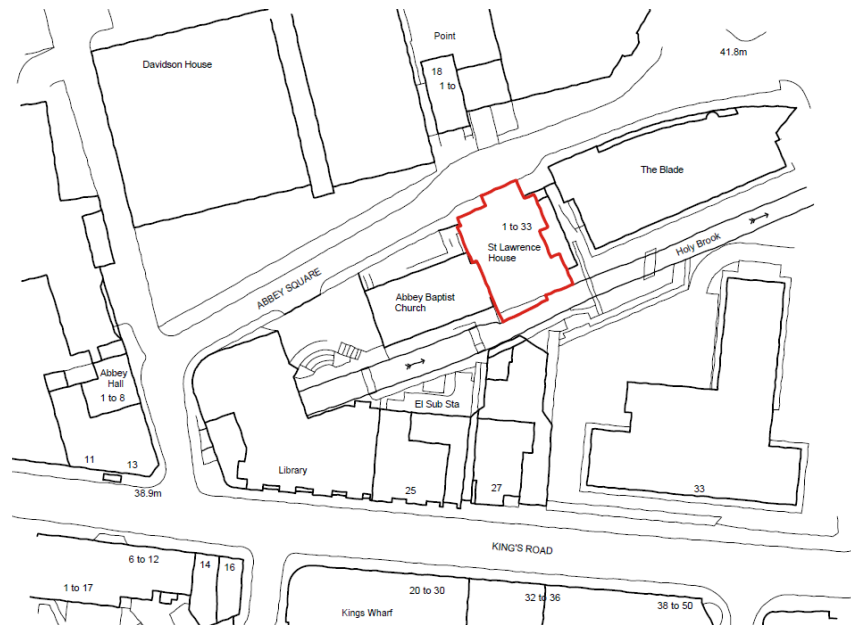
View across Lower Ground Floor towards Holy Brook.



Photograph of the Lower Ground Floor and the hole for the flue to the roof

2.03 Surrounding Buildings.

- Location. The existing building is located on Abbey Square, adjacent to the Blade to the east, and the Baptist Church to the west, Holy Brook and Kings Road to the south, with residential and office blocks to the north with Forbury Square beyond.



Site Location Plan Showing the building in context.

- Parking and Access. Abbey square is a side road generally providing access to the surrounding buildings and benefits from little through traffic.

There is no on street parking

3.0 PLANNING LEGISLATION AND PLANNING HISTORY

3.01 Planning Designation

The site is within:

- i) Reading Central Area
- ii) Abbey Quarter (and Policy CR15 as the site is next to the Abbey Gateway ruins)
- iii) and is on the edge of flood zone 3, but is not within the active floodplain.

3.02 The Extant Original planning Permission Refs:04/00282 and 01/00833

- The Current Approval.
The building was approved on 29 November 2004 and constructed in 2005.
The Use Classes approved were B1 Office/C3 Residential/A3 Restaurant (now Class E)

The application description was;

Redevelopment of new office building, 32 flats and restaurant with access, servicing, car park and landscaping – plus - Variation of revised scheme providing 13th floor, modification to sub-basement parking and to building footprint.

- The Conditions
The Conditions listed below are ones that related to the restaurant use:

- 06 Landscape
- 16. Noise transmission between the restaurant and residential units
- 17. Ventilation and filtration to be approved and installed
- 18. Restriction of restaurant to no takeaway and not any other A3 use
- 20. Bar to not exceed 10% of floor area
- 21. Opening hours restricted
- 22. Deliveries restricted hours
- 23. No outdoor tables
- 24. No loudspeakers tannoy etc
- 25. Details for servicing
- 26. Active display frontage

The Conditions have not been signed off. (Though there are later applications to do so which did not gain approval)

3.03 Later Planning Applications

- **2013 Application for Change of use from A3 Restaurant to A3 Restaurant and B1 Offices (Ref:13/1577)**

The application was approved 27th March 2014 but not implemented

The permission included the following Conditions relevant to the current application

- Refuse storage
- Bar areas restricted to 10% of floor areas
- No outdoor tables
- Noise suppression scheme
- Retain visible active display at GF
- No takeaway food
- Flood levels

- **2016 Application to confirm Compliance with Conditions (Ref:16/1749)**

The particular Conditions were:

- 06 Landscape Management Plan,
- 17 Details of restaurant ventilation and filtration equipment and
- 27 Details for circulation spaces relating to Planning Permission 04/00282/FUL

None of the conditions were signed off. There are no details available of application submissions

- **2017 Change of use of the Ground and Lower Ground floor from Class A3 restaurant to D2 (Assembly and Leisure) function room for leisure and corporate events (Ref:17/0357)**

Conditions included;

- The use will be restricted to just a function room attached to the Forbury
- Doors will be closed for noisy events and singing
- Infilling of gap between the slab and screen at GF level
- Acoustic mitigation between residential and commercial space (**undertaken**)
- Flood levels

Approved 11th July 2017 but not implemented

4.00 PROPOSED DUAL USE PLANNING APPLICATION

4.1 This Application

This application seeks approval for the following Use Classes on a mixed flexible use basis:

Class E. Commercial Business and Service (Parts 'a' to 'gi')

And

Class F1 Learning and Non-residential institutions

4.2 Class E Sub-Uses

- In the spirit of the new Use Class E this application is for all the sub-uses encompassed by Class E except that E(g)(ii) research and development and (iii) Industrial Processes as this would not be appropriate within this location, in addition to the use class, the freeholder has requested two additional restrictions as noted in red.

- The use classes sub-uses are listed below;

- E(a) Display or retail sale of goods, other than hot food (not solely alcohol)
- E(b) Sale of food and drink for consumption (mostly) on the premises
- E(c) Provision of:
 - E(c)(i) Financial services,
 - E(c)(ii) Professional services (other than health or medical services), or
 - E(c)(iii) Other appropriate services in a commercial, business or service locality
- E(d) Indoor sport, recreation or fitness (not involving motorised vehicles or firearms or use as a swimming pool or skating rink,)
- E(e) Provision of medical or health services (except the use of premises attached to the residence of the consultant or practitioner)
- E(f) Creche, day nursery or day centre (not including a residential use)
- E(g) Uses which can be carried out in a residential area without detriment to its amenity:
 - E(g)(i) Offices to carry out any operational or administrative functions, (not political or campaigning purposes)

Individual sub-classes may require further information/works to ensure that the particular use does not have a detrimental impact upon the neighbouring residents and users and these can be provided as part of a conditions application.

To ensure that the unit has the best opportunity of being occupied the flexible use, and multiple sub-classes are requested.

4.3 Supporting Information

Further information in support of this application:

1. **Acoustic mitigation** – Acoustic separation between residential and commercial elements of the building have been previously completed
2. **Ventilation Fresh Air** - Installation of a fresh air heat exchange system will be installed. The external grills will be incorporated within the spandrel panels of the existing façade.
3. **Cooking Extracts** – In the case of restaurant use of the Unit a ventilation and odour control system will be designed. The extract will use the purpose built external riser duct casing carrying extracted fumes to high level above e residential accommodation.
4. **Parking**
The town centre location in Zone 1 has the following maximum parking standards;

For retail, restaurant and financial nil parking is required
For office a maximum of 1 space per 250m²
For further education a maximum of 1 space per 3 FTE and 1 per 6 non-teaching staff
For Doctors, dentists and vets require 1 per consulting room
For a Nursery 1 per 4 FTE + Drop off

The standards are 'maximum'. The Unit is located within the Town centre with plentiful LA parking close by. No allocated parking spaces will be provided especially as it was not provided as part of the original approval.
5. **Servicing and deliveries**
Previously approved for the building as a whole, with a demarcated loading bay to the front of the building on Abbey Square.

4.4 The Effect of the Proposed Uses

The proposed alternative uses are appropriate for the building and are in the spirit of the original planning permission granted. The proposed flexible uses will not have any detrimental effect upon the current occupants of the building, nor to the wider Town Centre area and will improve the area by bringing the building into use.

It is noted that particular uses within Class E will need to be controlled through Planning Condition requiring compliance as listed in previous Section 4.3.

4.5 The Flood Plain

The lower ground floor was constructed 150mm above the advised flood plain level in accordance with the 'extant' planning approval

5.00 PROPOSED EXTERNAL CHANGES

To facilitate the occupation of the vacant unit, mechanical ventilation is required to serve both the toilets and the active floor area. In addition to the required ventilation, due to the amount of glazing and the southern aspect overlooking Holy Brook air conditioning is also likely to be required.

The ventilation exhausts and intakes are shown as louvred panels replacing the spandrel panels between the lower ground and ground floors to the south, and to the ground floor to the west above the side door as denoted on the proposed elevations.

The air conditioning is proposed to be located at lower ground floor within a new enclosure formed in the existing footprint of the building, set behind louvred acoustic panels. If required to be installed detailed acoustic design can be conditioned.

THE END