

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

12th September 2022
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OXFORD ROAD PHARMACY: No.266-268 OXFORD ROAD, READING, RG30 1AD

Subject: Full planning application for alterations to the shop front of No.266-268 Oxford Road, rear single storey extension to first floor, raising of existing rear flat roof, removal of chimney stack and change of use from HMO (class C4) to Health services (class E) at first floor.

Background

This statement accompanies a Full Planning Application for no.266-268 Oxford Road, including alterations to the shop front of No.266-268 Oxford Road, rear single storey extension to first floor, raising of existing rear flat roof, removal of chimney stack and change of use from HMO (class C4) to Health services (class E) at first floor.

Existing Building and site

The site is located at No. 266 to 268 Oxford Road, with the neighbouring premises of no.270-272 and no.274 being leased by the applicant. No.266-268 is accessed via Oxford Road and an alley way to the rear of the property which comes out on Beresford Road. The premises of the applicant site are currently empty, with what once would have been a retail unit (Pound Store) at ground floor level and an HMO at first floor level. The HMO had a separate entrance on the front elevation off Oxford Road.

Notable recent planning history includes:

Ref: 130630

270-274 Oxford Road Reading RG30 1AD

Single storey rear extension to shop, first floor extension to provide new lobby to flats and alteration of external staircase to flat entrance.

July 2013

Ref: 040770

266-268 Oxford Road Reading RG30 1AD

Modification to shop front to form new entrance and internal staircase to first floor flat at 268 Oxford Road

October 2004

Ref: 050648

266-268 Oxford Road Reading RG30 1AD

New shop front

May 2006

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Location Plan (NTS)

Proposals

The application can be divided up into separate elements of works undertaken at no.266-268

- Alterations to glazed frontage and new signage to shop front
- Change of use at first floor from HMO (Class C4) to Provision of medical or health services (Class E)
- Rear single storey extension at first floor level and raising of existing flat roof
- Removal of chimney stack

The proposed alterations to the shopfront will enable more space within the ground floor unit and tie in better with other shop fronts along Oxford Road. New glazing and signage will provide a much-needed rejuvenation of this active frontage and integrate it better within the high street. It is intended that the proposed shop will house the Post Office, which will form an important part of the Oxford Road streetscape.

The change of use at first floor level from an HMO (class C4) to Provision of medical or health services (Class E) will provide four consultation rooms linked to Oxford Road Pharmacy. This will provide the opportunity for either the Pharmacy or external practitioners to have a base from which they can treat patients in the local community. Access to the first floor will be via the Oxford Road Pharmacy, where a new stair and lift core will be provided to give access to patients and practitioners.

The proposed single storey rear extension will aid the provision of the proposed consultation rooms at first floor, providing a small reception area. Set back from the rear elevation at first floor, the proposed extension will be subservient in appearance and infill the space between the two existing gables, which is currently unused flat roof space. The remaining flat roof is to be raised to be closer in height to the neighbouring properties, allowing more head height at ground floor level.

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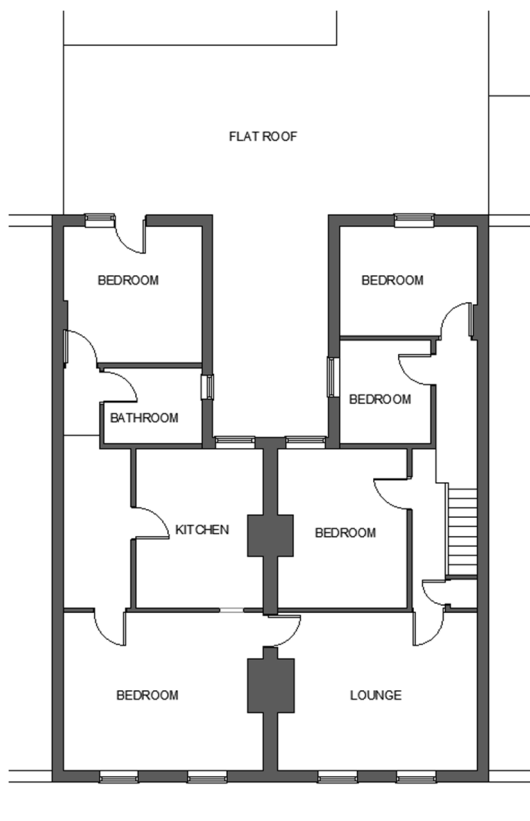
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Planning Policy

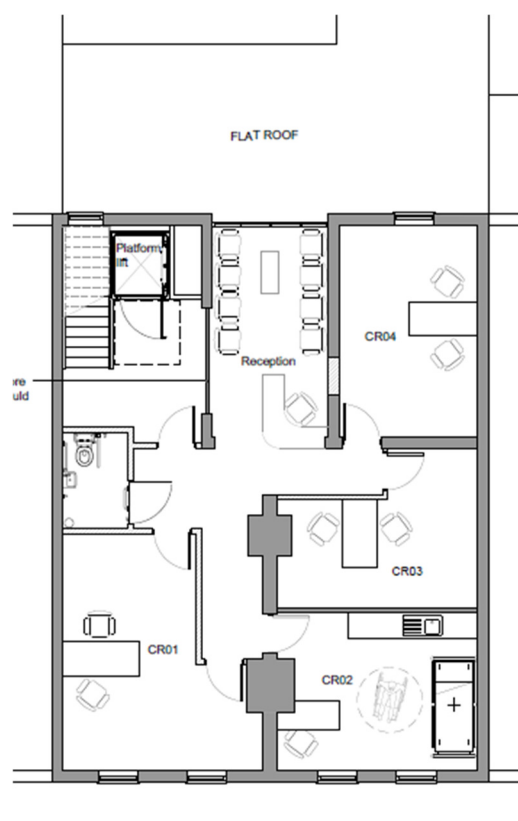
The proposed shop front alterations will improve the existing shop frontage through new glazing and signage. The new shop front will improve the active frontage and provide a positive contribution to the character of the existing building and local area (Reading Local Plan Policy OU5). The changes to the rear of the existing ground floor unit will not require a change of use as both the existing and proposed uses will fall under Class E (commercial, business and service). The alterations will allow for the Oxford Road Pharmacy to expand operations and become more invested within the local community.

The proposed rear single storey extension at first floor level will be in accordance with the RLP Policy H9. Providing an extension that respects the character and appearance of the existing building in terms of scale, materials, and design. The proposals will have no more of an impact on local neighbours than the current situation and therefore have no adverse impact.

The proposed change of use at first floor from Class C4 to Class E represents an opportunity to improve facilities in the local community and provide a use fit for purpose. The current residential use at first floor does not seem suitable for its intended purpose and is unlikely to be suitable for a five-bedroom HMO when following guidance such as *Readings Local Plan Policy H8* and the *Guide to Amenity Standards applicable to Houses in multiple occupation that require a licence*. Factors such as accessing cooking and cleaning facilities and even fire exits through bedrooms (which are likely be lockable), fails to provide a safe and healthy living environment for its occupants.



Existing First Floor Plan



Proposed First Floor Plan

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It is understood that the RLP aims to protect existing housing stock through Policy H7 and would not accept a loss of residential floor area without exceptional circumstances, unless where a loss of a limited amount of general residential would help to meet other identified needs. The proposals aim to provide an asset to the local community in terms of establishing a place for health care professionals to work from. Under 2.2 (Objectives) of the RLP, point 3 outlines the importance of improving the quality of life for those living and working in Reading. The proposals aim to achieve this through providing more opportunities for health care within a densely populated area of West Reading, which is very accessible to the public and is already recognised within the community as a medical care provider. The adjoining Oxford Road Pharmacy at no.170-174 Oxford Road, run by the applicant, has one consultation room already for an orthopaedic consultant, who can treat his patients in a comfortable environment with easy access to local transport networks.

The provision of individual consultation rooms will also help with providing a 'healthy and balanced local economy' as stated in point 4.3.17 when talking about variety and size of employment premises. Under Policy EM4: Maintaining a variety of premises, it is established that the need to provide small and medium sized works space such as the proposed consultation rooms are key for the growth of small and growing businesses. The proposed consultation rooms will allow local professionals a flexible space to work from, with good network connections.

Access

Access to the retail unit will be located at the front of no.266-268, off Oxford Road as per the existing situation. Access to the rear part of the unit at ground floor will be via no.270-274, where access will also be provided to the new consultation rooms at first floor. Rear access will only be used as a fire escape from no.266-268, with an escape route via the alley behind the premises to a safe meeting point. The only access being removed is that at ground level on the front elevation which lead to the HMO at first floor level, which is no longer included as part of the proposals.

Conclusion

The proposals at ground floor to no.266-268 will provide an enhancement to the Oxford Road street-scene and allow for new businesses to benefit from the improvements proposed. The change of use from class C4 to class E at first floor will allow for high quality, accessible workspaces for health care professionals and medical facilities for the local community to use. The extension to the rear of the property at first floor level will provide space for a waiting area to serve patients. The design will respect that of the local architecture, materials and scale found on Oxford Road. Considering the above, we would deem the proposals to be a positive contribution to the local area of West Reading and an important contribution to the development of Oxford Road.

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Appendix A

Existing Site Photographs:

Front Elevation Photographs



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Rear Elevation Photographs

