

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT
OFFICE (CLASS E) TO RESIDENTIAL (CLASS C3)
90 LONDON STREET
READING
BERKSHIRE
RG1 4SJ

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Introduction

The Design and Access Statement is to support the planning application for the change of use at 90 London Street.

The proposals consist of a change of use from office (Class E) to residential (6 x 1 studio units) and to maintain a small office space.

The application should be considered with the following documents:

- Existing Floor Plans
- Proposed Floor Plans
- Proposed Detailed Layout
- Proposed Bin Storage
- Proposed Cycle Storage
- Proposed Waste Management Collection
- Proposed Detailed Secondary Glazed Window

The site is shown on RG14SJ/PA01 and is currently being used as an education centre, but it also is classed as an office building that is Grade II listed.

The site is in a central location within Reading, with excellent access to local services, shopping and employment.

Paragraph 27 advises that a Design and Access statement should explain the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the proposed development and demonstrate the steps taken to appraise the context of the proposed development and how the development design takes that context into account.

Paragraph 28 states that concerning proposals affecting Listed Buildings, a Design and Access Statement should consider the particular architectural or historical importance of the building. The physical features of the building justify its designation as a listed building and its setting.

Design

The remit of the development proposal has, first and foremost, ensured that the minor alterations to the Listed Building are satisfactory, having regard for the importance of preserving the historic fabric of the building and its setting.

The external elevation of the Listed Building is to have no changes.

For a more detailed consideration of the creation of the proposals in so far as how the internal alterations of the proposal have regard for the historic fabric of the building, please refer to the Heritage Statement that accompanies this planning application.

Over four levels, the proposed development compromises the conversion of offices to six residential studio units with waste and recycling storage for residents and office users. The proposals involve the transformation of the existing building with no external alterations. The basement floor area will remain unchanged but open for extra storage for residents.

A proposed waste and recycling storage facility for the converted studio flat will be located within the existing rear yard but placed at the car parking entrance on Church Street for collection days. An existing storage shed will be converted into an outside cycle storage area at the ground floor level at the rear. The basement consists of a storage area maintaining the existing arch area.

The proposed development will retain the visual appearance of the existing property. The layout has been designed to have regard for the importance of ensuring satisfactory living accommodation. Suitable waste, recycling and cycle storage are provided. The works are entirely within the internal structure of the existing building.

Access

This development proposal confirms that in relation to access, the recommendations provide safe pedestrian access for residents accessing the dwelling located at 90 London Street, direct access is

provided off on London Street. This proposal is detailed on both the proposed site plan and floor plans submitted with this Design and Access Statement.

Cycle storage for the dwelling will be located at the rear of the property with the capacity for three bicycles, as shown in Drawing RG14SJ/PA13.

The parking provision consists of four parking spaces for residents and one parking space for visitors. The other car parking space is privately owned by one of the tenants using the adjoined properties. However, other properties were converted from office to residential and managed to achieve planning permission without parking spaces. The transport statement will showcase how residents and workers rely on alternative modes of transport other than a car in the London Street area.

This provision is more than sufficient given its central location within Reading, its excellent access to community services and facilities, and employment opportunities.

Heritage & Planning Policy Considerations

Please refer to the Heritage Statement and Planning Statement which are submitted alongside this application for detailed heritage and planning policy considerations.

The site and Surrounding Context

Site Description

The site currently comprises one existing building known as 90 London Street. The site is in central Reading, in the administrative district of Reading Borough.

90 London Street is a late 18th Century semidetached and is the original building on the site with a three-storey frontage on London Street. This building has a car parking located at the rear of the site.

90 London Street is also an adjoined property with 92 and 94 to 102 London Street, which share a car parking space at the rear of the site.

90 London Street contains one open office space on the ground and separate offices on the first and second floors. The property is currently classed as an office but is occupied and used year.

90 London Street is a Grade II Listed Building, and the whole site lies within the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area.

The site is also located within an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and an area of Archaeological Potential as defined on RBC's Proposals Map.

The site is also located in Flood Zone 1 which carries the lowest risk of flooding.

Surrounding Area

The site lies in a predominantly built-up urban area that contains a mixture of office, residential and retail buildings.

The site is situated in a sustainable location with accessible links to multiple forms of public transport. The central Reading train station is located within 0.5 miles. A bus stop is located outside 90 London Street and serves several bus routes.

The Oracle Shopping Centre, which contains a wide variety of retail and leisure facilities, is approximately 0.2 miles away, highlighting its sustainable location.

Planning History

This section summarises the planning history relevant to the site and the surrounding area.

Application Site

Online planning history records from 1971 onwards indicate that there have not been any planning applications for the site. However, one planning application was submitted for the area that precedes this date, summarised below.

Chancellors Associates 90 London Street
Erection of non-illuminated individual letter sign and logo (ref: 992446)
Planning permission was issued in August 1999.

Surrounding Properties

There has been a collection of change-of-use planning applications in London Street which gained planning permission to convert offices to residential:

102 London Street

In December 2000, a planning application was submitted (ref: 990662) for 102 London Street for a residential development of 6 x 1-bedroom and 7 x 2-bedroom apartments situated around a courtyard. This application was granted planning permission in June 2001.

106 London Street

A prior approval notification application (ref: 130847) was submitted for the adjacent property at 106 London Street in June 2013, with the description of development as follows:
Change of use of a building from Class B1(a) (offices) to C3 (dwellinghouses) to comprise 7 x 1-bedroom flats. This application was approved in July 2013 and has subsequently been implemented. There is a current application (ref: 05/01311/FUL which has not yet been determined for a Change of use of office and part of a 2-storey link to 1 no. 2 bedroom flat on the ground floor and 2 no. 1 bedroom flats on the first floor and the retention of an existing front office building for use as offices.

108 London Street

There have been several applications on the site, but most notable and relevant to this application is the approved application and Listed Building Consent in September 2018 (ref: 181223 & 181218). Internal and external alterations in association with change of use and conversion from offices (Class B1a) to 7 (4x1 & 3x2-bed) residential apartments (Class C3) with associated parking, refuse storage and associated works.

112 London Street

An application for the demolition of the existing nightclub and erection of 10 new residential Class C3 apartments (5 x 1 bed and 5 x 2 bed) with a courtyard garden, cycle and bin storage was submitted in October 2016 (ref: 161935). This application was refused on the grounds of poor

design, sub-standard accommodation and living standards and the failure to comply with a few policies.

Subsequently, an amended application (ref: 172213) for this site was submitted in December 2017. The development description is as follows - Demolition of existing building and erection of 2 x Class C3 residential apartment blocks comprising 6. No. Flats. This application was referred to Committee with the recommendation for refusal on similar grounds as outlined above. Consequently, the application was withdrawn.

114 London Street

In September 2022, an application was submitted for a proposed change of use from Class E to create a self-contained C3 dwelling with associated works and taken more than five months to achieve planning permission due to amended requests and further information required.

Proposed Development

The description of the development consists of shared access to the dwellings and office spaces via London Street and includes a safe pedestrian route to the front entrance door of the building.

Three bicycle parking spaces will also be provided within the rear courtyard flower bed, serving the dwelling located with the refuse storage area.

The existing front exterior of 90 London Street will be maintained. Still, the graffiti issued on the front elevation will be removed and repainted by the building owner to maintain its character.

As 90 London Street is a Grade II Listed Building, the internal layout of the building has been redesigned to create new residential units.

There will be a proposed internal secondary glazing for the proposed units to comply with soundproofing reporting requirements.

In addition, the proposed ensuites will have tinted glazed material sheets that will be applied to the internal glazing of the windows.

Further details on the design of the proposed development can be found in the Heritage Statement, Construction Method Statements and Detailed Drawings accompanying this application.

Planning Policy Context

This section provides a summary of the relevant planning policy framework against which the a planning application will be determined.

The relevant planning policy framework comprises the Core Strategy (2008, as altered in 2015), the Reading Central Area Action Plan (AAP) (2009) and the Sites and Detailed Policies Document (SDPD) (2012, altered 2015). Alongside this are several relevant Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) which are detailed below.

The National Planning Policy Framework (2021) is also a relevant material consideration.

National Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides the overarching planning policy framework against which all local and neighbourhood plans should be prepared and against which all planning applications are determined.

Paragraph 8 of the NPPF establishes that there “are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social, and environmental.” These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform several roles:

“an economic role – contributing to building a robust, responsive and competitive economy by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time. To support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including infrastructure provision.

a social role – supporting strong, vibrant, and healthy communities by supplying of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high the quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and

an environmental role – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy” (p.5).

As detailed in Paragraph 11, at the heart of the NPPF is a presumption favouring sustainable development, which should be seen as “a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking” (p.4). NPPF Paragraph 11 sets out how the presumption in favour will apply to planning and decision-making. As the development plan is already in place for RBC in the form of the adopted Core Strategy, Area Action Plan and adopted Site and Detailed Policies Document, it is the Policy in the second part of NPPF paragraph 11 concerning the application of the presumption in

favour to decision making that is relevant. This ruling advises that development that accords with the development plan should be approved "without delay".

Paragraph 17 of the NPPF states that within the overarching roles that the planning system should play, a set of core land-use planning principles should underpin both plan-making and decision-making. These principles include that planning should (pp. 8):

“not simply be about scrutiny, but instead be a creative exercise in finding ways to enhance and improve the places in which people live their lives; always seek to secure high-quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings; take account of the different roles and character of other areas to support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking a full version of flood risk, and coastal change contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution.

Allocations of land for development should prefer land of lesser environmental value, where consistent with the other policies in this Framework; and actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable”.

Concerning delivering a wide choice of high-quality homes, paragraph 76 requires local planning authorities to "boost the supply of housing significantly" (p.21), and section 77 states: Housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development” (p.21).

When discussing development which relates to a heritage asset or Listed Building, Paragraph 190 states:

“In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation; the positive contribution that preservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities, including their economic viability; and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness”.

The Government also attaches great importance to the design of the built environment, which is illustrated in section 12 of the NPPF. NPPF paragraph 130 states that planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments:

It will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development.

establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractively and comfortable places to live, work and visit.

optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development, create and sustain an the appropriate mix of uses (including the incorporation of green and other public spaces as part of developments) and support local facilities and transport networks.

respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation.

Create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion; and

They are visually attractive because of their impressive architecture and appropriate landscaping.

Local Policy

As indicated above, the adopted local planning policy is currently set out within the Reading Borough Core Strategy (2008, as altered in 2015), the Reading Central Area Action Plan (2009) and the Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012, revised 2015).

Relevant local planning policies for this application are as follows:

Core Strategy

The Core Strategy provides the overall planning strategy and principles of development for the Borough.

It was formally adopted in 2008, with an alteration made in 2015 to the affordable housing policy.

Policy CS1 – Sustainable Design and Construction: Proposals should ensure that the design of buildings and site layouts use energy, water, minerals, materials, and other natural resources. Efficiently by meeting several requirements. Relevant policies from the Core Strategy are summarised below:

Policy CS4 – Accessibility and Intensity of Development: This Policy states that any new development must be at a scale, density, and intensity appropriate to the level of accessibility to defined districts and local centres.

Policy CS5 – Inclusive Access: Policy CS5 states that all buildings should be located, sited and designed to provide convenient access for all potential users, including disabled people.

Policy CS7 – Design and the Public Realm: The Policy states that all development must be of a high design quality and that new development should make a positive contribution to the Council's urban design objectives. The Policy states that growth will need to respond positively to the local context and create or reinforce local character and distinctiveness and be visually attractive as a result of high-quality built forms and spaces.

Policy CS11 – Use of Employment Land for Alternative Uses: For sites located outside of Core Employment Areas, proposals which would result in the loss of employment land are assessed against a set of criteria which determines whether the loss of employment land for other uses

such as residential.

Policy CS14 – Provision of Housing: Provision will be made to complete an average of 521 dwellings per annum in the period 2016-2026 through various sources of supply.

Policy CS15 – Location, Accessibility, Density and Housing Mix: Policy CS15 requires an appropriate density and mix of residential development to be informed by an assessment of the site's characteristics and surrounding area. In terms of density, the Policy advises that net densities below 30 dwellings per hectare (dph) will not be acceptable and that development in an 'urban' location should target a residential density of between 40-75 dph.

Policy CS20 – Implementation of The Reading Transport Strategy (Local Transport Plan 2006-2011): This Policy states that proposed developments should contribute to the transport network as defined in the Reading Transport Strategy, including the provision of making alternative uses to the private car more attractive.

Policy CS24 – Car/Cycle Parking: This Policy requires that maximum car and cycle parking standards are applied to the accessibility of locations within the Borough.

Policy CS33 – Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment: This Policy details that historical features and areas of historical importance, which include Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas will be protected and, where appropriate, enhanced.

Policy CS34 – Pollution and Water Resources: This Policy seeks to reduce the impact of pollution on proposed developments through mitigation measures.

Policy CS36 – Biodiversity and Geology: This Policy states that any features of biodiversity or geological interest found on a site should be retained and protected.

Summary and Conclusions

The application to which this Planning Statement relates is submitted on behalf of the applicant of 90 London Street and seeks full planning permission and Listed Building consent for the conversion of existing offices to residential dwellings at 90 London Street, Reading.

This Planning Statement demonstrates that the proposed development complies with the adopted. Development plan and national Policy will contribute to meeting the spatial strategy and housing needs within Reading.

The proposed development would provide a high-quality dwelling in a highly sustainable location with associated refuse storage.

This Planning Statement demonstrates that the proposed development fulfils the potential of the existing buildings and will ensure the long-term preservation of the Listed Building. The proposed development would respect the importance of the heritage asset and would not adversely impact the surrounding area or the existing road network.

Having addressed in this statement that several properties along London Street have already submitted and been approved for similar applications gives more significant support to the application for approval.

Overall, the proposed development is considered to be suitable and sustainable. Housing development would contribute towards the Council's housing needs in society today. It has been demonstrated throughout this Planning Statement and the suite of technical documents that support the application submission that any harm arising from the proposals will not “significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits” of the scheme.

The planning application and proposals contained within are therefore commended to RBC for due consideration.