

## Planning Statement

Property: 286 Kings Road Reading RG1 4HP

Proposal: Prior Approval for a Proposed Change of Use of a building from Office Use (Class BI(a)) to a Residential (Class C3) On behalf of our Client, Serrate Ltd,

## Application

Overview: This Application is for determination as to whether prior approval is required for the proposed conversion of the existing offices (Use Class BIa) to provide three residential flats (2x2-bedroom & 1 x 1 Bedroom Flat) (Class C3) under Class O of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Amendment) (England) Order 2015 (as amended 2016).

The application comprises the following drawings and documentation:

- Completed application forms
- Existing & Proposed Plans
- Site Location Plan

Application Site: The application property comprises a four-storey office building (Use Class BI) currently occupied by ITS Reading Ltd (a trading company of the applicant). The building comprises under-croft parking on the ground floor with office accommodation on the upper floors. The site has a lawful use as offices (BIa).

## Relevant

Planning History: In July 2014, a prior approval application was submitted to the Council, which was effectively the same as the current application proposal. The application was registered and validated under the Council's ref: 140594. The Council issued the decision notice confirming that further prior approval is NOT required. As per the one of the conditions, however, the conversion was to be implemented before 30th May 2016, and therefore could be considered to have lapsed even though the revised legislation has now extended the time limit. For the avoidance of doubt therefore this submission is effectively a resubmission of the previously approved prior approval

application (ref: 140594) where the Council raised no objection to the conversion of the offices into residential flats.

## Proposed

Development: The application proposes the conversion of the existing offices to residential use and will create three new flats (2 x 2-bedroom & 1 x 1 Bedroom ).

The internal layout of the proposed development has been carefully designed to maximise the internal space and ensure that proposed development would create good quality-built environment for the future residents. The physical internal alterations to the property are modest and only what is required to facilitate the change of use. It should be noted that no external alterations are proposed as part of this application and the overall layout and scale of the building would remain unchanged.

A full planning application has been submitted for the insertion of additional windows in the east elevation which is envisaged could also serve the residential reuse of the building. These alterations do not, however, form part of this submission.

## Permitted

### Development

Rights: From 15th April 2015, Class O, Part 3 was inserted into the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended 2016). This allows, subject to specific land designations (being outside a safety hazard area and not being listed) and prior notification first being sought from the local planning authority, the change of use of a building and any land within its curtilage to a use falling within Class C3 (dwelling houses) from a Class Bla (office) use.

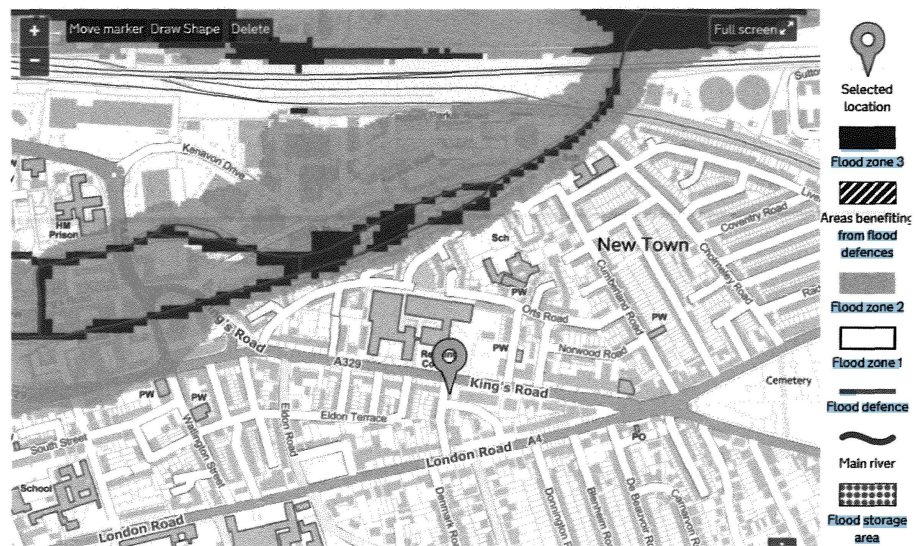
There are no site-specific designations which would prohibit this development from taking place under the Class O regulations. In other words, the change of use from Bla (office) to C3 (residential) constitutes 'Permitted Development' subject to the condition that before beginning the development, the developer shall apply to the local planning authority for a determination as to whether the prior approval of the authority will be required as to:

- 1) Flood risks on the site;

- 2) Contamination risks on the site;
- 3) Transport and highways impacts of the development;
- 4) Impact of noise from commercial premises on the intended occupiers of the development.

#### 1) Flood Risk:

In accordance with the Government's Flood Map for Planning, the entire application site falls within the Flood Zone 1, which is less likely to flood, and residential development is acceptable in principle. Please see the extract below showing the site location on the Government's Flood Map.



*Extract from Government Flood Map for Planning*

In summary, the proposed residential development is acceptable in Flood Zone 1, and therefore, no prior approval is required in terms of flood risks.

#### 2) Contamination

##### Risks

The application site is currently occupied by offices with no habitable accommodation provided on the ground floor. Considering the history of the application site and its surroundings, there is no evidence to suggest that there is any risk of contamination. The proposal seeks to utilise and convert the existing building and therefore no ground works will be undertaken.

### 3) Transport and

#### Highway Impacts

The existing building benefits from a dedicated under-croft car park on the ground floor, which also allows for cycle storage, with additional ad-hoc parking to the front.

The proposed residential use is considerably less intense than the existing office use with regard to parking demand, vehicular movements and traffic generation. The proposal would therefore significantly improve transport and highways impacts.

The application site is located within a highly sustainable location in the centre of Reading benefitting from adjacent bus stops and the railway station nearby. Planning policy at national and local level encourages re-use or intensification in the use of underused, vacant or previously developed land where there will be an appropriate increase in the efficient use of the site, particularly in areas with excellent access to public transport.

Considering the site's location and siting, the car and cycle parking, the proposed development would not cause any material increase or material change in the character of the traffic in the vicinity of the site and would therefore not cause 'severe' impact as referenced within Paragraph 32 of the NPPF. The proposed development would not cause any harm to the existing parking arrangement and highway conditions and would actually represent a net improvement.

### 4) Noise

For the purposes of Class O, "commercial premises" means any premises normally used for the purpose of any commercial or industrial undertaking which existed on the date of application. There are no noise generating commercial uses within the immediate vicinity of the application site, nor any significant noise emanators. Therefore, it is considered that there would not be an unacceptable noise impact on the intended occupiers of the development.

As part of this application, the internal arrangements would remain unchanged. Furthermore, no changes are proposed to the pedestrian access, vehicular access or parking.

#### Summary:

National Planning Policy Guidance (Paragraph 028, Ref: 13-028-20140306) in response to 'Is a prior approval application like a planning application?' states that "The statutory requirements relating to prior approval are much less prescriptive than those relating to planning applications. This is deliberate, as prior approval is a light-touch process which

applies where the principle of the development has already been established. Where no specific procedure is provided in the General Permitted Development Order local planning authorities have discretion on what processes they put in place. It is important that the local planning authority does not impose unnecessarily onerous requirements on developers, and does not seek to replicate the planning application system."

The Guidance (Paragraph 026, Ref ID: 13-()2620140306) also emphasises that "A local planning authority cannot consider any other matters (our emphasis) when determining a prior approval application."

Moreover, the above considerations have previously been assessed as part of the earlier application in 2014 (LPA Ref: 140594) which confirmed that the prior approval of the Local Planning Authority was not required. Circumstances have not materially changed since that time and, for the reasons above, it is considered that this proposal accords with, and is supported by, national and local planning policies including the adopted National Planning Policy Framework and its Technical Guidance and Class 0. Therefore, it is requested that the LPA grant prior approval for the change of use from the offices to 3 flats. It is intended that the residential use will be implemented following the determination of this application.

We hope that this provides you with sufficient information for your purposes and look forwards to receiving confirmation of registration in due course.