

Planning Statement

Planning Application

Conversion of the first and second floors to provide 2 x one-bedroom flats and erection of a roof terrace

59 London Street, Reading RG1 4PS

DLA Ref: 22/414

October 2022

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1.0 Background

1.1.1 This report relates to a planning application for the conversion of the first and second floors to provide x 2 one-bedroom flats and erection of a roof terrace at 59 London Street, Reading RG1 4PS.

1.2.0 Scope

1.2.1 This document comprises an overarching Planning. Sections 2 to 4 consider the physical, economic, social and historical context of the site, identifying the relevant local, regional and national planning policy framework; and Section 5 sets out the details of the proposal. All these sections inform the evaluation of the proposal in Section 6 against the identified planning policy framework. The overall conclusions are set out in Section 7 and which are summarised below at paragraph 1.3.0.

1.3.0 Summary

- The provision of housing in this location is considered acceptable in principle.
- The proposals do not harm the character and appearance of the area.
- The proposal would cause no loss of amenity to neighbouring occupiers and future occupiers would be afforded good living conditions.
- The proposal is in a highly sustainable location and would be a car-free development.

2.0 SITE & CONTEXT ANALYSIS

2.1.0 Location

- 2.1.1 The application site is located on the eastern side of London Street close to its junction with South Street and is approximately 200m to the south-east of the Oracle Shopping Centre and Riverside area.



Figure 1: Location of the application site

2.2.0 Application Site

- 2.2.1 The existing building on the site is a modern red brick building with a pitched roof and rooflights on the front facing roof slope. There are four car parking spaces allocated to the commercial unit in a shared parking court to the rear of the building and which is accessed off South Street. Internally, the building is currently in commercial use across the ground, first and second floors.

2.3.0 Context

- 2.3.1 The application site is located within the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area. Heights range from 2 to 4 storeys, the higher buildings being located close to the town centre in Market Place and Blagrove Street. The surrounding area mainly comprises commercial uses at ground floor with residential and/or office accommodation above.

2.4.0 Proposals Map Notation

- 2.4.1 The Reading Borough Council Local Plan Policy Map lists designations relevant to the application site, which includes:

- Boundary of Reading Central Area CR1-10
- Air Quality Management Area Policy EN15
- Conservations Area Policies EN1 and EN3
- Area of Archaeological Potential Policy EN2

2.4.2 The application site does not include any statutory listed buildings and is located in Flood Zone 1.

2.5.0 Local Services & Facilities

2.5.1 The application site has excellent access to a range of facilities and services that are easily accessible by means of walking and cycling. The table below identifies the immediate key services and facilities:

Facility	Local provision	Distance from the site (km)	Indicative journey times (minutes)	
			Walk	Cycle
Education	Kendrick School	230m	3 mins	1 min
	University of Reading (London Road Campus)	500m	6 mins	4 mins
	University College of Estate Management	450m	5 mins	2 mins
	The Abbey School	650m	8 mins	3 mins
	Katesgrove Primary School	650m	8 mins	4 mins
	Reading College	1.1km	14 mins	5 mins
Retail	Nisa Local	270m	3 mins	1 min
	Tesco Express	270m	3 mins	1 min
	Town Centre	450m	6 mins	3 mins
Health, Leisure & Community Facilities	The Oracle	200m	3 mins	2 mins
	Buzz Gym	600m	7 mins	3 mins
	Forbury Gardens Public Park	650m	9 mins	4 mins
	St Giles Church	300m	4 mins	1 min

2.6.0 Accessibility

2.6.1 The application site fronts on to London Street which benefits from lit and level footpath in both directions and towards the Town Centre. The closest bus stop is 55m from the application site, providing frequent services to Central Reading, Whitley Wood, Lower Earley and Coley Park.

- 2.6.2 Reading Rail Station is 850m from the application site and is accessible by foot and cycle. Destinations including Oxford, Bournemouth, London Waterloo, London Paddington, Cardiff Central, Newcastle, Bristol Temple Meads, Nottingham, Manchester Piccadilly and Gatwick Airport can be accessed from Reading station.

3.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

3.1.0 Application Site

3.1.1 The relevant history of the application site is summarised in Figure 3.1.0 below.

LPA Ref	Proposal	Outcome
070005	Change of use from B1 (offices) to A2 (financial and professional services)	Approved – 12/09/2007

3.2.0 Other Relevant Sites

3.2.1 63 London Street, Reading

Planning permission has recently been granted to convert the loft space of this property into a one-bedroom flat (LPA Ref: 211731). The proposal did not include any private amenity space or off-street car parking.

4.0 POLICY CONTEXT

4.1.0 National Policy / Guidance

4.1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021, sets out the Government's planning policies for England. The following sections are considered directly relevant:

- Decision-making (Section 4)
- Delivering a sufficient supply of homes (Section 5);
- Building a strong, competitive economy (Section 6);
- Ensuring the vitality of town centres (Section 7);
- Promoting healthy and safe communities (Section 8);
- Promoting sustainable transport (Section 9);
- Making effective use of land (Section 11); and
- Achieving well designed places (Section 12)

4.1.2 The National Planning Policy Guidance contains detailed guidance on the application of the NPPF and is a material consideration in the decision-making process.

4.1.3 National Design Guide 2021: Planning practice guidance for beautiful, enduring and successful places, aims to illustrate how well-designed places that are beautiful, healthy, greener, enduring and successful can be achieved in practice.

4.2.0 Development Plan

4.2.1 For this Local Planning Authority the development plan is now in one document – the Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019). The relevant policies are:

Policy No.	Title
CC1	Presumption in favour of sustainable development
CC2	Sustainable design and construction
CC3	Adaptation to climate change
CC5	Waste minimisation and storage
CC6	Accessibility and the intensity of development
CC7	Design and the public realm
CC8	Safeguarding amenity
CC9	Securing Infrastructure
EN3	Enhancement of Conservation Areas
EN12	Biodiversity and the green network
EN15	Air Quality
EN16	Pollution and Water Resources
H1	Provision of housing
H2	Density and mix

H3	Affordable housing
H5	Standards of new housing
H10	Private and communal outdoor space
TR1	Achieving the transport strategy
TR3	Access, traffic and highway related matters
TR5	Car and cycle parking and electric vehicle charging

4.3.0 **Supplementary Planning Guidance / Documents**

4.3.1 Relevant Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) are:

- Affordable Housing (2021)
- Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)
- Planning Obligations Under Section 106 (2015)
- Sustainable Design and Construction (2019)
- Market Place/ London Street Conservation Area Appraisal

5.0 DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT

5.1.0 Use

- 5.1.1 The proposal would replace the commercial floorspace on the upper floors with two self-contained, one-bedroom dwellings. The ground-floor would be retained for commercial Class E use.

5.2.0 Layout

- 5.2.1 The internal subdivision of the first and second floors would be required to accommodate the two, one-bedroom flats. A new spiral staircase would be incorporated within Flat 2 enabling access to the proposed roof terrace.



Figure 2: Proposed floor plans

5.3.0 Appearance & Scale

- 5.3.1 The proposed development would create a roof terrace with a 1500mm high slatted timber fence and a 1100mm high glass balustrade. Both will be fixed to the existing flat roof / perimeter wall and along the boundary. These will be the only alterations to the external elevations of the building.

5.4.0 Landscaping

- 5.4.1 New planting would be provided to the edge of the roof terrace.

5.5.0 **Access**

- 5.5.1 Access to the property will be retained and will be shared by both the office and residential uses.

6.0 **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

Based on the analysis set out in Sections 2 to 5, I consider that the application proposal raises the following issues, which I will consider in turn below:

1. Principle
2. Layout & Design
3. Parking

6.1.0 Issue No 1: Principle

6.1.1 The issue of principle rests on a consideration of a single factor:

- Provision of Housing

6.1.2 These factors are considered in turn below in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development which is at the heart of the NPPF as detailed at paragraph 10 thereof. In support of this, paragraph 8 of the Framework states that achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has ‘three overarching objectives’ – economic, social and environmental - which are ‘interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways.’ Notwithstanding this, paragraph 9 notes that they are not criteria against which every decision can or should be judged. It continues as follows:

“Planning policies and decisions should play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions, but in doing so should take local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area.”

6.1.3 Government, regional and local planning policy all support the provision of additional housing. Paragraph 60 of the NPPF seeks to significantly boost the supply of housing. Paragraph 119 advises that planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes.

6.1.4 Policy H1 of the Local Plan states that provision will be made for at least an additional 15,847 homes (averaging 689 homes per annum) in Reading Borough for the period 2013 to 2036. The Council will continue to work with neighbouring authorities within the Western Berkshire Housing Market Area to ensure that the shortfall of 230 dwellings that cannot be provided within Reading will be met over the plan period.

6.1.5 There is a pressing need for additional housing in Reading and the surrounding area. However, Reading is a very tightly defined urban area, and sites for new development are limited. The undeveloped land that does exist is mainly either in the functional floodplain or is important public open space. Provision of new housing therefore involves a heavy reliance on previously developed land, and the supply of such sites constrains the amount of housing that can be delivered in the Borough.

6.1.6 With the significant need for housing in Reading and surrounding areas, it is important that efficient use is made of the land that is available to boost the delivery of new homes. In light of this, the proposal provides an excellent opportunity to maximise the use of brownfield

land through the provision of two new dwellings without significant external works to the existing building.

6.2.0 Issue No 2: Layout & Design

6.2.1 Impact on the Character & Appearance of the Conservation Area

6.2.2 The National Planning Policy context for this development is provided by Section 72(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 which in respect of Conservation Areas requires that:

“Special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of that area.”

6.2.3 The NPPF sets out policies for the Historic Environment in section 16, Conservation Areas are statutory designated heritage assets. The policies of the Framework seek to conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance.

6.2.4 Policy CC7 seeks to protect and enhance the character and appearance of the area and requires a high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. Policy EN3 states that the special interest, character and architecture of Conservation Areas will be conserved and enhanced. Development proposals within Conservation Areas must make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

6.2.5 There will be some minor alterations to the roof of the existing building. The proposed development would create a roof terrace with a 1500mm high slatted timber fence and a 1100mm high glass balustrade. Both will be fixed to existing flat roof / perimeter wall and along the boundary.

6.2.6 The proposed roof terrace will be set back from the rear elevation by 1.3m (behind a 0.5m high parapet wall) and therefore would not be readily visible from the rear aspect of the property. The pitched roof on the front section of the building would also screen views of the roof terrace from London Street.

6.2.7 Given the above, the introduction of a roof terrace is not considered to cause any undue harm to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area in accordance with Policies CC7 and EN3 of the Local Plan and the provisions of the NPPF.

6.2.8 Residential Amenity

6.2.9 Paragraph 130 (f) NPPF promotes development with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

6.2.10 Policy CC8 of the Local Plan stipulates that development should not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties.

6.2.11 Policy H5 includes a number of standards for new development. Policy H12 states that Houses will be provided with private outdoor space whereas flats may be provided with communal outdoor space, balconies and/or roof gardens. However, the supporting text at paragraph 4.4.83 states:

“Flats in central Reading will not require the same amount of outdoor space as houses in other parts of Reading, and the sites are usually more constrained in any case. This is because often the needs of residents within central Reading can be different to those of the rest of the Borough. Flats in central Reading are less likely to attract families, and the ability to walk to public open space nearby reduces the need for private open space.”

In the past, the Council has sought the following minimum provisions for private or communal outdoor space for each type of accommodation, and they provide a useful guide for proposals:

(a) Houses: Useable private outdoor space should be no less than the gross floor area of the dwelling to which it relates (measured externally and including garage space).

(b) Flats outside central Reading:

- *1 and 2-bedroom: 25 sq m per flat*
- *3 or more bedrooms: 40 sq m per flat*
- *Sheltered units: 20 sq m per unit*

(c) Development in central Reading will not always be expected to comply with the standards set above. Open space is nonetheless required, unless exceptional circumstances prevail, to accommodate modest sitting out areas and clothes drying facilities.”

6.2.11 *Existing Occupiers*

To the rear of the site is Chapel Court, however the rear windows of the proposal will not face directly on to these properties such that there should be no concerns of overlooking. In addition, given the East View Place development is over 26m from the windows of the proposed flats, there should be no issues of overlooking in this respect. The provision of two flats within an existing building would not be expected to cause any concerns in respect of any of the other factors listed in Policy CC8.

6.2.12 *Future Occupiers*

The proposed dwelling would meet internal space standards for a new one-bedroom (one-storey) dwelling, including bedroom sizes. All habitable rooms would be served by windows and therefore the dwelling would provide acceptable light levels and outlook for future occupiers.

6.2.13 Policy H12 does not set out a strict requirement for the provision of outdoor amenity space and highlights that flats in central Reading will not require the same amount of outdoor space as houses in other parts of Reading. The proposal provides a large roof terrace for Flat 2, but no outdoor amenity provision is provided for Flat 1. However, as the site is in Central Reading and only an 8-minute walk from good quality space at Forbury Gardens, it is considered that the proposal is justifiable in relation to this Policy. As noted at Section 3, permission was recently granted for a flat at No 63 London Street without any outdoor private amenity space.

6.2.14 The site is within an Air Quality Management Area. For the recently approved application at No 63 London Street a ventilation strategy was proposed to ensure a good level of air quality within the dwelling. The Officer Report accepted that this would ensure acceptable living conditions. A similar scheme would be provided at the application property and the details of which could be secured by condition. Similarly, a planning condition could require details demonstrating suitable noise attenuation.

6.2.14 In the above circumstances, the proposal would maintain and provide good living conditions for existing and future occupiers in compliance with Policies CC8 and H5 of the Local Plan and the provisions of the NPPF.

6.3.0 **Issue No 3: Highways & Parking**

- 6.3.1 Paragraph 107 of the NPPF recognises that local parking standards for residential development should take into account the accessibility of the development and availability of and opportunities for public transport.
- 6.3.2 Policy TR3 states that development should not result in a detrimental impact to the transport network and should promote sustainable transport measures. Policy TR5 stipulates that development should provide car parking and cycle parking that is appropriate to the accessibility of locations within the Borough to sustainable transport facilities, particularly public transport.
- 6.3.3 The site is in a highly accessible location and future occupiers would have excellent access to a wide range of shops, services, and employment opportunities as well as good access to public transport links. There are bus stops within 55m of the site on London Street and Reading Station is a 10-minute walk. In these circumstances, future occupiers would not be reliant on the private motor car for travel such that there is a high potential to utilise environmentally sustainable modes of transport.
- 6.3.4 Given the central location of the site and the extensive parking restrictions in place preventing unauthorised parking in the area, a car free development should be considered acceptable in this location. Future occupants can be made aware that they would not be eligible for a resident or visitor parking permits and this can be secured via condition. It should be noted that car-free development was considered acceptable at 63 London Street as set out in Section 3 of this Statement.
- 6.3.5 The Parking Standards and Design SPD stipulates that 0.5 cycle parking spaces should be provided for each one-bed unit. This would total to a requirement of one cycle space for the whole development, however given the car-free nature of the scheme, two cycle spaces have been provided.
- 6.3.6 The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in relation to Policies TR3 and TR5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

7.1.0 Background

7.1.1 This report relates to a planning application for the conversion of the first and second floors to provide x 2 one-bedroom flats and erection of a roof terrace at 59 London Street, Reading RG1 4PS. The proposal is promoted in the following circumstances:

- The proposals provide an excellent opportunity to maximise the use of brownfield land through the provision of two new dwellings in a sustainable, town centre location.
- The introduction of a roof terrace is not considered to cause any undue harm to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area in accordance with Policies CC7 and EN3 of the Local Plan and the provisions of the NPPF.
- The proposal would maintain and provide good living conditions for existing and future occupiers in compliance with Policies CC8 and H5 of the Local Plan and the provisions of the NPPF
- The proposal would not be prejudicial to highway safety and car-free development is considered acceptable in this sustainable location in accordance with policies TR3 and TR5 of the Local Plan.

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