



BVA Planning
Town Planning Consultancy

Planning Statement

33 Prospect Street, Reading, RG4 8JB

Prepared on behalf of:

Colony Architects

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Contents

1.0	Introduction	3
2.0	Site and Surroundings	4
3.0	Proposed Development	5
4.0	Planning Policy	6
5.0	Scheme Justification	11
6.0	Summary and Conclusion	16

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Statement has been prepared in support of a planning application seeking full planning permission for rear extensions to the ground, first, and second floors, to allow for three residential flats (existing shop space retained) (“**the site**”). This Statement has been prepared by BVA Planning Ltd. on behalf of Colony Architects (“**the applicant**”).
- 1.2 The purpose of this Statement is to outline the background to the proposed scheme and the justification for the development in the context of relevant planning policy.

Format of Planning Statement

- 1.3 This statement is structured as follows:
- **Section 2** describes the site and surrounding area;
 - **Section 3** describes the proposed development in more detail;
 - **Section 4** sets out the relevant national and local planning policy context pertaining to the site and the proposed scheme;
 - **Section 5** appraises the proposed scheme against the relevant planning policies; and
 - **Section 6** provides an overall summary and conclusions.

2.0 Site and Surroundings

- 2.1 This site is located to the south of Reading town centre in an area known as Caversham. The site is within a predominately retail and residential area of predominately terraced Victorian properties.
- 2.2 The site is an existing retail unit (hair salon) that is to remain with empty upper floors that are not used by the retail occupiers. The surrounding uses vary from retail to takeaways/restaurants etc.
- 2.3 The area has excellent access to the local highway network and public transport routes are readily available in the area with bus stops found along Prospect Street. A network of cycle and pedestrian routes also exist.
- 2.4 The land falls within Flood Zone 1 (low risk) as defined by the Environment Agency's Online Flood Mapping. There are no statutory or local listed heritage assets within the area that would be affected by this proposed scheme.

3.0 Proposed Development

3.1 The proposed full application seeks approval for:

“rear extensions to the ground, first, and second floors, to allow for three residential flats (existing shop space retained).”

3.2 As outlined above, the proposal looks to repurpose existing accommodation that is not used for any purpose at present. The submitted plans and the Design and Access Statement provide detailed information on the works that would take place to accommodate the flats.

3.3 In total, 3 flats would be created at ground (rear), first and second floors. They would be all 1-bedroom units with designated spaces for storage, lounge, kitchen etc.

3.4 The ground floor unit would be accessed from the rear (via Short Street) where a spiral staircase is also located providing access to the upper flats via a terrace area. The ground floor unit only has side windows, but these are at high level with the upper flats all with windows facing the rear of the property and parking area.

4.0 Planning Policy

- 4.1 This section outlines the key planning policy considerations relevant to the proposed development at both the local and national level.
- 4.2 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that local planning authorities should determine planning applications in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.3 At the national level, relevant policy and guidance is set out within the National Planning Policy Framework (“**NPPF**”) published February 2019 and the associated Planning Practice Guidance (“**PPG**”).
- 4.4 The Development Plan (and associated guidance) for the area currently comprises of the Reading Local Plan (2019).
- 4.5 In support of the adopted development plan, the council has also adopted several Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) including those on Affordable Housing (2021) and Parking Standards (2021).

Reading Local Plan (2019)

- 4.6 The advice in the NPPF at paragraph 213 states that existing policies should not be considered out of date simply because they were adopted or made prior to the publication of the Framework. Due weight should be given to them, according to their degree of consistency with the Framework.
- 4.7 The proposals map confirms that the site falls within an identified local/district centre. The key policies relevant to this application are as follows:
- CC1: PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
 - CC2: SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION
 - CC5: WASTE MINIMISATION AND STORAGE

- CC6: ACCESSIBILITY AND THE INTENSITY OF DEVELOPMENT
- CC8: SAFEGUARDING AMENITY
- EN15: AIR QUALITY
- EN18: FLOODING AND DRAINAGE
- H1: PROVISION OF HOUSING
- H2: DENSITY AND MIX
- H3: AFFORDABLE HOUSING
- H5: STANDARDS FOR NEW HOUSING
- H8: RESIDENTIAL CONVERSIONS
- H10: PRIVATE AND COMMUNAL OUTDOOR SPACE
- TR3: ACCESS, TRAFFIC AND HIGHWAY-RELATED MATTERS
- TR5: CAR AND CYCLE PARKING AND ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING
- RL1: NETWORK AND HIERARCHY OF CENTRES

National Planning Policy Framework (2019)

- 4.8 The revised NPPF was published in February 2019 and replaces the previous guide published in July 2018. The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied and is a material consideration in planning decisions.
- 4.9 Paragraph 7 of the NPPF states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, which at a very high level, means meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- 4.10 Paragraph 8 goes on to add that achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways. These objectives are economic, social, and environmental.

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- 4.11 Paragraph 10 of the NPPF makes it clear that a presumption in favour of sustainable development is at the heart of the Framework.
- 4.12 Paragraph 11 of the Framework sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision making this means where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless the application of policies of the NPPF that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed or any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole.
- 4.13 Section 5 of the NPPF relates to the delivery of new homes. Paragraph 59 says it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay.
- 4.14 Paragraph 91 of the NPPF sets out that planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which, among other criteria, promote social interaction; are safe and accessible; and enable and support healthy lifestyles.
- 4.15 Section 11 seeks to make effective use of land. Paragraph 117 states that planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions.
- 4.16 Paragraph 122 goes on to add that planning policies and decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land, taking into account:
- *“The identified need for different types of housing and other forms of development, and the availability of land suitable for accommodating it;*
 - *Local market conditions and viability;*
 - *The availability and capacity of infrastructure and services – both existing and proposed – as well as their potential for further improvement and the scope to promote sustainable travel modes that limit future car use;*
 - *The desirability of maintaining an area’s prevailing character and setting (including residential gardens), or of promoting regeneration and change; and*
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- *The importance of securing well-designed, attractive and healthy places.”*

4.17 Section 12 of the Framework seeks to achieve well-designed places. Paragraph 124 begins by declaring that the creation of high-quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. It goes on to add that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.

4.18 Paragraph 127 of the NPPF states that Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

- *“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;*
- *Are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*
- *Are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);*
- *Establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;*
- *Optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and*
- *Create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.”*

4.19 Paragraph 130 states that permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, taking into account any local design standards or style guides in plans or supplementary planning documents. Conversely,

where the design of a development accords with clear expectations in plan policies, design should not be used by the decision-maker as a valid reason to object to development.

5.0 Scheme Justification

- 5.1 This section of the Statement provides justification for the proposed scheme in the context of relevant planning policies cited in the previous section.

Principle of Residential Development

- 5.2 As set out in previous section, the application site falls within an identified District Centre, where Policy RL1 advises that the vitality and viability of these centres should be maintained and enhanced. The policy goes on to state that the residential use of upper floors will be acceptable. This policy is in line with the guidance in the NPPF which provides a presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- 5.3 The site is easily accessible by a range of transport modes including public transport, walking and bicycle routes. The Council also recognises (Policy H8) that residential conversions have an important role to play in housing land supply in Reading. Conversion to flats has also added a valuable supply of reasonably low-cost private rented accommodation, meeting a need in the market. Generally, conversions provide for a market need for small, flexibly let accommodation reflecting household formation trends in the population and the more transient nature of parts of the labour market. Therefore, there is no in-principle policy objection that would suggest development of the upper floors should be resisted. The proposal is in full compliance with Local Plan policies CC1, RL1, H8 and the guidance within the NPPF.

Achieving Sustainable Development

- 5.4 In accordance with s.38 (6) of the 2004 Act, the application must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Core Strategy constitutes a spatial strategy and policies designed to achieve sustainable development under the three objectives: economic, social and environmental. This is also set out in paragraph 8 of the NPPF, achieving sustainable

development. In respect of this application the proposed scheme would deliver the following:

1. **Economic objective:** Provision of employment and supply of associated materials, goods and services in the construction of the flats. The application site would deliver new housing to improve choice and competition in the marketplace especially at the smaller, flexible end where there is significant demand. The construction of the units would also bring some increased spending by residents in local shops and increased demand for local services.
2. **Social objective:** The scheme would deliver additional homes in the short term and be delivered in a well-designed and accessible scheme.
3. **Environmental objective:** Any necessary development brings about change. The application site is currently within a sustainable and built-up area and is not considered to hold any significant ecological value. The proposal provides new areas for planting to the rear of the ground floor area.

5.5 Overall, the application is suitable for residential use given its sustainable location.

Housing Mix/Affordable Housing

5.6 Given the small-scale nature of this proposal, the provision of 3 x 1-bed flats is considered to comply with policies H8 as it would deliver a choice of accommodation when considered alongside the existing stock in the area (in compliance with Policy H2). In respect of affordable provision, and in line with Policy H3 a financial contribution may be provided by the applicant, but this matter will be agreed with officers during the determination of the application.

Character, Appearance and Layout

5.7 The design and appearance of the proposed scheme is in line with other homes found in the area.

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- 5.8 The proposed layout of the units will ensure privacy and amenity issues for both prospective and existing residents is not compromised. The orientation of the units and careful placement of windows means no excessive overlooking will occur, if at all. All the units are provided with adequate private/communal open spaces and a secure bicycle/Bin store.
- 5.9 The materials proposed are considered to reflect those found within the wider area and will positively add to the character of the area in accordance with policies CC2, CC5, CC6, CC8, H5, H8 and H10.

Transport, Accessibility and Parking

- 5.11 As part of the scheme, it is proposed to access the site via Short Road. A small-scale development of this nature is unlikely to negatively impact upon the flow of traffic in this area. The sustainable nature of the site, and the fact the units are all 1 bedroom, means that the provision of parking spaces is not considered necessary. By not providing parking, the occupiers will utilise public transport and pedestrian/cycling routes in the area.
- 5.12 In respect of refuse collection, a dedicated area is provided close to the entrance of the site to the rear which will allow easy access for refuse workers to collect and drop back the bins in a safe and secure manner.
- 5.13 As such, the proposal is not expected to give rise to any unacceptable highway impacts that would warrant refusal of this application and, thereby, complies with policies TR3, TR5 and the guidance within the NPPF.

Flood Risk and Drainage/Air Quality

- 5.14 The site is located within Flood Zone 1 according to the Environment Agency's online flood mapping, which means that the land has a low probability of fluvial flooding (less than 1 in 1000 (<0.1%) annual probability). Residential development is appropriate in Flood Zone 1 and, therefore, the application complies with the aims of the sequential approach.

- 5.15 As part of the scheme, it is proposed to use water efficient devices to reduce water usage. The units are all located to the rear of no.33 and, therefore, will be shielded from any air pollutants derived from vehicle exhausts along Prospect Street. As part of the scheme, and in compliance with building regs., adequate ventilation will be provided for each flat through passive and mechanical systems, where appropriate. Therefore, the proposal would be in accordance with policies EN15 and EN18.

Construction Method and Waste Management

- 5.16 On construction projects, impact upon the public and adjacent owners is an important consideration. A pre-engineered approach ensures that proper consideration is given to forming a Good Neighbourhood Policy. This extends to the appearance of the site and its impact on the adjacent buildings and includes:

- Minimising noise and dust disturbance.
- Planning deliveries to be out of peak hours where possible, and ensuring all materials are immediately incorporated into the project as soon as practically possible.
- Advising the adjacent users of the master programme and sectional completion plans.
- Showing consideration to local residents, businesses and the general public to ensure that construction works and operatives do not intrude on normal day to day activities.

- 5.17 In considering a Waste Management strategy, the four criteria listed below for effective waste management will be taken into consideration in formulating a suitable strategy:

1. Minimise / Reduce
2. Re-use
3. Recycle
4. Disposal

5.18 In particular, opportunities will be investigated to maximise the practicable recycling potential of construction material. The following are identified at this stage:

- Re-use excavated spoil within landscape/other areas of fill if suitable;
- Timber waste considered for recycling for use of by-product;
- Arrange recycling of packaging with suppliers; and
- Prevention of over-ordering/damage of materials on-site.

5.19 In respect of waste management once the units are occupied, it is proposed that each house is provided with its own refuse storage area at ground level.

S106 Agreement/Conditions

5.20 In respect of any S106 obligations that may be sought, the applicant is willing to consider these in dialogue with officers, if required. As part of the application, the applicant has provided CIL information for consideration. If any planning conditions are considered necessary, then the applicant reserves the right to review and provide comment on these prior to them being imposed.

6.0 Summary and Conclusion

- 6.1 This Statement has been prepared in support of a full planning application seeking planning permission for rear extensions to the ground, first, and second floors, to allow for three residential flats (existing shop space retained) at no. 33 Prospect Street. This Statement has been prepared by BVA Planning Ltd. on behalf of Colony Architects.
- 6.2 One of the core land-use planning principles set out in the NPPF is to proactively drive and support sustainable development to deliver the homes that the country needs. In this regard, every effort should be made by local authorities to meet the housing needs of their area.
- 6.3 The site is located within the identified settlement boundary and sits within a sustainable location that benefits from easy access to public transport and walking/bicycle routes and to local shops and employment opportunities. Therefore, the principle of allowing this sustainable development is not in question. The detailed scheme is well-designed and has taken into consideration local character and amenity issues. In addition, the proposal has carefully considered issues, such as parking/access, amenity space, drainage and energy use.
- 6.4 In our opinion, the proposal is in accordance with relevant national and local planning policies, being an attractive development set within a sustainable location. On this basis, this application **should be approved without delay.**