

The Head of Planning
Reading Council

Our ref: 10258

By Electronic Submission

26 July 2021

Dear Sirs

Notification of a Proposed Change of Use from B1(a) to C3 Residential Use – Delta House, 70 South View Avenue, Reading, RG4 5BB

This application is submitted in accordance with the requirements of Class O of Part 3 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 as amended (hereafter referred to as the GPDO).

This letter is submitted with the following plans/documents:

- Online application form
- Topo Survey 00470640
- 778-001-PL00-Site Location and Block Plan
- 778-010-PL01-Existing Ground Floor Plan
- 778-011-PL00-Existing First Floor Plan
- 778-016-PL03-Proposed Site Plan including plans of the flood barrier/wall
- 778-017-PL01-Proposed Bike and Bin Stores
- 778-025-PL01-Proposed Ground Floor Plan
- 778-026-PL01-Proposed First Floor Plan Site survey
- YE8922- Phase 1 Desktop Report V2 (appendices available on request as the file is too large for the Planning Portal)
- Flood Risk Assessment FRA Report Delta House 70 South View Avenue
 - Appendix A Collection of Figures
 - Appendix C Environment Agency's Data and Information
- CIL Questionnaire
- Acoustic windows details
- Buffalo Barrier Specifications
- Buffalo Barrier Instalment Arrangements
- TFC Floodwall Spec for Delta House
- Previous approval reference 201411

This letter provides the supporting information necessary to ensure that the current requirements of permitted development allowances are met. The Council will be aware that there is a current application (reference 211028) which is currently being considered under the same Class O (section W) procedure. This application is similar but proposed an alternative approach to the floor mitigation. Instead of raising the ground floor level, this application proposes a low level walls with 2 Buffalo barriers (entrances - details



submitted) surrounding the property. The proposal is to install a designed Flood wall to the perimeter of the property with openings to gain access to the buildings entrances and exits. These openings can be protected by installing Buffalo HD demountable flood barriers – full specification are included on the document entitled “Floodwall Spec for Delta House”, prepared by *The Flood Company* and submitted with the application. The party wall which forms the rear boundary of the site will be made waterproof through internal changes to make sure that the barrier fully surrounds the building.

This would both be a more cost-effective solution than the previous approach of raising the floor levels as well as being more protective to the building than allowing any flood water to flow into the building. In the event of a flood the barriers would be deployed and the building would become its own little protected citadel. The approach is demonstrated below:

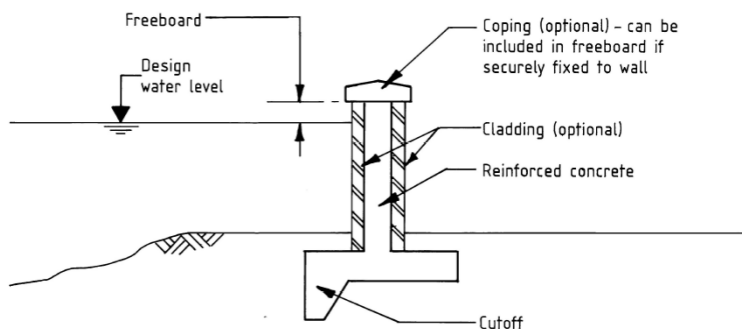


Figure 9.3 Typical floodwall

The diagram illustrates the main components of a floodwall. A cutoff is often required to reduce seepage under the wall (in which case it would generally be deeper than illustrated). The cutoff also helps to stabilise the wall (against sliding – see Section 9.6).

The wall/barriers will be 1200mm high around the property to allow for climate change increases in water level. The Buffalo barriers, which slot in at the gaps in the wall are shown below:



This approach has been discussed informally by *The Flood Company* and the Environment Agency (EA) with the concept apparently endorsed by the EA officers (Michelle Kidd).

Whilst Class O of the General Permitted Development Order does not allow for any material external changes to the building, it does not rule out any other development on site that is permitted development provided for by other classes of the GPDO. In this case, Part 2 Class A of the GPDO allows for “The erection, construction, maintenance, improvement or alteration of a gate, fence, wall or other means of enclosure” as long as no part is more than 1m high (if any part is adjacent to the highway) or 2m otherwise. Therefore, the proposed wall is granted planning permission by the GPDO and therefore can be a condition of a prior approval with no conflict with Class O.



Whilst this is a different approach to that previously agreed, there are often several ways of mitigating or removing flooding issues. This is explained in the National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPF) which explains¹ *“Developers and applicants need to consider flood risk to and from the development site, and it is likely to be in their own best interests to do this as early as possible, in particular, to reduce the risk of subsequent, significant additional costs being incurred. **The broad approach of assessing, avoiding, managing and mitigating flood risk should be followed**”* (our emphasis). Ultimately, as explained subsequently in the NPPG, the key to a successful application is making sure the site is safe for the proposed use.

The Site

The site is located on the southern side of South View Avenue in the Caversham area of Reading. It is a detached two storey, L-shaped building which is arranged into four office suites (A-D). The building is of brick construction with a pitched, tiled roof. It is set back from South View Avenue in a predominantly residential part of Lower Caversham. Externally, there are approximately 16 parking spaces.

The plans show the existing Class E (formerly B1a unit) in its current layout with the proposed residential layout which will provide 10 flats of various sizes. The proposed layout of the flats provides good quality living accommodation (further consideration below).



Site History

Originally the administrative offices for Caversham Laundry, consent was granted in 1987 (87/TP/592) for “Two-storey extension at front for additional office accommodation” and later in 1991 (91/0690/DE) a certificate was issued on 9th August 1991 confirming “Planning permission is NOT required for: The change of use of the Old Laundry to administrative offices together with an element of light electronics assembly”.

The building has been occupied continuously as office space and paying non-domestic business rates for over 25 years. The lawful use of the site was recently established again through the granting of a

¹ Paragraph: 029 Reference ID: 7-029-20140306



Certificate of Existing Use (28th July 2020 – application reference 200551) as a B1(a) use. As of 1st September 2020, this is now an E Use Class property.

Application 201411 for the conversion of the property into 7 flats was approved 18th February 2021 (another Class O application) where the Council confirmed that the proposed development was permitted development and passed the subjective tests of Paragraph W of the GPDO.

Permitted development

Schedule 2, Part 3 Class O of the GPDO states that development consisting of a change of use of a building from a use falling within Class B1(a) (Office) of the Schedule to the Use Classes Order to a use falling within class C3 of the Use Classes Order.²

In accordance with the requirements of O.1 we can confirm as follows:

- Was in use as a B1(a) office use on 29th May 2013
- The site is not and does not form part of a site of special scientific interest
- The site is not and does not form a part of a safety hazard area
- The site is not and does not form part of a military explosive's storage area
- The building is not listed or a scheduled ancient monument

The LPA has accepted the position on all of these.

Furthermore, in respect of O.2:

Transport and Highways Impact

The proposal would result in 10 one-bedroom dwellings. The site benefits from ample existing car parking, which is used for the existing office use, and this will be used by future residents. The proposed use is a less intensive use than a B1(a) office in terms of daily trips. The site is in a built up area and in walking distance of Reading Town Centre and station providing future residents with an alternative to car travel.

Flooding risks

The site is located in Flood Zone 3 which means that there is potential, at least according to the Environment Agency modelling, for the site to flood.



² Note, in this transition period the historic B1(a) use remains the test despite the site now being in the E Use Class.



The application is submitted with a full Flood Risk Assessment (the same FRA that has been agreed previously by the Environment Agency and the Local Planning Authority) which considers the flooding impact on the proposed residential use factoring in the provisions for changes of use which are less onerous than the tests for new development. During the course of the previous application the initial Environment Agency objection was addressed by an updated FRA, a survey of the site levels and an agreement to raise the ground floor levels above the theoretical flood level. As explained above, this application proposes an alternative to raising the floor levels.

As requested by the EA, the prior approval was previously issued subject to the condition below which can be amended to suit this application to this application. The FRA has not needed to be updated as the number of units proposed is irrelevant to the consideration and the only defining issue is the safety mitigation proposed which is set out in this letter, the application plans and the supporting documents.

Condition: *The development shall be carried out in accordance with the submitted flood risk assessment (ref 25/11/2020, QFRA 1754 version 1.1, UK Flood Risk) and the following mitigation measures it details:*
- *a flood wall with Buffalo HD demountable flood barriers shall be installed in the location shown on plan 778-016-PL02-Proposed Site Plan whilst the party wall along the southern boundary of the site shall be made fully waterproof in accordance with specifications to be submitted and agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.*

These mitigation measures shall be fully implemented prior to occupation and subsequently in accordance with the scheme's timing/phasing arrangements. The measures detailed above shall be retained and maintained thereafter throughout the lifetime of the development.

Reason: *To reduce the risk of flooding to the proposed development and future occupants*

The proposed use is considered an acceptable use in this Flood Zone therefore meets the requirements set out in Class O, Part 2.

Contamination

The historic office use suggests against any contaminated land issues on the site. However, it appears from the Environmental Phase 1 Report (enclosed) that there may be other historic uses on the site which pre-date the current use. This use would have been the same use as 68 St Johns Road to the south (the old laundry) which was subject to a consultation in the recent permitted development applications.

The previous Class O prior approval was subject to the following condition which deals with this as an issue:

Prior to occupation, ground investigations and an assessment of the nature and extent of contamination should be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. This assessment must be undertaken by a competent person, and shall assess any contamination on the site, whether or not it originates on the site. Moreover, it must include:

(i) a survey of the extent, scale and nature of contamination;

(ii) an assessment of the potential risks to:

- *human health,*
- *property (existing or proposed) including buildings, crops, pets, woodland and service lines and pipes,*
- *adjoining land,*
- *groundwaters and surface waters,*
- *ecological systems,*
- *archaeological sites and ancient monuments;*



Reason: These details are required due to insufficient information being contained within this submission and to ensure the development is suitable for its end use and the wider environment and does not create undue risks to occupiers of the site or surrounding areas in accordance with Policy EN16 of the Reading local Plan 2019.

Impacts of commercial noise

The surrounding area is primarily in residential use which is, of course, a compatible use with the proposed use. 68 St Johns Road, to the south, is in class E use now but was historically a B1(c) use. The difference between B1(c) (light industrial) and B2 (Industrial) is that the former is an appropriate use for a residential area. Given this, then the proposed residential use is compatible with this use.

The next properties to the immediate south are the small business units in South View Park. These are all B1(c) uses too and therefore the same argument applies as that above.

The business to the immediate rear is completely empty. It is unoccupied and has been for some time. The previous applicant spoke to the owners of that site who, as the council are aware, are have also been pursuing PD change of use. There appears no prospect of it being used again in the near future. The empty building is shown below and a view inside is attached:



Next to these empty buildings are some small business units which are occupied by a housing developer, chartered surveyors, acoustic consultants (ironically) etc and are seemingly in office style use more than anything. Other premises are empty which is a sign of the times unfortunately.





To further address potential noise from these sources, as agreed during the previous application, additional acoustic measures can be added to the windows. The information about these measures are submitted with this application and the plans are annotated as previously approved.

The provision of adequate natural light in all habitable rooms of the dwellinghouses

The provision of adequate natural light to habitable rooms is a recent addition to prevent development of poor quality dwellings. The south elevation of the application property faces onto the commercial units to the south and these have required careful consideration in the preparation of the plans for the proposed residential use. The 68 St Johns Road buildings are only single storey (as shown below) and therefore the first floor windows look out over the neighbouring building to the rear.



At ground floor level, there are no south facing windows abutting 68 St Johns Road.

Further to the east, there is a 2m+ gap between the building and the units on South View Park. The South View Park units are relatively low and therefore sunlight and natural light will both be prevalent in this gap. Whilst the outlook from any ground floor windows in this location would be limited, they will still benefit from natural light which is the GPDO test. All habitable rooms will comply with natural daylight requirements.

On this basis the proposed development passes the test of providing sufficient natural daylight for the proposed dwellings.

Since the previous application two additional tests have been added to the GPDO. Firstly, in Class O it requires the application to be submitted by 31st July 2021 (there is no requirement for the application to be determined by this date). Secondly, Section 3 Paragraph 9A requires that all dwellings are a minimum of 37m² in area and comply with the nationally described space standards. These requirements are satisfied.

On the basis of the information provided above and on the submitted plans, through this application the Council can confirm that prior approval of any further details is not required, and the proposed change of use is lawful and can proceed.



We look forward to receiving confirmation of registration of this application and the Council's decision in due course.

Yours faithfully

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