

PLANNING STATEMENT
2 Priory Avenue, Caversham, RG4 7SF



1. Introduction

- 1.1 This design statement accompanies an application to determine if prior approval is required for the proposed: Change of use from Commercial, Business and Service (Use Class E) to Dwelling houses (Use Class C3), Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) - Schedule 2, Part 3, Class MA
- 1.2 The request relates to the proposed redevelopment of 2 Priory Avenue, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7SF.
- 1.3 2 Priory Avenue was last used as a Doctor's Surgery prior to COVID-19. It now lies vacant and in disrepair.
- 1.4 A similar scheme to that now proposed was approved for full planning on 9th May 2019, on application number 181716 and an amendment approved in August 2021 on application number 210870
- 1.5 The adjoining property has recently been granted permitted development to convert the offices to residential flats.

2. Site and Surroundings

- 2.1 The application site is located at the intersection of Priory Avenue and Church Street (A4155) on the edge of the Caversham District Centre. The site has a dual frontage, with 35m to Priory Avenue, and 7m to Church Street. The site contains a part 2 storey part 1.5 storey building which has been in use as the Priory Avenue Doctors Surgery. (site location plan below, site edged red)



- 2.2 Immediately adjoining the site to the East is a two-storey building which was given consent to change its office use to residential, with a service station beyond it. To the North, the site is bound by two-storey residential dwellings.
- 2.3 The site is located approximately 1 km to the north of Reading town centre and is within easy reach of local services and public transport routes. Caversham village is identified as a district centre in the local plan and is dominated by retail uses with a large number of residential uses above shops and adjacent to a large suburban housing area.
- 2.4 Caversham village has a number of local amenity spaces and public car parks situated in close proximity.

- 2.5 The building is not listed. The site does lie on the northern edge of Flood zone 2.
- 2.6 This scheme puts forward a viable alternative to the existing approved schemes that retains the original building in its setting. The existing building is in the Arts and Crafts style with many original features which are proposed to be retained.
- 2.7 The surrounding area is predominantly in residential use, however the character and appearance of the street scene is very varied
- 2.8 Immediately facing the site is Priory Court (pictured below). A substantial residential development built in 1999 for retirement living. The site comprises 27 flats in a part mock Tudor building, across three floors. The building includes a large imposing mock Tudor gable, and a mixture of dormer windows and gables to the facade. The building and fittings are modern in design. Off street car parking is accommodated along the site frontage.



- 2.9 Beyond this, buildings are more typically accommodated with lower rooflines, comprising a mixture of two and three storey dwellings of different styles and forms, including external facing materials (painted, brick, rendered), and fenestration details, and roof forms (pitched, hipped etc).

2.10 The Bakehouse development on Rectory Road (pictured below), is situated on a road perpendicularly bisecting Priory Avenue, and a two minute walk from the site. The Bakehouse is the closest recent example of a similar size site being completed in the local area. The development is of modern construction and design with individual entrances to most flats at street level. The original structure was demolished to make way for seven flats. Similarly to the Priory Avenue site, The Bakehouse does not offer any street parking to its residents. It is situated on the road with minimal frontage to the road.



3. Planning History

- 3.1 Planning amendment approved in August 2021 on application number 210870
- 3.2 Planning permission granted on 9th May 2019, application number 181716, for the conversion to six units, comprising: 4 x 1 bed flats and 2 x 2 bed units.
- 3.3 091109/FUL (09/01753/FUL): Erection of a first floor extension above existing single storey extension granted.
- 3.4 100545/FUL (10/00276/FUL): Erection of a first floor extension above existing single storey extension (resubmission of 09/01753/FUL) granted

4. Proposed Development

- 4.1 The proposed development seeks to gain permitted development for an already consented scheme but with minimal alterations, namely the removal of the bins and bike store.
- 4.2 The new scheme makes better use of the constraints of the building, namely that each flat can have its own waste, not shared. Each flat will be able to store their own wheelie bins in their own separate amenity space, additionally there is further space along the Priory Avenue frontage for wheelie bins for the two flats (5&6) without their own separate amenity space. The windows directly facing this will be obscured and sealed shut. The area also previously earmarked for bicycle storage can be instead used as living accommodation.
- 4.3 The room sizes exceed or are close to the technical housing standards document 2015 and all have access to satisfactory daylight and outlook, which includes a dual aspect for those flats to the southern end of the building in proximity to the protected Magnolia tree. In order to minimise internal changes and keep most of the historic room layouts intact two of the flats are on the borderline sizing requirements – but without changing the external window layouts a more equal sizing of the flats is not possible.
- 4.4 We consider that the scheme proposed presents an appropriate mix of housing on a brownfield site in a highly sustainable location that would fit comfortably within the local area and from our review of the development plan context, we believe that the scheme is policy compliant.

5. Planning Policy Framework

- 5.1 Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) - Schedule 2, Part 3, Class MA
- 5.2 The Development Plan for the area is made up of national planning guidance in the form of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the adopted documents forming part of the Local Development Framework particularly, in this case, the adopted Core Strategy (CS) document and the Sites and Detailed Policies Document (SDPD)
- 5.3 One of the main principles of national policy is to concentrate development in sustainable locations. The provision of housing to meet the needs of a sustainable and buoyant economy is also a principle theme
- 5.4 In terms of the Local Plan context the following policies are considered relevant to this application:
- 5.5 Policy CS31 (Additional and Existing Community Facilities) states that proposals involving the redevelopment of existing community facilities for non-community uses will not be permitted, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that there is no longer a need to retain that facility.
- 5.6 Policy CS7 (Design and the Public Realm) requires that all development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located.
- 5.7 Policy CS15 (Location, Accessibility, Density and Housing Mix) states that the appropriate density and mix of residential development within the Borough will be informed by:
 - (a) An assessment of the characteristics, including the mix of uses of the area in which it is located
 - (b) Its current and future level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport, as defined in Policy CS4

(c) The need to achieve high quality design in accordance with Policy CS7; and

(d) The need to minimise environmental impacts, including detrimental impacts on the amenities of adjoining occupiers.

5.8 SDPD Policy DM8 (Safeguarding Amenity) seeks to ensure that development does not have a significant detrimental impact on the living environment of existing or new residential properties, in terms of, among other things

i) Privacy and overlooking

ii) Access to sunlight and daylight

iii) Visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development.

5.9 Further, The National Planning Policy Framework (2012) encourages the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land) and seeks that all housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development.