

TONY THORPE ASSOCIATES

CHARTERED TOWN PLANNERS

The Studio, 1 Durant Way, Tilehurst, Reading, Berks, RG31 6TR.

Telephone: 0118 942 1855.

Mobile: 07831 432582 Email: tonyplan.office@gmail.com

Our Ref:- AJT/SB/1178
Your Ref:- 210809

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APPLICATION FOR A DETERMINATION AS TO WHETHER THE PRIOR APPROVAL OF THE AUTHORITY WILL BE REQUIRED FOR A CHANGE OF USE UNDER CLASS O (CHANGE OF USE OF A BUILDING AND ANY LAND WITHIN ITS CURTILAGE FROM A USE FALLING WITHIN CLASS B1(a) (OFFICES) OF THE SCHEDULE TO THE USE CLASSES ORDER, TO A USE FALLING WITHIN CLASS C3 (DWELLINGHOUSES) OF THAT SCHEDULE).

WRITTEN DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AT:-

49, ST PETERS ROAD, READING RG6 1NT

1.00 Background.

1.01

An earlier pre-application inquiry (RBC ref:- 210809) determined that the principle of a change of use from the existing legitimate offices to a HMO was unacceptable since the proportion of HMO's would result in HMO's representing significantly more than 25% of the residential properties within a 50m radius of the application site. As such, the proposal is contrary to Policy H8 of the Local Plan and the Residential Conversions Supplementary Planning Document.

1.02

Accordingly this application for a determination is for a single C3 dwellinghouse.

2.00 The site and its surroundings.

2.01

The premises lie at the corner of St Peters Road and Auckland Road and comprise a two-storey with attic, semi-detached building in legitimate office use. There is a parking space located on the office forecourt. The premises adjoin 49a St Peters Road (which fronts Auckland Road) and which is a separate planning unit. The area is predominantly residential. The building appears to originally have been built c1900 as a corner shop with accommodation above. The applicants' family purchased the property in 1980 and it has been in legitimate office use since that time.

2.02

The applicant wishes to change the use of 49 St Peters Road from its legitimate B1(a) office use to a C3 dwellinghouse use, as allowed by class 'O' of the GPDO.

2.03

We can confirm that the building is not on Article 2(5) land and the Class B1(a) use existed prior to 29th May 2013. The Google Street photograph below dated May 2012 shows the premises in use by a B1(a) dental staffing agency with offices above. The office use has continued uninterrupted until the present time.



PHOTO 1. Google Street image dated May 2012.

2.04

The Valuation Office Agency confirms that all rooms are used as offices (see appendix 1.). The building is not part of a safety hazard area or military explosives storage area and is not a listed building or scheduled monument.

3.00 Transport and Highway Impacts

3.01

The test is whether the development ***"...is likely to result in a material increase or a material change in the character of traffic in the vicinity of the site."*** In our submission the substitution of residential for commercial use will not result in a material increase in the level of vehicular movements associated with the proposed use. Using TRICS data the change of use is likely to lead to a net reduction in traffic generation and therefore have a reduced impact on the free flow and safety of traffic.

3.02

The area is Zone 3 (Secondary Core Area). Four bedrooms are proposed with a policy requirement of 0.25 spaces per bedroom. The consequent single space requirement is satisfied by the existing off-street parking space on the forecourt (see photos 2 overleaf). There is a double yellow parking restriction line around the radius of the corner ensuring free access to the parking space.

3.03

Traffic speed appears subjectively low and we consider that the COU would not adversely affect the free flow and safety of traffic on the local network. The abandonment of the legitimate commercial use significantly reduces potential traffic generation. We are advised that until its recent closure the business had up to 15 vans coming and going from the building.



PHOTO 2. General view of the site 17th May 2021. Pedestrian access is via the central white door. Existing advertisements to be removed. Single off-street parking space visible on left.

3.04

Accordingly it is our submission that the change of use will not cause any increase or change in the character of traffic in the vicinity of the site. The test applied by the legislation is not merely any 'increase' but the sterner test of a 'material increase'. The effect of the proposal is demonstrably well below this higher 'materiality' benchmark.

4.00 Contamination Risks on The Site

4.01

The site is not now nor will it become, as a result of the proposed change of use, 'contaminated land' as described in Part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 having regard to the Contaminated Land Statutory Guidance issued by the SoS for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in April 2012.

4.02

The 1883 6-inch OS shows the site as farmland. By 1900 the building existed but was not attached to the adjoining terrace fronting St Peters Road which was a garden at that time (see appendix 2). Therefore OS mapping confirms that there is no historic evidence of contamination.

5.00 Flooding Risks on The Site

5.01

The online Environment Agency Flood Map for Planning shows the site to be in flood zone 1, an area with a low probability of flooding and with no critical drainage problems (see appendix 3). Therefore no further consultation with the Environment Agency is necessary.

6.00 Provision of adequate natural light in all habitable rooms of the dwellinghouse.

6.01

The submitted floorplan shows the location of all windows. The attached 'Elevations for Natural Light Assessment' (appendix 4) shows a reasonable area of fenestration to each habitable room. As an example of interior levels of light we have attached photos of two offices to be converted.

7.00 Compliance with DCLG Technical Standards for Space.

7.01

Please see plan AJT/02 for details. All rooms change from Office to Residential. Layout is 4-bed, 6-person, 3-storey. Floorspace is 121.30m. Floorspace of in built storage is 3.23m². Minimum single-occupant bedroom width (excluding built-in storage) is 2.2m. Minimum bedroom size is 12.5m². One ground floor WC will be converted to a shower. Adequate natural light available to each habitable room.

7.02

The proposal therefore complies with the DCLG Technical Standards for Space.

8.00 Conclusions

8.01

We consider that no further information is required to determine the application but will of course supply any assessment of the relevant impact or risks and a statement of mitigation should the Council have reasonable grounds to request such information.

8.02

In our submission prior approval is not required.

9.00 Appendixes

APPENDIX 1:- Valuation Office Agency webpage confirming that all rooms are used as offices.

APPENDIX 2:- 1900 OS 6-inch plan showing that the building existed but was not attached to the adjoining terrace fronting St Peters Road. OS license 100048991.

APPENDIX 3:- Environment Agency Flood Map for Planning.

APPENDIX 4:- Elevations for Natural Light Assessment.