

PLANNING, DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

**Erection of two storey extension to
accommodate 2 x 2-bed flats, 3 x 1-
bed flats and 2 x studio flats including
changes to fenestration (Resubmission
of lapsed planning approval ref.
130842)**

**at
125 Chatham Street, Reading, RG1 7HT**

On Behalf of: The Keen Partnership

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement is produced to support a planning application for the erection of a two-storey extension to accommodate 2 x 2-bed flats, 3 x 1-bed flats and 2 x studio flats including changes to fenestration at 125 Chatham Street, Reading. This is a resubmission of lapsed planning consent ref. 130842 approved January 2015.
- 1.2 This planning statement will cover the background to the application and provide the necessary information to enable its determination by officers at the Council. It will consider the proposal in light of relevant planning policies and other material considerations. The conclusion reached is that key material considerations and the wider objectives of National and Local planning policy support the grant of permission.
- 1.3 In addition to this planning statement, the application is accompanied by the appropriate planning application forms and ownership certificate, duly signed and completed, and the following documents prepared by The Keen Partnership:

8415-PL-01	Location Plan	1:1250	A3
8415-PL-02	Existing Block Plan	1:250	A3
8415-PL-03	Existing Plans	1:200	A3
8415-PL-04	Existing Elevations	1:100	A3
8415-PL-05	Existing Elevations	1:100	A3
8415-PL-06	Proposed Block Plan	1:200	A3
8415-PL-07	Amenities & block plan 1:200 &	1:100	A3
8415-PL-08	Exis&Prop Street Scene	1:250	A3
8415-PL-09	Prop Ground Floor plan	1:100	A3
8415-PL-10	Prop First Floor plan	1:100	A3
8415-PL-11	Prop Second Floor plan	1:100	A3
8415-PL-12	Prop Third Floor plan	1:100	A3
8415-PL-13	Prop Roof plan	1:100	A3
8415-PL-14	Prop Front Elevation N	1:100	A3
8415-PL-15	Prop Side Elevation E	1:100	A3
8415-PL-16	Prop Rear Elevation S	1:100	A3
8415-PL-17	Prop Side Elevation W	1:100	A3
8415-PL-18	3D Front -Side view	N/S	A3
8415-PL-19	3D Rear-Side view	N/S	A3

- 1.4 The relevant application fee will be submitted by the applicant separately.

2. Site Location and Description

- 2.1 The application site is a vacant two-storey office building on the south side of Chatham Street to the west of Reading Town centre. The building is in a modern style, circa. 1980 with a flat, parapet roof and has a gated car park behind, accessed from Ambrose Place, which is a private road.
- 2.2 The site and surrounding buildings are within the West Side Major Opportunity area defined by Reading Borough Council's Local Plan adopted November 2019.
- 2.3 Surrounding the site is a variety of building types and uses. To the west of the site is a large new residential building and a grade II listed house that dates from the early 19th Century. To the south of the site is a grade II listed church. To the north is an old residential building with associated land, which has been approved for further residential development. To the east of the site, again there is a number of buildings that vary in style and use. These include: a surgery, industrial units and a former night club.

3. Planning History

- 3.1 Application Ref 170979 - Change of use of building from Class B1(a) (offices) to C3 (dwellinghouses) to comprise 8 x 1 bed flats. Prior Notification under Class O, Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015. (Resubmission of 130870). Approved 12/08/17
- 3.2 Application Ref 161100 - Application for a non-material amendment following a grant of planning permission (130842). Approved 11/07/2016.

- 3.3 Application Ref 130870 - Change of use of building from Class B1(a) (offices) to C3 (dwellinghouses) to comprise 8 x 1 bed flats. Prior Notification under Class J, Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (as amended). Approved 01/08/2013.
- 3.4 Application Ref 130842 - Erection of two storey extension to accommodate 2x 2-bed flats, 3x 1-bed flats and 2x studio flats and changes to fenestration. Approved 22/01/2013. Not implemented.

4. Development Proposals

- 4.1 The National Design Guide (2019) identifies that *"well-designed homes and buildings are functional, accessible and sustainable. They provide internal environments and associated external spaces that support the health and well-being of their users and all who experience them. They meet the needs of a diverse range of users, taking into account factors such as the ageing population and cultural differences. They are adequate in size, fit for purpose and are adaptable to the changing needs of their occupants over time"* (para 120-121).
- 4.2 Regarding the requirements of NPPG Paragraph: 029 Reference ID: 14-029-20140306 in respect of Design and Access Statements, the proposal is described as follows:
- Use and Amount*
- 4.3 This proposal which is a resubmission of the previously approved application ref. 130842 seeks to convert the existing office building to a residential use. A roof extension is also proposed to provide an additional 7no. apartments.

- 4.4 The proposed use is in accordance with Local Plan CR12c which states development of this area will be predominantly residential and the amount and type of units proposed is the same as previously considered acceptable by the council.
- 4.5 The use and amount are therefore considered entirely appropriate for the area.

Layout and Scale

- 4.6 The proposed layout of the development has been designed to provide good-sized apartments with carefully considered stacking of similar rooms/areas. All flats would be accessed via a central lobby and stair, and flat depths have been designed so that no part of a habitable room is in excess of five metres from a window. On the north side, the windows to the living/dining areas are larger to allow more daylight penetration.
- 4.7 The height of the proposed building on Chatham Street is considered to be acceptable, as demonstrated by the submitted streetscene views. These show that the building is sufficiently separate from other buildings and that a taller and more dominant building can be accommodated in the streetscene, which features buildings of varying ages and qualities, most of which have limited frontages onto Chatham Street. The surgery, for instance, despite having its front door on the north, actually has its principal outlook and frontage to the west on Ambrose Place. There is, therefore, considered to be merit in a building which properly addresses the street, and which provides an increase in dwellings.

Appearance

- 4.8 This application seeks to re-clad the existing building and provide a new roof extension. This will transform the building from an existing dated two-storey office building to a contemporary building featuring front and rear balconies; reminiscent of other recently built flatted blocks in the Caversham Road/Weldale Street area.

- 4.9 Changes will be made to the external skin and finished with the use of render, cladding, glass, aluminium. These materials are essential in the transformation of the office building to a contemporary residential building.
- 4.10 The use of different, and modern materials will contribute to the proposed change of use and comply with the standards for high quality design.
- 4.11 The change from the typical glass curtain wall to large aluminium windows to the front, and Juliet balconies to the living spaces to the rear, as well as the terraces to the top floor, will contribute to a better relationship between the new dwellings and the future developments.
- 4.12 The proposal would produce a contemporary building in three bay sections with the plans indicatively showing a yellow coloured render to the sides and grey brick to the centre. The grey would then set back at third floor level, where there would be recessed balconies. The rear elevation would be similar, but with some flats having their own individual balconies. The building would be more 'logical' than present, appearing as a four-storey building and having a discernible top floor and roof. The roof would be a low-pitch, double-monopitch, i.e. sloping up towards the front and rear, with a central transverse valley, rather than a ridge. Both front and rear entrances would be signalled by glazed, barrel-roof canopies with metal fittings.

Landscaping

- 4.13 Existing trees can be retained and protected through the demolition and construction process. New planting can be accommodated within the curtilage and is proposed for control via condition.

Access and Parking

- 4.14 The parking area available consists of a roughly square area of land adjacent to the building and a narrower strip of land which continues to the south between the side of No. 118 Oxford Road and the Face Bar building.

- 4.15 The proposed parking layout which provides seven parking spaces for 15no. flats is considered acceptable given the highly sustainable town centre location.
- 4.16 Internally, disabled access and circulation requirements are designed to achieve Building Regulations Part M standards, including entrance doors to be a minimum of 800mm, electrical fittings and service controls at suitable heights for disabled persons use, and all bathrooms and WC facilities designed for disabled access.

5. Policy Assessment

National Guidance

- 5.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is relevant to the consideration of the application. Some weight also needs to be given to the content of the Ministerial Statement, 'Planning for Growth', issued in March 2011.
- 5.2 The 'Golden Thread' running through the centre of guidance within the NPPF is the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 38 of the NPPF states that "*Local planning authorities should approach decision on proposed development in a positive and creative way*" and "*at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible*". Paragraph 117 of the NPPF comments that planning should "*make effective use of land*" in "*meeting the need for homes and other uses, whilst safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions*".
- 5.3 Paragraph 59 confirms the Government's objective to boost the supply of housing, and paragraph 8 identifies the three objectives of sustainable development, as economic, environmental and social.

- 5.4 Paragraph 124 identifies 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"*, whilst paragraph 131 states that *"In determining applications, great weight should be given to outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings."*
- 5.5 The National Design Guide builds on the above and clarifies that *"well-designed neighbourhoods need to include an integrated mix of tenures and housing types that reflect local housing need and market demand. They are designed to be inclusive and to meet the changing needs of people of different ages and abilities. New development reinforces existing places by enhancing local transport, facilities and community services, and maximising their potential use"* (para 109).

Principle of Development

- 5.6 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.7 The principle of converting the existing building from office use to residential has already been established by prior approval application ref. 170979. Furthermore, Local Plan Policy CR12c identifies the site and surrounding buildings as a major opportunity area for new residential development therefore the extension which makes the most efficient use of previously developed land is considered to be in accordance with the objectives of the Local Plan.

Loss of Employment

- 5.8 As highlighted above, the loss of the existing office accommodation has already been agreed in principle. The site is allocated within the Local Plan for residential development and thus the loss of employment accommodation is not considered to be of concern.

Density and Size of Dwellings

- 5.9 The amount and mix of dwellings proposed (2 x 2-bed, 3 x 1-bed and 2 x studio) has been designed in accordance with the indicative requirements of Local Plan Policies H2 and CR6.

Listed Buildings (setting and fabric)

- 5.10 Whilst the site is not within a Conservation Area (the northern extremity of the Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area stops on the southern side of Oxford Road), there are two listed buildings nearby: Holy Trinity Church and No. 118 Oxford Road.
- 5.11 Holy Trinity Church is a tall, dominant building which fronts Oxford Road and is sited on a north-south axis to the south of the application site, with the nearest part of the listed building approximately 38 metres from the rear façade of the development. It is not considered that either the re-cladding or the additional roof height would have a significant effect on the setting of this listed building, given this distance and the fact that the buildings are not seen at the same time in their principal street views.
- 5.12 At the nearest point, 118 Oxford Road is 14m from the site. It occupies an odd position on its plot, being set at the very rear of the site away from Oxford Road, up against the boundary of the application site and Cherwell Crescent, but its principal frontage appears to be to the south (Oxford Road). The majority of its curtilage is therefore towards Oxford Road and away from the application site. 118 has tall gables and chimneys and its overall height is some 12 metres.

5.13 The main impact of the development on the setting of this listed building will be the additional height, in relatively close proximity, increasing from 8.2 metres (maximum height to top of the piers on the existing building) to 13.5 metres. To assist in visualising this effect, the supplied streetscene views of Chatham Street, show 118 in the background. The application building is currently approximately equal to the eave's height of No. 118 and following the development would become approximately 1.5 metres taller than 118. However, the buildings will not generally be seen in this context from Chatham Street, where 118 is sited some 30 metres away from the edge of the road, with the walled car park to Cherwell Crescent in between. To gauge the fullest impact on the listed building, you would need to view the relationship from either the west, at the entrance to the Cherwell Crescent car park, or the east from Ambrose Place. In both cases, the relationships are not concerning the main façades of either building. Therefore, given that the distance which is between the buildings is still greater than the height of either building; only the rear façade of 118 would be affected; there is presently a two storey building in a poor condition on site; and the buildings front different streets, therefore this increase in height, will result in less than substantial harm on the setting of the listed building and is therefore considered to be acceptable in terms of Local Plan Policy EN1 and NPPF paragraph 196.

Residential Amenity – internal space

5.14 The proposed flats comply with the nationally described space standards as referred in policy H5, and thus are considered acceptable in this respect.

Residential Amenity – external space

5.15 Some of the proposed flats benefit from Juliette balconies and two flats on the second floor, have large private balconies. Furthermore, all flats would have access to the ground floor amenity space and a large communal balcony on the third floor.

- 5.16 In a dense urban area such as this, the provision of amenity space, particularly private amenity space, is always valued, but often very difficult to supply. The amenity spaces above are considered to be positive elements of the overall quality of the scheme and therefore the application complies with Policy H10.

Residential Amenity – overlooking, loss of light and overbearing

- 5.17 The application building itself is detached. Buildings on the north side of the dual carriageway are 34 metres away and three storeys, plus basement and are unaffected by the proposals. On the south side of Chatham Street, the building would be set within the context of four buildings, all at similar distances to the application building. Of these buildings, only one would have its amenity in terms of overlooking/privacy affected to any notable extent and that is 118 Oxford Road.
- 5.18 Local Plan policy CC08 states that a back-to-back distance of 20 metres between dwellings is usually appropriate, although the circumstances on individual sites may enable dwellings to be closer without a detrimental effect on privacy. At the nearest point, this distance, from middle window to middle window, is 15 metres, but off- set by some 20 degrees. It should also be noted, however, that an overlooking situation technically 'exists' - during office hours, were the offices to be re- occupied - and this could have more overlooking to the rear than a residential development, due to the number of occupiers in an open-plan office. It should also be remembered that the floors below also can also be used as residential accommodation, due to the granting of prior approval 170979.
- 5.19 The proposals are therefore considered to comply with Local Plan policy CC08.

Air and Noise Pollution

- 5.20 Located within the Reading Air Quality Management Area, mitigation elements will be provided in the form of heat recovery units, with special attention given to the windows on the frontage overlooking Chatham Street.
- 5.21 Any new glazing will be double glazed and designed to comply with current building regulation standards to minimise the amount of sound that will travel through them.

Trees and Landscaping

- 5.22 Any existing trees can be retained and protected through the demolition and construction process. New planting can be accommodated within the rear curtilage and is proposed for control via condition.

Transport and Parking & Cycle provision

- 5.23 Local Plan Policy TR5 states 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.
- 5.24 Given the highly sustainable town centre location, the proposal to provide 7no. parking spaces for the 15no. apartments is considered to be in accordance with this policy. Secure cycle storage will be provided in the rear communal area.
- 5.25 The site is also located just on the edge of the central core area located within Zone 2, primary core area' as defined by Reading Borough Councils revised Parking Standards and Design SPD. Although the SPD requires 1 parking space per dwelling in this location, this zone directly surrounds the Central Core Area and extends to walking distances of 2 kilometres from the centre of Reading. Typically, this zone is well served by public transport, with buses continuing either into or out of the Central Core Area via this zone.

- 5.26 Much of this area is within acceptable walking distance (400m) of either the main railway station or Reading West railway station. Walking and cycling in this area tends to be encouraged through the provision of wide and safe footways, with some dedicated or shared cycle ways.
- 5.27 It is therefore considered that a reduction to the parking requirement would comply with policy given that there would be no highways implications and in order to promote the use of sustainable modes of transport.

Sustainability/Energy

- 5.28 Paragraph 8 of the NPPF supports the transition of development to a low carbon future. The national Code for Sustainable Homes has now been abolished; however it is proposed that the development would conform to Part L of the Building Regulations which as of 2010 requires a 25% reduction in carbon emissions over the 2006 standards. This is equivalent to Code level 3 of the Code for Sustainable Homes.
- 5.29 By way of contributing to the reduction in carbon, the proposal would also achieve current building construction standards with added sustainability measures through;
- a) The limitation of the amount of inherent material, structure and embodied energy through the employment of good building standards to create an excellent SAP rating;
 - b) Use of locally sourced, recycled materials and labour where practicable
 - c) Maximizing the use of natural light
 - d) Reduced internal water consumption of 110 litres per person per day through the incorporation of water efficient sanitary fittings, including low flow toilets and water efficient taps for wash basins.
 - e) Refuse and recycling facilities to be provided to work with the Council's existing waste and recycling collection service
 - f) Secure cycle provision to encourage sustainable modes of transport
 - g) 'A' rated electrical appliances and energy saving light fittings
 - h) 'A' rated double glazed windows with natural cross ventilation provision

- j) Recycling of waste construction materials where practicable
- k) Permeable driveway/parking spaces to avoid increase in surface water runoff

The proposal is therefore considered to comply with sustainability objectives in this respect.

Affordable Housing

- 5.30 Local Plan Policy H3 states that on sites of 5 – 9 dwellings, a financial contribution will be made that will enable the equivalent of 20% of the housing to be provided as affordable housing elsewhere in the Borough. The applicant is willing to enter into a Section 106 agreement to this effect.

Community Infrastructure Levy

- 5.31 The proposed development is CIL liable. The relevant forms have been completed and submitted with the application.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 This statement has demonstrated that the proposed development is acceptable in principle and makes an efficient use of land.
- 6.2 Material planning considerations have been carefully considered and analysed, as evidenced in section 5 of this statement and the supporting plans and documents. It is considered the proposed development would contribute an appropriate windfall site to the Borough's housing supply, without adverse effect on the character of the area or the amenity of neighbouring residents.
- 6.3 It is considered that the proposed scheme complies with relevant Development Plan Policies and is further supported by National Guidance. Therefore, it is respectfully requested that planning permission is granted.