

Planning and Design and Access Statement

Application Submission for Full Planning Permission for:

Material change of use of dwelling from use class C3 (Dwellinghouse) to C4 (Small - Houses in Multiple Occupation).

Alterations to an existing building to create an additional bedroom ancillary to the C4 use.

128 Chatham Street, Reading, RG1 7HT

Submitted on Behalf of Mehek Holdings Ltd

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Ref: APL-256 – 128 Chatham Street

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Arrow Planning have been instructed by Mehek Holdings Ltd (“the Applicant”) to prepare a Planning and Design & Access Statement to accompany a full planning application at 128 Chatham Street (“the Site”). The submitted description of development reads as follows:

“Material change of use of dwelling from use class C3 (Dwellinghouse) to C4 (Small - Houses in Multiple Occupation). Alterations to an existing building to create an additional bedroom ancillary to the C4 use”.

- 1.2 The purpose of this Planning Design and Access Statement is to clarify the nature of the application, to analyse it against the relevant planning policy framework, to consider key material considerations and to demonstrate why planning permission should be forthcoming for the proposed development.

- 1.3 The application submission comprises the following plans:

- Location Plan – R1
- Block and Site Location Plan - ref: 2798 002 P1
- Existing Elevations and Section – ref: 2798 004 P3
- Existing and Proposed Floor Plans - ref: 2798 003 P3
- Proposed Elevations and Section – ref: 2798 006 P3

- 1.4 There is a need for new HMO accommodation the Reading Area¹. The application proposes good quality accommodation in a highly sustainable location. The proposal respects the established character of the area. Therefore, in accordance with the provisions of the NPPF, we would respectfully request that planning permission be granted in a timely manner.

¹ See para. 4.4.57 of the Local Plan.

2.0 Site and Surroundings

- 2.1 The application site comprises a three storey (with additional basement level) mid terrace dwelling. The site is located on the north side of Chatham Street between Reading town centre (to the east) and the Reading West train station (to the west). The principle access to the property fronts Chatham Street. A secondary vehicular access is available to the rear, which takes access from Malthouse Lane. There is a detached garage located at the rear of the property.
- 2.2 The current lawful use of no.128 Chatham Street is for three self-contained flats. The first and second floor flats will be unaffected by the proposed application. The application only relates to the ground and lower ground floor flat.
- 2.3 The site is located:
- To the west of Reading town centre; a walk of some 6 minutes².
 - To the east of Reading West train station; a walk of some 10 minutes.
 - To the west of Reading main station; a walk of some 12 minutes.
- 2.4 The surrounding area comprises a rich mix of uses and building types. Uses in Chatham Street within a very short distance (circa 3-5 mins walk) of the site include: takeaway, doctors surgery, several gyms, places of worship, several drinking venues, a hotel and nightclub. Building types vary from 3 storey Victorian properties to multi storey commercial and residential developments. Taken in the round, the area comprises a busy urban location with a high footfall, both locally generated and from through traffic.
- 2.5 HMOs of varying scales are a common, but not overwhelming, feature in the area. Reading Council's HMO register reports:
- 4 HMOs are reported in close proximity to the site on Chatham Street at nos. 140, 144 and 146-148.
 - 9 HMOs are reported on Bedford Road at nos. 38, 53, 56, 61, 64, 66, 67, 73 and 81.
 - 1 HMO was reported on Charles Street.

² Measurements taken from Google Maps

3.0 Relevant Planning History

Site Planning History

- 3.1 There are two items of planning history on the application site, which are considered to be relevant to the current proposal. These are summarised below:

Application Ref:	Description of Development and relevance to current case	Decision/Date
200726	Certificate of lawfulness for a proposed change of use from dwelling house (C3) to HMO (C4).	The application was withdrawn in August 2020. The reason for withdrawal is that the Council took the view that: 1. The original building comprised a house and had already been converted into two flats and therefore the exclusion under L.1 of Class L of Part 3 of the GPDO (as amended) was triggered. 2. Flats are excluded from the right under Class E of Part 1 of the GPDO (as amended)³ to make external alterations to buildings within their curtilage. The applicant is currently considering his position in respect of the above and in the meantime is applying for planning permission. In our view there was a misinterpretation of exclusion L.1 in Class L of Part 3 of the GPDO, which relates to the 'previous use' of the building (i.e. last lawful use), not the original use of the building. Therefore, the planning unit under consideration was the ground and lower ground floor maisonette, not the entire building.

³ The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 as amended interprets the following in 2.(1) of the order:

“dwellinghouse”, except in Part 3 of Schedule 2 to this Order (changes of use), does not include a building containing one or more flats, or a flat contained within such a building;

030679	Conversion of house into 2 studio flats and 1 x 2-bedroom maisonette.	The application was permitted in August 2003. The application comprised a new chapter in the site's planning history and created the maisonette at ground and lower ground floor level, which is the subject of the current application. This application also led to the creation of the studio flats at first and second floor level, which now comprise separate planning units.
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Surrounding Area Planning History

- 3.2 The following planning history in the surrounding area is also considered to be of relevance:

Application Ref:	Description of Development and relevance to current case	Decision/Date
191689	Use of existing outbuilding as part of proposed HMO use (Class C4).	Certificate was granted January 2020. This certificate is relevant to the current application because the Council accepted that the use of a similar detached outbuilding could comprise an ancillary use to the existing C4 use.

4.0 Application Proposals

- 4.1 The application seeks full planning permission for a change of use from a dwellinghouse falling within use class C3⁴ to a small-scale HMO falling within use class C4⁵. Small scale HMO's (i.e.C4) comprise between 3 and 6 unrelated individuals⁶. The HMO would have four bedrooms and therefore would be at the smaller end of what is ordinarily considered to comprise a small-scale HMO.
- 4.2 As part of this change of use it is proposed that the existing garage be converted into a fourth bedroom, which will comprise part of the overall C4 use. The works to the garage will include:
- the removal of the existing garage door, bricking up of the opening (materials to match) and insertion of a window.
 - removal of the existing garage door and window (pedestrian access facing the main dwelling) and its replacement with a new door and window.
 - Internal alterations comprising insulation and space division to create a bedroom, lounge and en-suite.
- 4.3 The accommodation in the converted garage will be ancillary to the main dwelling as evidenced by:
- the nature of its access, which is via the main dwelling; and,
 - its use/dependence upon the shared facilities, namely:
 - the kitchen and laundry area in the main dwelling; and,
 - the shared external amenity space.

⁴ Use as a dwellinghouse (whether or not as a sole or main residence) by—

(a) a single person or by people to be regarded as forming a single household;

(b) not more than six residents living together as a single household where care is provided for residents; or

(c) not more than six residents living together as a single household where no care is provided to residents (other than a use within Class C4).

⁵ Use of a dwellinghouse by not more than six residents as a “house in multiple occupation”.

⁶ As defined in circular 08/2010 – Changes to Planning regulations for Dwelling Houses and Houses in Multiple Occupation (2010) – cancelled, but as technical guidance is still considered relevant.

5.0 Policy

- 5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (the Act) requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.2 For the purposes of considering this application the relevant parts of the Development Plan are:
1. Reading Borough Local Plan adopted November 2019.
- 5.3 In addition, the Residential Conversions SPD (adopted Nov 2013) and Parking Standards and Design SPD are considered to be relevant. The fact that both these SPDs are based on now superseded policy reduces their weight.
- 5.4 The site comprises a residential area within the town centre. There are a number of areas proposed for change in close proximity to the site.
- 5.5 The following policies are considered to most important for the consideration of this application:
- 1) CC1 (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development)
 - 2) CC6 (Accessibility and Intensity of Development)
 - 3) CC7 (Design and the public realm)
 - 4) CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity)
 - 5) TR5 (Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging)
 - 6) H1 (Provision of Housing)
 - 7) H8 (Residential conversions)
 - 8) H9 (House Extensions and Ancillary Accommodation).
 - 9) H10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space)

6.0 Planning Assessment

Principle of Development

- 6.1 The site is currently in residential use and therefore there can be no objection to the principle of ongoing residential use.
- 6.2 A material change of use from C3 to C4 will result in a small intensification of use of this building, which is considered to represent a planning benefit in this highly accessible town centre location.
- 6.3 Para. 4.4.57 of the Local Plan sets out the need for reasonably low cost private rented accommodation, which provides small flexibly let accommodation that reflects household formation trends in the population and the more transient nature of parts of the labour market. The proposed accommodation will add to the valuable and much needed supply of this type of accommodation and count towards the Council's five year housing land supply.
- 6.4 The site is not located in an area covered by an Article 4 direction. Therefore, the 25% restriction in policy H8 would not apply. In all events the Council's HMO register indicates a more balanced mix in the Chatham Street area, which means it would comply in any event.

Accessibility and Parking

- 6.5 Policy TR5 requires development to provide car and cycle parking that is appropriate to the accessibility of the site having regard to the availability of sustainable transport facilities, particularly public transport.
- 6.6 The Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD indicates a requirement of 0.25 parking spaces per bedroom in central locations for a C4 HMO and 0.5 spaces for a 2-bedroom flat.
- 6.7 The application site is located in a town centre location, with excellent access to both of Reading's train stations and the town centre services, jobs and facilities. Therefore, the site is considered to be highly accessible and capable of supporting journeys using alternatives to the private car.
- 6.8 The site currently has one garage parking space; although there is no evidence the garage was in use for parking. The proposed development generates a need for 1 parking space. 2 tandem parking spaces are proposed. The level of parking provision is considered to comply with policy and represents betterment compared to the existing situation.
- 6.9 4 cycle parking spaces are also proposed at the front of the property, which equates to 1 space per bedroom, which is considered to conform with policy.

Place Making and Design

Impact on Existing Character

- 6.10 The area currently has a mixed character both in terms of use and architectural form. There are a number of HMO's in the vicinity of the site, as you might expect in such a central location, yet the character of the

area retains a healthy mix of flats, HMOs and single-family dwellings. The current proposal, which is for a very minor change to that overall mix, is not considered to have a material or detrimental impact on the character of the area.

- 6.11 The existing site is currently in poor condition having only recently been purchased by the current applicant. It is envisaged that with new investment in this dwelling that its appearance will be improved.

Layout

- 6.12 The main dwelling will remain largely unchanged save for the lower ground floor living room being changed to a bedroom. The arrangement of bedrooms over bedrooms, will serve to limit the potential for noise transfer as per the requirements of policy CC8.
- 6.13 The additional bedroom that will be created by converting the existing garage will be accessed through the main dwelling and serve to enclose the rear boundary creating a clearly defined private boundary for the HMO. Closing off the current access to the rear of the property will limit the current potential for crime. Given the particular layout of this property the outbuilding will act, in functional terms, as an extension to the main dwelling.
- 6.14 Policy H9 of the Local Plan makes clear that:

“ancillary accommodation, such as granny annexes, will be acceptable where it would not be capable of operating as a separate dwelling which could be let or sold separately”.

In this instance, given that:

- the only way to access the accommodation in the outbuilding is via the main dwelling; and,
- access will be required to the shared facilities in the main dwelling to serve the future occupiers day-to-day needs,

the test in policy H9 has been met.

- 6.15 A bin store is provided to the front of the dwelling, where there will be easy access (kerb side) on collection day for bin collections.

Scale & External Appearance

- 6.16 The size, scale and massing of the buildings will remain unaltered from that which currently exists. The appearance of the building, once renovated, is likely to be improved and refreshed. This will improve the appearance of the building and the contribution that it makes to the area.

Residential Amenity

Occupiers of neighbouring dwellings

- 6.17 With no new built form or changes to fenestration the main dwelling will not give rise to any new amenity issues for neighbouring dwellings.

- 6.18 The additional room of accommodation at the rear of the property, being at low level, will not result in any additional intrusive overlooking.

Future occupiers of the development.

- 6.19 The proposed accommodation, given its size, complies with minimum space standards set out in the Council's Residential Conversions SPD.
- 6.20 The availability of communal space both internally and externally, is considered to deliver a good quality living environment for future occupiers.

7.0 Conclusions

- 7.1 The proposed development is acceptable in principle. It takes advantage of an opportunity to create additional good quality accommodation in this highly accessible location, whilst respecting the area's existing character and the way that it functions. It provides a form of accommodation that is in demand, and for which there is an acknowledged need, in the Reading area⁷.
- 7.2 Significant planning benefits would be delivered in terms of:
- Bringing back into use a currently empty building.
 - Making more efficient use of land in this highly sustainable location.
 - Delivery of good quality HMO accommodation for those in need.
 - Providing good quality living accommodation for future occupiers in terms of internal and external amenity space provision.
 - More secure design resulting from closure of the rear access.
 - Social and economic benefits.
- 7.3 When assessed on balance the proposal is considered to represent sustainable development that should be permitted.

⁷ See para. 4.4.57 of the Local Plan.