

PLANNING STATEMENT

**Planning Applications for proposed
ground floor and roof level
extensions to provide 4 no.
residential apartments**

**83-85 London Street,
Reading,
Berkshire,
RG1 4QA**

Prepared by:

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This statement has been prepared by Woolf Bond Planning LLP in support of two planning applications. The first proposes a ground floor extension to the building to enable an additional single residential apartment. The second proposes a roof level extension to provide an additional 3 residential apartments. The site comprises Nos. 83 – 85 London Street, Reading, RG1 4QA.
- 1.2. The location of the application site is shown edged red on the supporting Location Plan.
- 1.3. This statement provides an overview of the proposed scheme and sets out a justification for the development as proposed having regard to, inter alia, relevant planning policy considerations and other material considerations.
- 1.4. This statement is set out as follows:

- Section 1:** Introduction
- Section 2:** Description of the Site & Surrounding Area
- Section 3:** Proposed Scheme & Main Issues
- Section 4:** Planning Policy Framework
- Section 5:** Summary

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE & SURROUNDING AREA

- 2.1. The application site forms a three storey building located on the eastern side of London Street. The building is of a simple yet attractive red brick building with the pedestrian access off London Street and vehicular parking located to the rear accessed via East Street.
- 2.2. London Street comprises both commercial and residential units and is within the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area. The building and the surrounding area are illustrated on the image below:



Image: Aerial photo of site and surrounding area (Source: Google Maps)

Site

- 2.3. A view of the building's front and rear elevations are provided overleaf:



Front Elevation



Rear Elevation

- 2.4. The site is located approximately 350 metres from the Oracle shopping centre and within an easy walking distance of Reading town centre that acts as a regional centre and offers a wide range of services, shops and other such facilities.

- 2.5. The site has been the subject of a recent office to residential prior approval application (LPA Ref. 181880/OPA). This is discussed in further detail later in this statement. Pedestrian access via London Street would be retained and the vehicular access would be via East Street to the rear.
- 2.6. The building comprises a three-storey building located within a varied street scene that ranges from two to five storey buildings. The materials range from predominantly red brick with recessed sash windows, pebble dash and painted buildings to more modern buildings with pale render.
- 2.7. The proposal relates to the ground floor which is currently inset from the first floor at the rear and a proposed roof level (third floor) extension.

3. PROPOSED SCHEME & MAIN ISSUES

- 3.1. The proposed scheme is submitted in the form of two separate applications. The first comprises an extension at ground floor level to enable the provision of a 1 bedroom apartment. The building's ground floor is currently inset from the first and second floors above. The proposal seeks to extend the ground floor so that it is in line with the upper floors. Consequently, the building line would not change. The proposal would simply enable an infill of the ground floor area roughly illustrated using a red dashed line on the below image. An area of amenity space would be provided to the rear of the apartment.



Rough Location of Proposed Ground Floor Infill

- 3.2. The second application proposes 3 no. apartments by way of an extension at roof level (comprising a 1 bed and 2 no. 2 bed units). This would make effective use of the existing flat roof area (illustrated below). This would be set back behind the existing parapet wall and would include terraces to serve each apartment.



3.3. The proposed scheme is shown on the following plans:

- Proposed Site Plan
- Proposed Ground Floor Plan
- Proposed First Floor Plan
- Proposed Second Floor Plan
- Proposed Third Floor Plan
- Proposed Front Elevation
- Proposed Rear Elevation
- Illustrative Street Views.

3.4. The entrance will remain at ground floor level. Residents will use the existing entrance off London Street where lift and stairs will provide access to the upper floors.

3.5. There will be a secondary access to the rear that will provide access to the car and bicycle parking area which is accessed via East Street.

Design & Character

- 3.6. The site is located in the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area and its impact upon the overall character and appearance of the area is therefore of paramount importance. In such areas Core Strategy Policy CS33 seeks to protect, and where possible enhance the historic features and elements of such areas.
- 3.7. The Market Place/London Street Conservation Area Appraisal sets out a number of features that make a positive contribution towards the overall character of Character Area 1 (London Street South of the IDR).
- 3.8. Such features include the unusual width of the street which rises gently from the River Kennet; the mix of architectural styles and periods; high quality townscape and the well-proportioned relationship between tall building and wide street; the predominance of brick; prevalence of white painted sash windows; street trees and the variety of architectural details including pedimented doorcases, iron balconies and timber shop fronts.
- 3.9. The scheme proposes an in-fill ground floor rear extension that will bring the ground floor in line with the upper floors which in itself will have no impact on the wider character and appearance of the area or the Conservation Area. It will enable an improvement when compared to the existing dead frontage at ground floor level, overhung by the above floors. This is particularly the case given the proposal to introduce some green landscaping to the rear of the building.
- 3.10. The design of the proposed roof extension has been carefully considered to ensure that it results in a positive contrast to the original building. The existing building is a three storey red brick building with white painted sash windows, doorcase and white banding that contribute to the simple yet attractive design.
- 3.11. The proposed roof extension would be of a simple flat roof design with glazed window openings to give it a contemporary design. The provision of accommodation at roofscape level is characteristic of London Street as illustrated on the example street scene images below.





Examples of Roofscape Accommodation on London Street

- 3.12. The front elevation at roof level would be set back from the existing parapet wall by between 2 to 3 metres. As such the use of the roofscape to provide additional accommodation would comprise a recessionary feature, save for a very discrete glass safety barrier, and the key views towards the northern part of London Street as demonstrated by the image below, would remain largely unchanged.



Image: View north along London Street (Source Google Maps) Site

- 3.13. The set back distance of the roof extension in conjunction with the roof form of adjacent buildings will ensure the proposal has no material impact on the overall character and appearance of the area.
- 3.14. Furthermore, the simple architectural styling of the proposed extension is to be finished in a boarding material of a contrasting colour to the existing red brick. This, in conjunction with the large glazed opening will ensure the proposal results in a modern addition to the older original building. The architectural style of the design will ensure that what limited views there are of the roof extension will not have a material impact on the overall character and appearance of the area or Conservation Area. Nor would the scheme detract from the attractive design of the original building.
- 3.15. As illustrated on the below image, to the rear the proposed additional storey will be of a similar height to neighbouring buildings immediately to the north and south of the site.



View of Rear Elevation

- 3.16. The proposed roof extension is therefore in accordance with sections 11 and 16 of the NPPF that support the efficient use of land and protection and conservation of the historic environment.
- 3.17. Section 11 of the NPPF ensures planning decisions promote an effective use of land with paragraph 118(e) supporting the principle of upward extensions. The buildings on London Street are all of a varied ridge height and roof form and as demonstrated above the modern flat roof design with glazed openings would make the most effective use of

the site and in a manner that retains the historic and architectural character of the Conservation Area.

Housing Mix

- 3.18. Sites and Detailed Policies Policy DM5 seeks to ensure that new developments provide a mix of dwelling size and that of this there should be some 3 bed units that are suitable for families. However, the policy specifically relates to proposals for 10 or more dwellings and the policy is technically not applicable to this proposal.
- 3.19. Paragraph 8.29 of the Reading Central Area Action Plan ('RCAAP') states that town and city centres are never likely to be popular with families. However, it is widely established that such locations within central town and city centres are far more appealing to individuals and couples.
- 3.20. The proposal provides for 2 no. 1 bedroom apartments and 2 no. 2 bedroom apartments thereby providing a mix of units that will be appropriate to those individuals and couples looking to live in the Reading central area. It follows that whilst there is no technical policy requirement to provide a dwelling mix, the scheme does enable a genuine mix of dwelling sizes to come forward appropriate to its central location. The scheme is therefore in accordance with the development plan.

Affordable Housing

- 3.21. Sites and Detailed Policies Policy DM6 states that 20% or 10% affordable housing provision will be made depending upon a scheme's size. However, paragraph 63 of the National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF') is clear that schemes that are not major developments should not provide affordable housing. The NPPF postdates the development plan and forms a material consideration of significant weight. Consequently, the provision of private residential development only on the site is appropriate.

Residential Amenity

- 3.22. Another requirement of both the Core Strategy and Sites and Detailed Policies Document is that new residential developments provide future occupants with a high standard of amenity with easy access to private and/or communal outdoor space. Policy DM10 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document ensures that flats may be provided with communal outdoor space, balconies and/or roof top gardens.

- 3.23. Each of the flats proposed will have access to an outdoor terrace with the ground floor unit having access to a shared communal area within the lightwell within the centre of the building and a further terrace to the rear. Each of the outdoor areas will provide occupants with sufficient room to sit out as well as provide sufficient room for other residential items such as a clothes horse.
- 3.24. In addition to the provision of the outdoor terraces and other private areas each of the four additional units will meet or exceed the minimum internal space standards set out in the 2015 DCLG guidance.
- 3.25. Such outdoor space, where the units themselves comply with the internal space standards will, in conjunction with the proximity to the restaurants, public houses and shops within Reading town centre, provide occupants with a high standard of amenity.
- 3.26. The units proposed will also ensure any existing occupants will not be impacted by the proposal by way of privacy or other such amenity impacts. Notwithstanding the largely commercial nature of the surrounding buildings any potential residential units will not be impacted.
- 3.27. To the rear the nearest residential units are approximately 60 metres away; in addition, those on the opposite side of London Street would be approximately 25 metres from the proposed roof extension. As such the scheme would have no adverse impact on the amenity of any surrounding residential units.
- 3.28. In summary, the proposals will provide additional residential units thereby making the effective use of this brownfield site located in a highly accessible and sustainable location. It will do so in a manner that preserves the original and historic character of the building and the wider Conservation Area; and each of the proposed units will afford future occupants with a high standard of amenity with spacious flats and areas of outdoor amenity space.

Other Issues

- 3.29. The proposal would fall below the minimum parking provision for such a residential development in Zone 2. However, the highly accessible, location and existing on-street parking restrictions would ensure the scheme has no material impact on highway safety in conjunction with the recently approved prior approval scheme.

- 3.30. The provision of parking below the minimum requirements has previously been accepted during the prior approval application due to the accessible nature of the site. This is confirmed in the below extract taken from the officer's report:

'As the site is within 350m of the Oracle shopping centre and multi-storey car park and Broad Street with a range of shops and services, the non-provision of private parking is acceptable for this development. In addition to this, the site is located within walking/cycling distance of Reading town centre and in close proximity to two town centre car parks ; however, the parking informative should be applied to prevent any future occupants of the flats from obtaining a residents parking permit for the surrounding residential streets where parking is under considerable pressure, this will ensure that the development does not harm the existing amenities of the neighbouring residential properties by adding to the already high level of on street car parking in the area'.

- 3.31. It follows that a parking free scheme is entirely appropriate in this location.

4. PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

4.1. This section summarises the planning policy position, against which the acceptability of the scheme is to be determined.

4.2. For the purposes of Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the development plan, against which the application proposal will be determined, comprises, at the local level:

- Adopted Core Strategy (Jan 2008) (altered in 2015);
- Site and Detailed Policies Development Plan Document (SDPD) (2012);
- Reading Central Area Action Plan (Jan 2009).

4.3. The content of the Local Development Plan is summarised below.

Core Strategy (2008)

4.4. The Core Strategy was adopted in January 2008 and replaced the majority of the policies set out in the earlier Local Plan.

4.5. The document states that ‘Development should maximise the use of previously developed land and be directed to sustainable locations’. The housing section then goes on to state ‘the spatial strategy encourages development in locations with good access to the Central Area as well as District and Local Centres in the Borough. This seeks to optimise locations with high levels of accessibility to local services’, which objective is met by the application scheme.

Policy	Summary of Policy
CS1: Sustainable Construction and Design	<i>Proposals for new development, including the construction of new buildings and the redevelopment and refurbishment of existing building stock, will be acceptable where the design of buildings and site layouts use energy, water, minerals, materials and other natural resources appropriately, efficiently and with care and take account of the effects of climate change.</i> The proposal would make an efficient use of the existing building which is located in a highly accessible and sustainable location. The proposal therefore imposes only minimal environmental footprint in terms of the consumption of resources and materials.

CS4: Accessibility and the Intensity of Development	<i>The scale and density of development within the Borough will be related to its level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport to a range of services and facilities. Sites will be assessed in terms of their level of accessibility to a defined district or local centre with a good range of facilities by pedestrian routes, and to a bus stop served by a strategic bus service. Unless it can be demonstrated that the accessibility of a site is to be significantly upgraded, for example by providing high quality pedestrian routes or providing access to good public transport services, any new development must be at a scale, density and intensity appropriate to that level of accessibility as set out in other policies in this document, other Development Plan Documents or Supplementary Planning documents.</i> The site has excellent access to public transport. The site is within easy walking distance from Reading Central Station and a number of bus stops as well as the wide range of services and facilities within the Oracle and town centre.
CS5: Inclusive Access	<i>All buildings should be located, sited and designed to provide suitable access to, into and within its facilities, for all potential users, including disabled people, so that they can use them safely and easily.</i> The proposal will not materially affect the internal design of the building. The ground floor will remain on the same level as the pavement allowing access for all as well as providing lift access to upper floors.
CS6: Settlement Boundary	<i>No development will be permitted outside the settlement boundary as defined on the Proposals Map.</i> The site is located within the identified urban area where the principle of residential development accords with the development plan.
CS7: Design and the Public Realm	<i>This policy seeks to assure that all development will be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area.</i> The ground floor extension will have a negligible impact on the wider character and appearance of the area. The roof extension has been designed to appear as a modern addition that would result in a positive contrast to the older original red brick building; the proposed set back further ensures its appearance is significantly reduced from the public realm and wider views within the Conservation Area.

Reading Central Area Action Plan (2009)

4.6. This was adopted in January 2009 and sets out detailed policies in relation to the management of development within the town centre within which the site is located and the AAP supports the proposal.

4.7. The RCAAP further supports the proposal as set out below.

Policy	Summary of Policy
RC5: Design in the Centre	<i>Applications for development within the Reading central area should demonstrate the following attributes:</i> <i>a. Development will build on and respect the existing grid layout structure of the central area, providing continuity and enclosure through appropriate relationships between buildings and spaces, and frontages that engage with the street at lower levels, and contributing towards enhanced ease of movement through and around the central area;</i> <i>b. Development will provide appropriate, well designed public spaces and other public realm, including squares, open spaces, streetscape, utilising high quality and well-maintained hard and soft landscape, public art, that provide suitable functions and interest, sense of place and safe and convenient linkages to adjoining areas;</i> <i>c. The architectural details and materials used in the central area should be high quality and respect the form and quality of the detailing and materials in areas local to the development site;</i> <i>d. Development and any associated public realm should contribute to the diversity of the central area, be capable of easy adaptation over time to meet changing circumstances, and be designed to enhance community safety.</i> The proposal will provide additional residential units in a manner that is of a high quality design that will result in a positive contrast to the existing older more historic buildings thereby preserving the underlying character and appearance of the surrounding area and conservation area.
RC9: Living in the Centre	<i>Proposals for residential development within the central area will be assessed against the following criteria:</i> <i>i. All proposals for residential development within the central area will be required to contribute towards a mix of different sized units within the development. This will be measured by the number of bedrooms provided within individual units. Ideally, a mixture of one, two and three bedroom units should be provided. As a guide, in developments of 15 dwellings or more, a maximum of 40% of units should be 1bed, and a minimum of 5% of units should be at least 3-bed, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that this would render a development unviable.</i>

	ii. <i>Proposals for new residential development within the central area will be required to demonstrate how the issue of potential noise disturbance from neighbouring land uses and other sources, and air quality implications of residential development, have been considered and if necessary, mitigated. New residential development should not be located next to existing town centre uses where those uses would give rise to unacceptable levels of noise and disturbance to the occupiers of the new scheme, unless this can be mitigated.</i> iii. <i>Residential developments in the centre will contribute towards affordable housing in line with Policy CS16 of the Core Strategy. In the central area, an over-concentration of social renting for single persons will be avoided.</i> iv. <i>Development in the central area that would have an adverse impact in terms of increasing the need for additional community facilities will be required to provide mitigation measures in line with the scale of the impact.</i> v. <i>Where proposals for serviced apartments and apart-hotels fall outside the C3 use class, they will be located within the Central Core. Such proposals will not be permitted unless the duration of occupation of residents is restricted, to ensure the units are used on a short stay basis and not as residential flats, and information monitoring the implementation of this restriction is regularly supplied. Proposals within the C3 use class will be dealt with in the same way as any other residential proposal.</i> The scheme provides studio apartments and 1 and 2 bedroom apartments in an area where potential occupants are likely to be individuals and couples. London Street does not have any unduly noisy establishments within close proximity to the site such as public houses or nightclubs that would impact the amenity of residents.
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Sites and Detailed Policies DPD (Alterations 2015)

- 4.8. The Sites and Detailed Policies Document further supports the proposed ground floor and roof extensions in the following ways.

Policy	Summary of Policy
DM1: Adaptation to Climate Change	<i>All developments will demonstrate how they have been designed to incorporate measures to adapt to climate change. The following measures shall be incorporated into development:</i> <i>New buildings shall be orientated to maximise the opportunities for both natural heating and ventilation and reducing exposure to wind and other elements;</i> <i>Proposals involving both new and existing buildings shall demonstrate how they have been designed to maximise resistance and resilience to climate change for example by including measures such as solar shading, heating and</i>

	ventilation of the building and appropriately coloured materials in areas exposed to direct sunlight, green and brown roofs, etc; Use of trees and other planting, where appropriate as part of a landscape scheme, to provide shading of amenity areas, buildings and streets, designed with plants that are carefully selected, managed and adaptable to meet the predicted changed climatic conditions; and • All development shall minimise the impact of surface water runoff from the development in the design of the drainage system. The proposal will provide new energy efficient units that will contribute towards a reduction of emissions through the use of enhanced building fabric and reuse of a brownfield site.
DM5: Housing Mix	<i>On new developments for 10 or more dwellings outside the central area and defined district and local centres, planning decisions will ensure that over 50% of dwellings will be of 3 bedrooms or more, and the majority of dwellings will be in the form of houses rather than flats, having regard to all other material considerations.</i> <i>Planning decisions will ensure that all new-build dwellings in any location will be built to 'Lifetime Homes' standards, having regard to all other material considerations.</i> As the scheme is below 10 units this policy is not applicable. However as set out above the site is located within the Reading Central Area where the significant majority of residents are likely to be individuals and couples and as such the scheme proposes a mix of both 1 and 2 bedroom units to cater for such residents.
Dm10: Private and Communal Outdoor Space	<i>Dwellings will be provided with functional private or communal open space that allows for suitable sitting-out areas, children's play areas, home food production, green waste composting, refuse storage, general outdoor storage and drying space. Houses will be provided with private outdoor space whereas flats may be provided with communal outdoor space, balconies and/or roof gardens.</i> <i>The design of outdoor areas will respect the size and character of other similar spaces in the vicinity, clearly identify whether they are private or communal spaces, ensure that they are appropriately related to main entrances, enhance safety and the perception of safety for future residents and the general public, and not be compromised by the relationship of other buildings which may be detrimental in terms of overlooking, overbearing or overshadowing</i> Each of the units will have its own outdoor terrace or communal space. Each terrace will be of a sufficient size to ensure occupants have sitting out space and room for other residential paraphernalia such as a clothes horse. In addition, each terrace will be of a sufficient distance from any other surrounding residential units such that there would be no impact on existing residential amenities.

National Planning Policy Considerations

- 4.4. The NPPF was published in February 2019. It set out a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The presumption in favour of sustainable development has been a constant theme in the original NPPF and subsequently the most recent version.
- 4.5. Of particular relevance to the subject application are sections 5 (Delivering a sufficient supply of homes), 9 (Promoting sustainable transport), 11 (making effective use of land) and 12 (Achieving well-designed places).
- 4.6. Paragraph 59 aims to support the Governments objective of **“significantly boosting the supply of homes...”**. The application proposes increasing the supply of housing within a sustainable location in a settlement location. Furthermore, the proposed dwellings accord with the Council’s latest evidence on the mix of housing required in the area.
- 4.7. With reference to sustainable transport; paragraph 102(c) states:
- ‘Transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals, so that:... c) opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use are identified and pursued;’**
- 4.8. Furthermore, paragraph 117 states:
- ‘Planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions’.**
- 4.9. Paragraph 122 states, inter alia, that planning decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land, take into account the identified need for houses, the availability and capacity of infrastructure of services and the scope for promoting sustainable transport and the importance of securing well-designed attractive and healthy places.
- 4.10. The proposed scheme accords with the above paragraphs by proposing housing development in a sustainable and accessible location. The scheme provides for the efficient use of land without resulting in any character related harm.

4.11. Of particular relevance to the application proposal is paragraph 127 which states:

‘Planning policies and decisions should ensures that developments:

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;**
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;**
- c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);’**

4.12. The scheme provides for a modern addition to an older original building within the Conservation Area while and in a way that retains and preserves the underlying special historic and architectural character of the area.

Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

4.13. The NPPF sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development and identifies that there are three dimensions to sustainable development, comprising (i) economic, (ii) social and (iii) environmental. The proposal accords with the NPPF’s three dimensions to sustainable development having regard to the following:

Economic Role

4.14. The scheme will contribute to a competitive economy through the creation of direct and indirect construction jobs and the associated first time and on-going expenditure within the town centre.

Social Role

4.15. The scheme will meet the social role by providing the supply of housing required, contributing to a high-quality built environment, accessible to local services and reflecting the community’s needs. The scheme is located in a sustainable location in Central Reading and is sustainable in locational terms in meeting housing needs in an inherently appropriate location.

Environmental Role

4.16. The environmental role requires the planning system to protect and enhance the natural, built and historic environment. The scheme proposes a high quality well designed extensions to the existing building, in a sustainable location thus meeting the environmental objectives of the NPPF.

5. SUMMARY

- 5.1. The application scheme represents a well-conceived, high quality development that accords with spatial and development control type policy requirements of the Local Plan and Local Development Framework.
- 5.2. The application site has been the subject to a recent Prior Approval for the conversion of the existing building to provide residential development. The scheme proposes to enlarge the ground floor so that it would be level with the upper floors to provide an additional single apartment and an additional floor to provide a further three apartments.
- 5.3. The ground floor will have no impact on the wider character of the area. The upper floor has been designed such that it would propose a modern addition to the original red brick building in a manner that preserves the special character of the Conservation Area.
- 5.4. The scheme represents a sustainable form of development and is submitted in accordance with the requirements of the development plan and is also in accordance with the policy provisions set out in the NPPF.
- 5.5. For the reasons set out above, the applications should be supported and planning permission granted.
