

Planning, Design and Access Statement:

Change of Use of first and second floors from A2 (financial services) to C1 (providing four serviced apartments) and of the ground floor from A2 (financial services) to A1 (providing for a coffee shop/café) with changes to the ground floor frontage.

At: 34 St Mary's Butts, Reading RG1 2LQ.

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APPENDIX

**'A' – Pre-application advice dated 1 February 2019
(submitted separately)**

28 February 2019

1. INTRODUCTION:

- 1.1. This planning statement has been prepared in support of the full planning application for the proposed development detailed above. In setting out why this development is acceptable, reference is made to the relevant and prevailing planning policy as well as an assessment of the main issues and compliance with planning policy.
- 1.2. This statement should be read in conjunction with the submitted plans and drawings.

2. THE SITE

- 2.1. The application site comprises a three-storey building previously occupied by the Co-operative Bank. All three floors were used by the bank as a business premises in A2 use. The existing floor plans clearly show the functionality of the premises.
- 2.2. The building features a ground floor with shopfront and a single storey element including a storage room at the back. There is an entrance door for access to the upper floors as well as an access door leading to an alley providing access to the rear.
- 2.3. The site is located within the St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area. Both the application building and its neighbour No. 32 are unlisted and have been identified as buildings which negatively impact on the Conservation Area.

Nos. 35 and 37 immediately adjacent and to the South are 16th Century Grade II listed buildings, as is the Horn Inn on the corner of St Marys Butts and Castle Street.

The application building faces a small kiosk which is believed to be a former tram stop. With the grounds of the Grade I listed St Mary's Church across the street, the frontage area has been earmarked for providing an improved pedestrian friendly and attractive public realm.

- 2.4. It is considered that renovation and conversion of this unattractive building to support tourism and provide accommodation for visitors in this central location constitutes sustainable and regenerative development.

3. THE PROPOSAL

- 3.1. It is intended that the Applicant company will develop and hold the property, letting the commercial premises and appointing an agent to manage the apartments as short-term serviced accommodation.

- 3.2. The proposal would involve the change of use to allow interior renovation and alteration of the first and second floors to provide four serviced single bedroom apartments, each with open kitchen and living area and a bathroom. On each floor will be an apartment with bedroom and kitchen/living area facing the street, and another apartment with kitchen/living area facing the rear of the building. These bedrooms will obtain sunlight from a lightwell.
- 3.3. The proposal would also involve the change of use to allow the provision of a ground floor coffee shop/café (A1 use). In this respect Applicant intends to improve the external appearance of the existing shopfront.

Design of proposed façade in the context of the Conservation Area and listed buildings

- 3.4. The existing façade, assumed to have been installed after the 1960s, does not contribute positively to the character of the surrounding area. It has a large glazed portion and an opening which once contained an ATM. This shopfront would be changed to better reflect the character of the Conservation Area by incorporating more sympathetic materials and reflecting the appearance of that of adjacent listed buildings.
- 3.5. The proposed design of the frontage has undergone revision.



Figure 1: First revision

- The first revision retained full height glazing, but with a more centrally located door, and with the glazed area widened to replace the existing tiled wall around the cashpoint.
- It is proposed to retain the height and location of the fascia, which does not seem out of character in this area (it should be noted that it is of similar height as the flower shop fascia where it is not below the timber framed element).

- It is proposed to provide some depth to this fascia by way of profiling at top and bottom of the panel, and that the sign writing would be painted onto the painted fascia, possibly in low profile lettering.
- The effect of pilasters is created by proposed painting of the shop window surround and other ground floor areas in the same colour as the fascia. This helps to unify an otherwise potentially unbalanced facade due to the location of existing doors to upstairs accommodation and passage alongside.

Following feedback from planning officer and conservation officer, the following changes are proposed in the current design:



Figure 2: Current revision

- To continue the line of stall risers and not provide a full height glazed portion, a similar height stall riser has been added, proposed to be in honed slate as this will provide a durable and clean finish.
- To improve the spacing and recommended use of a timber formed mullion and cill to tie in with the adjoining property, the current revision now proposes window frames in timber, increased in size, with a projecting timber cill and profile to match the adjoining florist's, and generally a more traditional appearance.
- The retail entrance door is provided with less glazing and a thicker frame, as well as a traditional fanlight over.
- It would make use of hanging signage rather than cantilever signage, now separated from the fascia to be more traditional in appearance and ties in with hanging signs and detailing on 'The Horn'.
- Signage on the fascia is to be limited to the area above the retail windows.

4. PRE-APPLICATION PLANNING ADVICE

- 4.1. Applicant requested and received supportive and instructive pre-application advice on a similar proposal that involved the proposed change of use on the ground floor to A3 (restaurant).

The written response dated 1 February 2019, ref no. 182074/PREAPP is submitted together with this statement.

- 4.2. Officers cautioned that the available ground floor area would only provide for a very modest restaurant and that proposed restaurant use would involve commercial cooking requiring the installation of extractor(s) in the kitchen. Such a change of use would require assessment of likely noise and odour impacts and concomitant noise and odour control measures.
- 4.3. Applicant elected to rather apply for change of use to A1 to enable the ground floor to be used as a coffee shop/café serving coffee and pre-prepared snacks to customers.
- 4.4. The Planning Officer did not identify any fundamental constraints and advised that the development as proposed would be generally acceptable.

5. PLANNING HISTORY

Application for a double sided internally illuminated projecting sign Ref no. 07/01301/ADV approved 23 January 2008.

6. PLANNING POLICY

The Local Development Plan

- 6.1. In determining applications, the local planning authority must have regard to the provisions of the development plan, so far as it is material to the application, and to 'any other material considerations' (section 70 of the Town and Planning Act 1990).
- 6.2. Planning applications are to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise (section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).
- 6.3. As far as relevant to this application, the Development Plan currently consists of:
- Core Strategy (January 2008, altered January 2015),
 - Reading Central Area Action Plan (January 2009),

- Sites and Detailed Policies (October 2012, altered January 2015).
- 6.4. Elaborating on the development plan policies, the provisions of the Minster Quarter Area Development Framework SPD (adopted December 2018) are also relevant as material consideration.
- 6.5. Policies of an up-to-date development plan enjoys priority in determining planning applications. However, all other material considerations, including government policy in the NPPF, are weighed in the balance. Proposed development that accords with the policies of an up-to-date Local Plan should be approved. Unless material considerations indicate otherwise, proposals that conflict with the Local Plan should be refused.

National Planning Policy Framework (2019) & National Planning Practice Guidance

- 6.6. National policy statements issued by the Secretary of State and guidance as set out in the NPPF and NPPG are material considerations to which considerable weight should be given. The revised NPPF published February 2019, establishes the Government's overriding planning policy. Local plans are expected to be consistent with national policy (NPPF pars. 2 and 35).
- 6.7. The NPPF directs that development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan should be approved without delay (NPPF par. 11).
- 6.8. It is however permissible to depart from an up-to-date development plan if material considerations in the particular case indicate that the plan should not be followed (NPPF par. 12).
- 6.9. The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development with economic, social and environmental objectives.
- These objectives are not criteria against which every decision is to be judged. Sustainable development should be delivered through the preparation and implementation of plans and the application of the NPPF policies (NPPF pars. 7 to 10).
- 6.10. The NPPF recognises the need to ensure the vitality of town centres in allowing a suitable mix of uses (NPPF par. 85) and that small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting housing requirements. Local planning authorities are expected to support the development of windfall sites through policies and decisions, giving great weight to the benefits of using suitable sites within existing settlements for homes (NPPF par. 68).

- 6.11. Development that makes efficient use of land, especially previously developed land, should be supported (NPPF pars. 117 – 122).
- 6.12. Whilst decisions should ensure that developments are sympathetic to local character, appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities) should not be prevented or discouraged (NPPF par.127).
- 6.13. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting of heritage assets that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably (NPPF par. 200).

National Planning Practice Guidance

- 6.14. This web based resource provides extensive guidance and information on various topics and technical issues and it is not necessary to refer to any specific provision for purposes of this application.

7. PLANNING ASSESSMENT:

The Principle of Development

- 7.1. The Reading Central Area Action Plan remarks on the marked increase in proposals for serviced apartments, providing basic facilities for self-sufficient living with the amenities of a hotel. These are recognised as attractive to people who will stay for weeks or months at a time (par. 8.34).

Policies RC6 and RC7 allow for main town centre uses as well as leisure and tourism in the Central Core area. Policy RC10 encourages active frontages with high visual quality. Although this policy does not recognise the application site as being part of the designated active frontage between Oxford and Hosier Street, A1 use is recognised as suitable on the ground floor along active frontages.

Policy RC9(c) requires proposals for such apartments to 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.'*

- The application site is located within the Central Core area.
- The proposed A1 and C1 uses are supported by policy.

- Applicant accepts the requirement for a section 106 legal agreement with *inter alia* the following terms providing that -
 - i. *no apartment shall be used for any use other than as a Serviced Apartment (C1 Use);*
 - ii. *no apartment shall be used or occupied as a residential dwelling or dwelling-house (C3 Use);*
 - iii. *not to let or licence for occupation or permit or suffer occupation of any of the Apartments for a continuous period of more than 3 months to the same occupier or occupiers;*
 - iv. *other than those Customers staying in accordance with the above, not to let or licence for occupation or permit or suffer occupation of any Apartment for a continuous period for more than 3 months to the same Customer or Customers;*
 - v. *not to require Customers of any Apartment to agree to any minimum period of occupation (of whatever duration);*
 - vi. *to provide to the Council within 14 days of written request evidence regarding the use or occupation of the Apartments or any of them*

7.2. Core Strategy Policy CS33 requires proposals to protect and where possible enhance the character and appearance of conservation areas, and the Minster Quarter Area Development Framework SPD earmarks the frontage as 'Key Frontage around Minster Square', facing a potential area for Local Market and a street where restricted vehicular access is recognised as possible.

- The existing shopfront will be improved to make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area, and the proposed coffee shop would contribute to an improved offering to visitors to the public square.

7.3. Policies DM4 and DM19 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document require development to avoid significant detrimental impact to the living environment of residential properties and to mitigate detrimental effects of poor air quality in Air Quality Management Areas.

- There is no indication that the proposal would have detrimental impact on the living environment of existing or new residential properties.

- Limiting residential accommodation to higher floors (as proposed) is a recognised mitigation measure and it is also stated that the policy does not mean that the development of sensitive uses in the AQMA will necessarily be inappropriate (par 9.2.7).
- In this instance, it may be possible to provide a mechanical ventilation system with inlets from the lightwell, and it is considered that this could be addressed by condition if deemed necessary.

7.4. It is considered that the proposal would have no real impact in terms of Transport and Highways related issues. This is a highly sustainable town centre location and any demand for parking will be met by public car parks.

8. **CONCLUSION**

It is considered that the proposal accords with policy in all material respects and Planning Permission is therefore requested.

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