

PLANNING, DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

**Change of use from mixed A1 and 2 x C3
apartments to 7 x C1 (serviced apartments) and
1 x 2-bed and 1 x 1 bed C3 apartments. Part two,
part 2.5 storey rear extension, rear dormer and
lightwells for the basement**

59-61 Southampton Street, Reading. RG1 2QU

On Behalf of: Forbury Homes

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement is produced to support a planning application for a change of use of the building comprising mixed used retail (A1) and 2 x C3 apartments to 7 x C1 serviced apartments and 1 x 2-bed and 1 x 1 bed C3 apartments. The development would incorporate a part 2, part 2.5 storey rear extension together with 2 no. dormers in the rear elevation and lightwells to the basement.
- 1.2 The existing ground floor retail units together with ancillary storage at basement level would be converted to 4 serviced apartments (C1), with the basement level accommodation facilitated by front and rear lightwells. A further 3 serviced apartments would be provided at first floor level, with 1 x 2-bed and 1 x 1-bed apartments (C3) within the 2nd floor and existing loft space.
- 1.3 The development would be facilitated by a part 2, part 2.5 storey rear extension incorporating a staggered set-back, together with 2 moderate gable fronted rear dormers.
- 1.4 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.
- 1.5 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 Hives Architects LLP:
 - 1:1250 Site Location Plan
 - 1:100 Existing plans and elevations

- 1:100 Proposed plans and elevations

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

2. Site Location and Description

- 2.1 The application site comprises a 3-storey building (with additional basement level and loft space) on the eastern side of Southampton Street within the Reading Central Area. The existing building currently comprises a vacant retail unit at ground floor (historically 2 units), with 2 residential apartments above, together with ancillary storage space at both basement level and within the loft.
- 2.2 The site immediately adjoins The Red Cow public House (Grade II listed) to the south, with a row of early 19th C. 3-storey townhouses (2 of which are Grade II listed with one being Grade II*) on the opposite side of Southampton Street. The immediate setting is primarily residential in nature with the site located outside of the Primary Shopping Area.
- 2.3 The site is also located outside of but within close proximity to the boundary of the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area to the north.

3. Planning History

- 3.1 190335 - Change of use from retail (A1) to 2 residential apartments(C3). Prior Notification under Class M, Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) - Pending consideration
- 3.2 930307 – Minor shop front alteration - Approved
- 3.3 900250 - New shop front with aluminium roller shutters - Refused

4. Development Proposals

- 4.1 Regarding the requirements of Circular 01/2006 in respect of Design and Access Statements, the proposal is described as follows:

Use and Amount

- 4.2 The proposed use at the site includes 7 x C1 serviced apartments and 1 x 2-bed and 1 x 1 bed C3 apartments.

Layout and Scale

- 4.3 The proposed accommodation would be incorporated within the existing building, including the basement, but also laid out over a part 2, part 2.5 storey rear extension with a staggered set-back. The extension would replace an existing extension at the rear of the property which ranges between 1 and 2 stories in height. Two gabled fronted rear dormers are also proposed to facilitate accommodation within the loft space.
- 4.4 Internally, the accommodation has been laid out to maximise the internal space and light afforded, with primary habitable rooms benefitting from an eastern orientation with the serviced accommodation at basement level benefitting from front and rear lightwells.

Landscaping

- 4.5 A grass shared amenity space will be created at the rear of the property, replacing an existing hard surfaced area of limited amenity value.

Appearance

- 4.6 The external appearance of the existing building with respect to the front elevation would remain practically unaltered, with the proposed two storey extension at the rear incorporating a staggered set-back front first to second floor levels. The extension would span the entire width of the plot and include a traditional gable fronted pitched roof.

- 4.7 It is proposed that matching brickwork would be utilised for the exterior of the existing building with respect to the rear extension.

Access and Parking

- 4.8 The existing access from St. Giles Close at the rear would remain unaltered but instead incorporate provision for 3 cycle parking spaces and waste storage in place of the existing vehicular parking area which would be removed.
- 4.9 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 at ground floor level.

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 "*Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible*". Paragraph 8 of the NPPF comments that planning should "make effective use of land" and ensure that "*a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations*".

Principle of Development

- 5.3 The application site is located within the settlement boundary as defined by Core Strategy policy CS6, where residential and commercial development is appropriate. In accordance with Policy DM8, the proposal involves the change of use of an existing building already comprising 2 no. residential apartments and a retail unit with a total floor area exceeding 120sqm. The proposals are therefore policy compliant in this respect.
- 5.4 Policy DM8 requires at least one unit of accommodation to be suitable for family occupation with a minimum of two bedrooms. This policy applies where the building to be subdivided is a C3 family dwellinghouse. Presently, the existing building comprises a combination of retail and 2 no. residential apartments. Notwithstanding this however, one of the new flats comprise 2 bedrooms and would therefore be suitable for family occupation in accordance with Policy DM8.
- 5.5 The application site is outside of the Primarily Shopping Area and is not within a defined Key Frontage as indicated on the proposals map. Furthermore, a Prior Approval application is currently being considered by the Council (ref. 190335) with respect to the conversion of the existing ground floor retail unit at the site to 2 x 1-bed flats.
- 5.6 It is therefore considered that the loss of a redundant retail unit in this location would be acceptable in principle, resulting in a more sustainable form of development at the site that would lead to replacement employment opportunities with regards to employees required to maintain the serviced apartments.

Character and Appearance of the Area

- 5.7 Policy DM9 addresses proposed external changes in relation to character, materials and design. The only external changes proposed to the existing property comprise the part 2, part 2.5 storey rear extension and rear dormers. Such development would largely replace an existing piecemeal

extension already in existence at the rear, and provides a better standard of living accommodation for future residents/occupants of the property.

- 5.8 The design of the extension is such that the rear elevation would be staggered, by way of the 2nd floor being recessed from the first-floor element. It is considered that the extension would assimilate successfully with the built form and vernacular of the existing building and surrounding development on either side, whilst creating a greater degree of visual interest with respect to the rear elevation.
- 5.9 The height of the eaves of the rear extension would also match the height of the existing rear projections, with the proposed extension resulting in a more efficient use of the site.
- 5.10 In addition, the proposed dormers are moderate in scale and proportionate to the size and width of the existing roof, incorporating gables that would better assimilate with the existing building than a boxed design.
- 5.11 Such development would not be visible from the Southampton Street streetscene, and therefore result in a negligible impact upon the character of the adjacent Conservation Area and setting of the adjoining listed building. Further consideration with regards to the impact of the development upon the setting of the adjacent Grade II listed building to the south is provided in the following section of this statement and reinforced by the submitted Heritage Impact Assessment.

Heritage

- 5.12 Due to the proximity of listed buildings to the application, due regard must be had to S66 of the Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) which states that: *"In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the*

desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.”

5.13 Paragraph 192 of the NPPF also advises that, “*In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:*

a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;

b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and

c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

5.14 The submitted Heritage Impact Assessment demonstrates that the proposed development would successfully preserve the setting of the adjacent listed building, therefore rendering the proposals acceptable from a heritage standpoint and compliant with local and national planning policy in this respect together with S66 of the Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Residential Amenity

5.15 In terms of internal space, the Residential Conversions checklist requires that proposals will be assessed against the Council’s minimum internal floor space standards. The checklist provides specific advice for the internal space standards in HMO dwellings but does not specify the internal space standards for residential flats. As such, the national space standards are referred to. The Sites and Detailed Policies Document (SDPD) at paragraph 5.1.11 relating to housing mix also states that ‘any room designated as a bedroom should contain at least 6.5 sqm of useable floorspace’.

5.16 The proposed apartments all have a proposed bedroom larger than the 6.5 sqm standard, and benefit from an open plan living room/ kitchen and separate bathroom. Furthermore, each apartment would conform to the

Nationally Described Space Standards with regards to internal living accommodation.

- 5.17 Policies DM4 and DM8 also require appropriate sound insulation between proposed and neighbouring units before a converted property is occupied. The proposed conversion would be undertaken in accordance with current Building Regulations and would be sufficiently insulated against noise.
- 5.18 Both C3 apartments would benefit from a shared outdoor amenity space at the rear (identified as soft landscaping on the proposed block plan), which would result in a betterment with respect to the existing two apartments that are not currently afforded any usable outdoor amenity space.
- 5.19 The serviced apartments at basement level would benefit from lightwells at the front and rear, with the submitted Daylight Report indicating that the daylight within the basement units would comply with the BRE/BS8206 guidance and receive good levels of natural light. Nevertheless they are for short term accommodation and not an occupier's permanent residence.
- 5.20 The rear lightwells also provide defensible space at the rear of the ground floor C1 units which reduces the impact upon their amenity from the use of the rear yard area for parking and pedestrian access.
- 5.21 With respect to neighbouring amenity, the proposed rear extension would replace an existing two storey rear extension, resulting only in a moderate increase in height, focused in the centre of the plot. The submitted Daylight Report indicates the following in this respect:
- 5.22 The main criteria used in this analysis to show compliance are the Vertical Sky Component. The effect on VSC is within the 80% guidance value in all cases. There will therefore be no adverse impact on neighbouring residents in terms of daylight.
- 5.23 In terms of daylight, no windows or gardens need to be assessed, therefore the scheme accords with BRE guidance in relation to sunlight, resulting in

no adverse impact on sunlight receipt with respect to neighbouring properties.

Transport and Parking

- 5.24 The application site is located within Zone 2 as indicated in the Parking Standards and Design SPD which describes the area as follows:

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. 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. The areas within Zone 2 also typically have smaller local centres, providing day-to-day access to retail and some commercial facilities. Future growth in these areas is likely to be more mixed than in the core area, with larger amounts of residential than commercial space.

- 5.25 Against the Council's SPD standards the existing site generates a need for 5 parking spaces; 2 spaces for the combined 2 x C3 apartments and 3 for the existing retail use (1 space per 50m²).
- 5.26 With respect to the proposed development, it is recognised that a total of 3.5 spaces would be required for the C1 serviced apartments and 1 space for each of the flats; resulting in a total of 6 parking spaces required in accordance with the SPD. This is an increase of 1 over existing.
- 5.27 The existing site has a rear delivery yard for the retail use, and has capacity for use for one parking space. This parking space will be retained.
- 5.28 Notwithstanding the shortfall of 1 space when compared with the existing use, the SPD does allow for a reduced level of parking provision in relation

to the required standards provided there would be no detriment to highway safety as a result.

- 5.29 The site in question is within a highly sustainable location, within walking distance to Reading's town centre/retail core that is well served by public transport. In particular, the site is located only a 4-minute walk to the nearest bus stop, and a 14-minute walk from the main train station which provides regular services to a variety of destinations including Central London, Oxford, the West Country and South Wales. In addition, the site is located only a 5-minute walk from the parking facilities at the Oracle Centre.
- 5.30 It should be further noted that 2 residential apartments already exist within the building, and a further 2 have been granted consent at ground floor level via the Prior Approval application currently being considered at the site. Cumulatively, this would necessitate a total of 4 parking spaces required at the site.
- 5.31 Whilst it is recognised that parking provision for approximately 2 spaces exists at the rear of the building, such provision is being proposed for removal in order to make way for an attractive and useable outdoor private amenity space for future occupants, together with dedicated cycle parking. It is considered that the proposals more successfully promote the use of sustainable transport modes, whilst providing an attractive recreational environment for future occupants that serves a more meaningful purpose than the existing hard-surfaced area.
- 5.32 Given the highly sustainable nature of the site as referenced above, it is considered that such development would not pose a materially harmful impact upon the safety and convenience of the local highway network. Furthermore, future occupants of the C1 serviced apartments are unlikely to be utilising private modes of transport, and will instead be able to access local services and facilities by foot, public transport and bicycle. This is also considered to be the case with respect to future occupants of the C3

apartments, with local parking facilities available within the immediate vicinity of the site if required.

5.33 Notwithstanding this however, public car parking facilities managed by Green Parking is available within close proximity to the site on Church Street to the north-east.

5.34 It is therefore considered that the lack of on-site parking provision with respect to the proposed development is justified, and should not prejudice the granting of planning permission in this particular case.

Cycle and refuse provision

5.35 A secure cycle store, located to the rear of the amenity area, would provide secure cycle storage for each of the proposed units, including the C1 units. Waste storage for the units would also be located within a store positioned in the rear amenity area, allowing bins to be placed adjacent to the St. Giles Lane streetscene for collection. Refuse will be collected by private contractor. This is considered to address the requirements of policies CS24, DM4, DM8 and CS18 as identified by checklists 16 and 17 of the Residential Conversions SPD.

Sustainability/Energy

5.36 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. 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 a SAP rating improvement over existing;
- b) Use of locally sourced, recycled materials and labour where practicable
- c) Maximizing the use of natural light through floor-ceiling windows
- 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
- 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
- i) Water butts fitted to the rainwater down pipes for watering the garden
- j) Recycling of waste construction materials where practicable
- k) Mechanical ventilation system for improved internal climate and external noise control

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

Affordable Housing

- 5.37 Sites and Detailed Policies Document, Policy DM6 sets out that on sites of 1-4 dwellings, on site and/or a financial contribution should be made that will enable the equivalent of 10% of the housing to be provided as affordable housing elsewhere in the Borough. In this instance 2 x C3 apartments are retained at the site, and so there is no change in the number of residential dwellings. Consequently, affordable housing is not required.
- 5.38 Affordable housing provision is not sought on schemes for C1 serviced accommodation proposals. Any decision can be controlled by condition to remain in such use class.

Community Infrastructure Levy

- 5.39 It is recognised that the development would be CIL liable as C3 accommodation is included, and the appropriate forms have been completed and submitted in support of the application.

Serviced accommodation

- 5.40 The target market for the C1 accommodation is working professionals either corporate lets or direct bookings from working professionals. There is growing demand from companies to save money in the current economic climate. These companies want the flexibility that comes from services apartments without the obligations that accompany a traditional AST together with the back up of services such as concierge, laundry and food packs for their staff. Additionally, there is demand from working professionals who work in Reading during the week and travel home at weekends. All serviced units will be held within a single ownership and operated as a business with business rates (not residential council tax) being paid.

- 5.41 For example, bookings will be made through on-line providers such as Booking.com and Air BnB. These on-line services help to streamline the payment and guest management process but also provide valuable feedback opportunities on which to further build the business model. Payment is taken in advance, usually by credit card. There will be no minimum length of stay and prices will be advertised as such on a per night basis. These online providers have built in systems and controls, enabling management to ensure, that rooms will not be occupied for periods of 60 days or more.

Once payment has been processed a standard digital welcome pack is sent to the guest that includes amongst others:

- Full address of the property including Sat Nav coordinates;
- Instructions on how to find and access the building;

- A video link to how the appliances work,
- Health and safety standards including No Smoking Policy,
- Terms and conditions including No Disturbance Policy; and
- Rendezvous points in the case of a fire.

5.42 The occupants of the services unit will not have exclusive possession of the room and management reserve the right to have access to the serviced unit for the provision of services, including amongst others, cleaning and changing laundry. All service units have en-suite and cooking facilities and typically includes the following:

- Kitchen with oven , cooker, fridge and microwave;
- Dining table and chairs;
- Double bed;
- 2 bedside lockers;
- Single wardrobe;
- Artwork;
- Intercom system;
- CAT 6 Wifi

5.43 The serviced units will be supported by a team of people employed to manage and maintain the business model as needed. A dedicated employee will be responsible for services such as;

- Concierge services;
- Cleaning the individual services apartments and the communal areas;
- Laundry;
- Manage the bins on refuse collection day;
- Check guests in and out including key handling and sourcing of food packs;
- Report and manage any maintenance issues that may arise; and
- Advising management on refunding deposits within 24 hours of a guest vacating a serviced unit.

Bat Survey

- 5.44 An ecology note is submitted with the application and confirms no bats have been found in the existing building.

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 successfully maintain the Borough's existing housing supply, without adverse effect on the character of the area (including the surrounding listed buildings or adjacent Conservation Area) or the amenity of neighbouring residents whilst providing a good standard of living for future occupants.
- 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.