



2 Mason Street, Reading, RG1 7PD

**Proposed roof alterations, part two part single storey extensions and
conversion of the existing building to 3x flats**

Planning Statement

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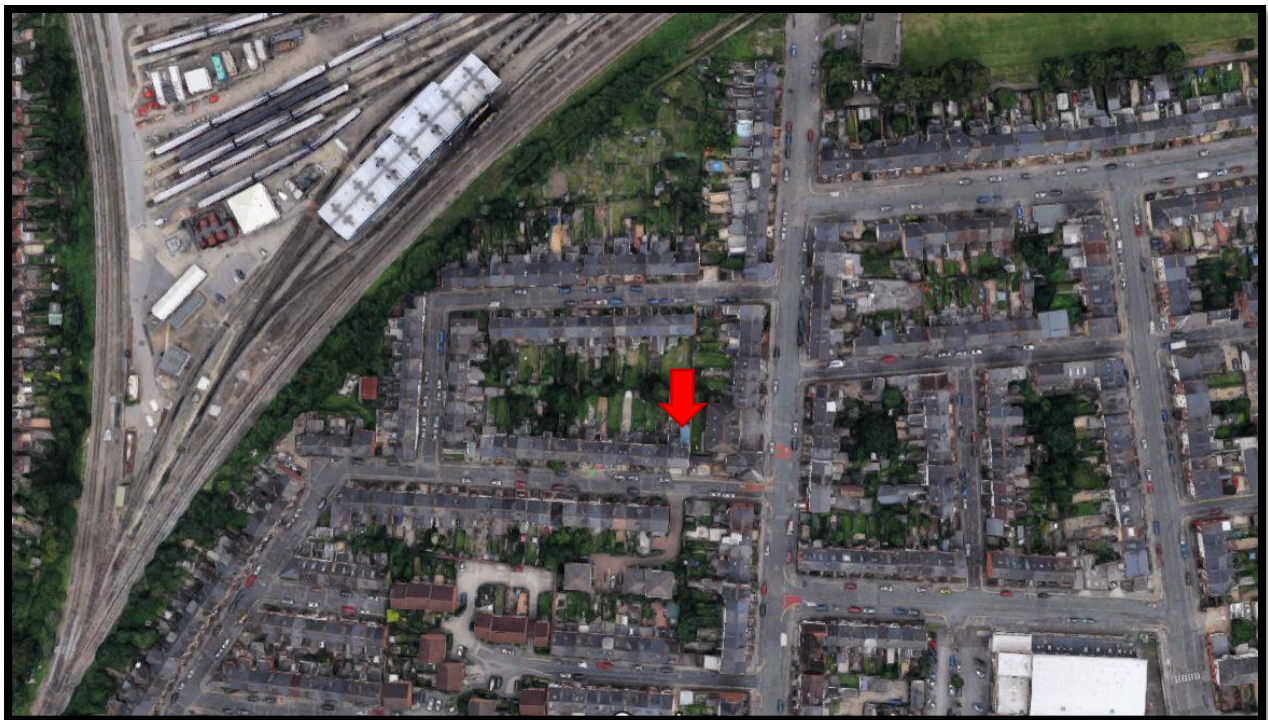
1. Introduction

1.1. Preface

This design statement has been prepared in support of a Full application for the proposed roof alterations, part two part single storey extensions and conversion of the existing building to 3x flats at 2 Mason Street, Reading, RG1 7PD.

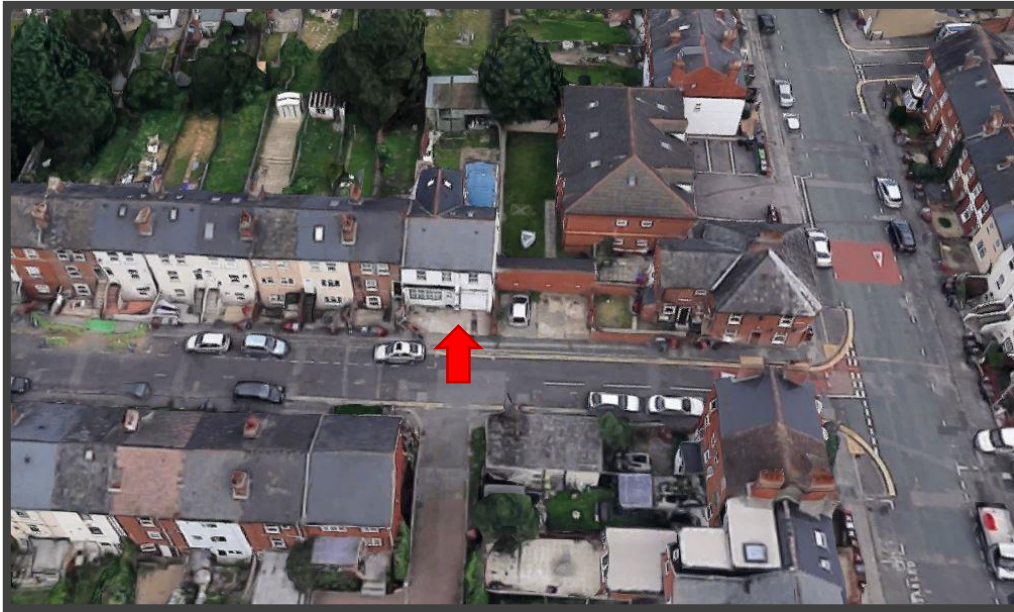
The following statement covers the subject and information required for submission as set National Planning Policy Framework and Reading Borough Council Local Plan. This document will outline the application site history and the design strategy for the proposed development. It should be read in conjunction with the submitted drawings.

1.2. Site Location

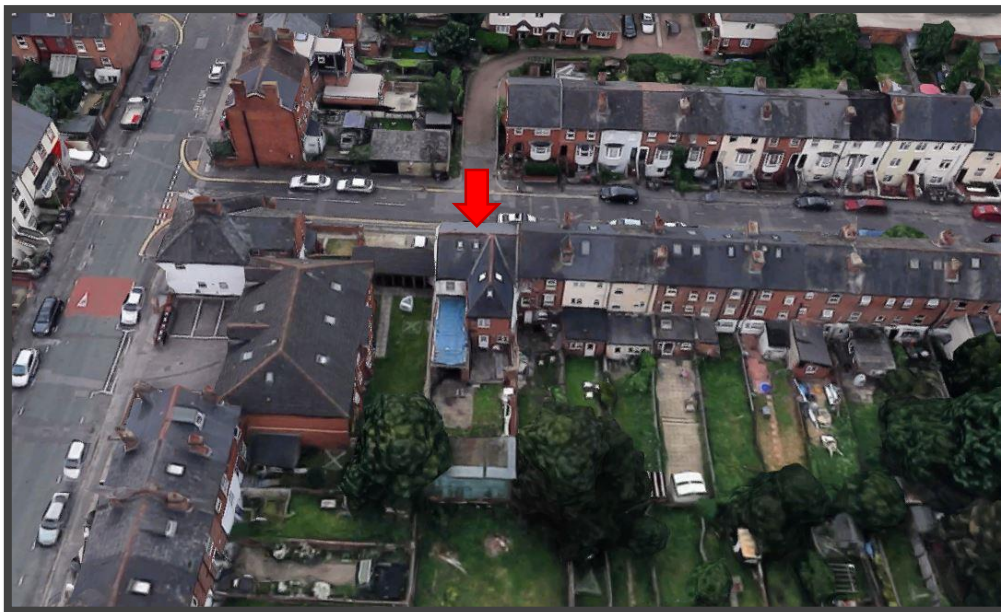


1. Aerial photograph





2. Bird's eye photograph (front)



3. Bird's eye photograph (rear)

1.3. Site Description

The application site is located on the northern side of Mason Street, first in a row of circa 15x terraced properties, where number of them are converted to multi-level flats. The application site is about 550.0m to the west from the Reading Town Centre. Despite that the application site is located within a group of numerous, strongly unified in terms of their scale and design terraced buildings, in itself no. 2 Mason Street appears significantly different, not in keeping and out of character, due to its different height, scale, fenestration details, architectural features or elevations materials.



The site is occupied by a two storey building, which is currently used as a single dwellinghouse – Class C3. The host building comprises some outside amenity space with insignificant landscaping, in total around 60.0m² plus a massive outbuilding in the back (8.0m x 4.25m). The entire area of the application property is circa 267.0m², where the host dwelling includes approximately 82.0m² footprint. The property benefits from off-street parking to the front and in the car port, sufficient for 3x vehicles. Given its location, the side and front elevations are clearly exposed within the streetscene, therefore it is considered highly prominent in the surrounding area.

The application property is end-of-terrace, similarly to adjacent buildings, however because of diverse and unsympathetic hipped roof form and unusual doors and windows, it appears out of keeping and visually disintegrated in relation to the adjacent buildings. The host property is similarly residential in use, however its front and side elevation are visually unattractive and of a poor condition.

1.4. Planning history and the current appearance

Currently the application property includes the host dwelling, with not finished extensions, approved previously in the planning history. The submitted plans (in order to provide a clarity in reading the drawings) include a host dwelling before the partial implementation of permission ref. 04/00982/FUL/BP, granted for a 'Second storey pitched roof rear extension' granted on 12/10/2004. Below photographs included in this paragraph present appearance of the dwelling as it stands, in March 2019. It is clearly visible that the external brickwalls are partially erected on the first floor above the car port and on the single storey level to the rear. These works have been commenced within 5 years from the date of the abovementioned permission, accordingly with the condition 1 of this consent. The application property include a two storey, around 3.5m rear outbuilding, which will be a subject to improvement in terms of the appearance and design, however not within this application. Currently it serves as a storage for the occupiers and its use would be retained after implementation of the potential permission.

The most recent planning permission includes erection of a part single, part two storey rear extensions and conversion of the existing building to 3x flats. IT has been conditionally approved under reference 190533. The current application is materially similar to the previously approved scheme, where the main difference includes a retained right hand side garage, which also would serve as a direct access to the garden area.











1.5. Surrounding Area Description

The majority of the Mason Street streetscene is characterised by a relatively repeatable type of development, with some examples of groups of dwellings with unified design features and strongly uniformed roofscape with chimneys, consistent frontages arrangement and cohesive appearance.

Within the closest proximity from the application property, there are numerous buildings, diverse in terms of their:

- use (residential, commercial);
- type (terraced; block of flats; backland development);
- fenestration and architectural details;
- roof forms (hipped, pitched, flat dormers);
- scale/footprint/volume;
- soft landscaping;
- distance from the highway
- boundary treatment and driveways.



The presentation of adjacent residential properties design within the Mason Street streetscene, has been presented on the below diagram.



4. Mason Street streetscene



2. Planning Policy

2.1. NPPF

Achieving Sustainable Development

Paragraph 7 of the NPPF emphasises that *“The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development”* and expands that in the paragraph 8, that it *“has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive:*

- *an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;*
- *a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being;*
- *an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy”.*

Furthermore, a decision-making in favour of sustainable development is strengthened and its significant weight is confirmed in paragraph 38, which states that *“Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available, including brownfield registers and permission in principle, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible”.*

Residential redevelopment location

Paragraph 68 of the NPPF encourages to prioritise small development sites with regards to housing land provision and it emphasises that *“Small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area, and are often built-out relatively quickly. To promote the development of a good mix of sites local planning authorities should:*



- *identify, through the development plan and brownfield registers, land to accommodate at least 10% of their housing requirement on sites no larger than one hectare;*
- *support the development of windfall sites through their policies and decisions – giving great weight to the benefits of using suitable sites within existing settlements for homes”.*

Furthermore, an effective use of land is significantly highlighted in paragraph 71, which says that development suitable for first time buyers or entry-level sites should *“be adjacent to existing settlements, proportionate in size to them, not compromise the protection given to areas or assets of particular importance in this Framework, and comply with any local design policies and standards”*, whereas paragraph 117 encourages Local Planning Authorities to *“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”* and *“makes as much use as possible of previously-developed or ‘brownfield’ land”*. Additionally, paragraph 118 says that decisions should *“promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings, especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing where land supply is constrained and available sites could be used more effectively (for example converting space above shops”*.

Housing Quality and Design

Paragraph 124 of the NPPF states that the *“creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve”* and 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”*.

Furthermore, NPPF paragraph 126 emphasizes an important role of the design codes and guides, which should *“provide a framework for creating distinctive places, with a consistent and high quality standard of design”* and that *“their level of detail and degree of prescription should be tailored to the circumstances in each place, and should allow a suitable degree of variety where this would be justified”*.

Paragraph 127 of the NPPF comprises a list, in terms of what decisions should ensure with regards to proposed developments, inter alia:

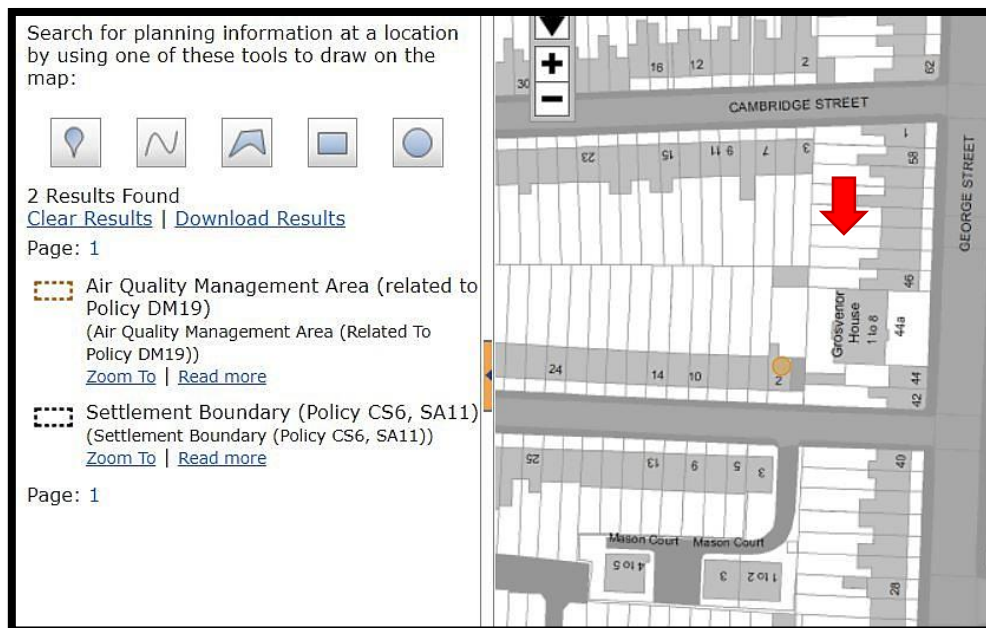
- *“function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
- *are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*



- *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);*
- *establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;*
- *optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and*
- *create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users⁴⁶; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience”.*

Delivering a decent level of design quality is comprised in paragraph 130 - “Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, taking into account any local design standards or style guides in plans or supplementary planning documents”.

2.2. Local Development Framework (November 2019)



5. Local Plan Policies Map



Residential redevelopment location

The application property is located within the settlement limits of Reading, therefore it is considered to constitute a positive contribution towards target set out in the Local Plan Policy H1, which identified 230 dwellings shortfall.

The proposed dwelling would be accommodated within the settlement boundaries for Reading. Local Plan Policy H16 states that *“There is scope for some of Reading’s suburban residential areas to undergo renewal and regeneration that would achieve the following aims:*

- *Improve the local built environment;*
- *Improve and modernise the housing stock; and*
- *Deliver additional homes.”*

Policy H16 then continues that *“Where development would fulfil the above aims, it would generally be supported, subject to other policies in this plan and provided that:*

- *Any loss of undeveloped land would be outweighed by a qualitative improvement in open and green space and by the benefits of development to the community as a whole;*
- *Buildings and features that make a positive contribution to the area’s character are retained;*
- *There would be adequate community facilities to serve the resulting community; and*
- *There would not be an unacceptable impact on the highway network as a result of loss of parking areas or garages.”*

Residential Conversions

The Local Plan Policy H8 is strictly about conversions for residential use. It has been confirmed in para 6.31 that such residential conversions *“will be assessed against the impact on the amenity and character of the surrounding area, particularly in terms of intensification of activity, loss of privacy, loss of external amenity space, the provision and location of adequate on-site car parking and the treatment of bin storage areas and other related servicing”*.

Furthermore, Policy H8 also highlights several aspects for a successful self-contained flats conversion, inter alia:

- *“The proposal respects the physical character of the area in terms of scale, location, materials and design, the arrangement of doors, windows and other principal architectural features;*
- *The proposal would not, either individually or cumulatively, unduly dilute or harm an existing mixed and sustainable community through the significant loss of single family housing;*



- *There are no unacceptable adverse impacts to residents of the scheme or surrounding properties arising from noise and disturbance in terms of the number and layout of units proposed and the proximity to other properties;*
- *There is no inappropriate stacking and location of rooms between units;*
- *Bin and cycle storage is of an appropriate size and standard for the units proposed and should be located at ground floor level with easy access; and*
- *The resulting property or properties would provide adequate internal floorspace and headroom for residents."*

Accessibility

Number of Local Plan Policies relate to sustainable development, such as CC6 'Accessibility and the intensity of development' part, which emphasises importance of sustainable location of development – *"The scale and density of development will be related to its level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport to a range of services and facilities, with the densest and largest scale development taking place in the most accessible locations. 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."*

Policy CC6 explains in paragraph 4.1.25 that *"...primary locations for new development will be those accessible by walking and cycling to a wide range of employment, services and facilities, leisure, education and health facilities, or which are accessible by walking to routes/stops of frequent public transport services that provide easy access to the aforementioned uses"*. Paragraphs 4.1.27 continues that good level of accessibility means - *"to be that within 400m of a defined centre with a good range of facilities by pedestrian routes, and within 400m by pedestrian routes of a bus stop served by a service with a frequency of better than one bus every 20 minutes in each direction within daytime hours (7.00 a.m. to 7.00 p.m.)."*

The general health targets, accompanying appropriately located developments, mentioned in the explanation of this policy include:

- *"increased physical activity;*
- *decreased incidences of cardiovascular disease and obesity;*
- *reduced levels of stress caused by traffic noise and congestion;*
- *fewer cases of lung or heart disease associated with poor air quality;*
- *proximity to healthcare services;*
- *access to open space for recreation"*.



Design Quality

Policy CC7 states that *“All development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. The various components of development form, including:*

- *Layout: urban structure and urban grain;*
- *Landscape;*
- *Density and mix;*
- *Scale: height and massing; and*
- *Architectural detail and materials”.*

The above components are linked with the subsequently highlighted urban design objectives, which should be enhanced by the proposals, inter alia:

- *“Character - a place with its own identity and sense of place;*
- *Continuity and enclosure;*
- *Quality of the public realm and provision of green infrastructure and landscaping;*
- *Ease of movement and permeability;*
- *Legibility - clear image and easy to understand;*
- *Adaptability – capable of adaptation over time;*
- *Diversity – meets a wide range of needs”.*

In addition, CC7 summarizes and encourages to ensure that proposed developments:

- *“Respond positively to their local context and create or reinforce local character and distinctiveness, including protecting and enhancing the historic environment of the Borough and providing value to the public realm;*
- *Create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder or fear of crime does not undermine quality of life or community cohesion;*
- *Address the needs of all in society and are accessible, usable and easy to understand by them, including providing suitable access to, into and within, its facilities, for all potential users, including disabled people, so that they can use them safely and easily;*
- *Are visually attractive as a result of good high quality built forms and spaces, the inclusion of public art and appropriate materials and landscaping”.*



2.3. Reading Borough Council – ‘Residential Conversions’ Supplementary Planning Document (November 2013)

Residential Conversions SPD comprises a detailed assessment methodology, based on 26 points included in the checklist. The most important and relevant (for the purpose of this application) aspects of the proposed residential development quality appraisal are:

1. Sympathetic design;
2. Avoid of unacceptable reduction of amenity space;
3. Housing mix (ensuring that a single family housing remains the dominant form of dwelling in the vicinity of the application site);
4. Neighbours Impact (light, privacy, noise, safety);
5. Sufficient internal space;
6. Encouraging to use alternative modes of transport (bike storage, location close to public transport, services within walking distance).

3. Appraisal

3.1. General concept

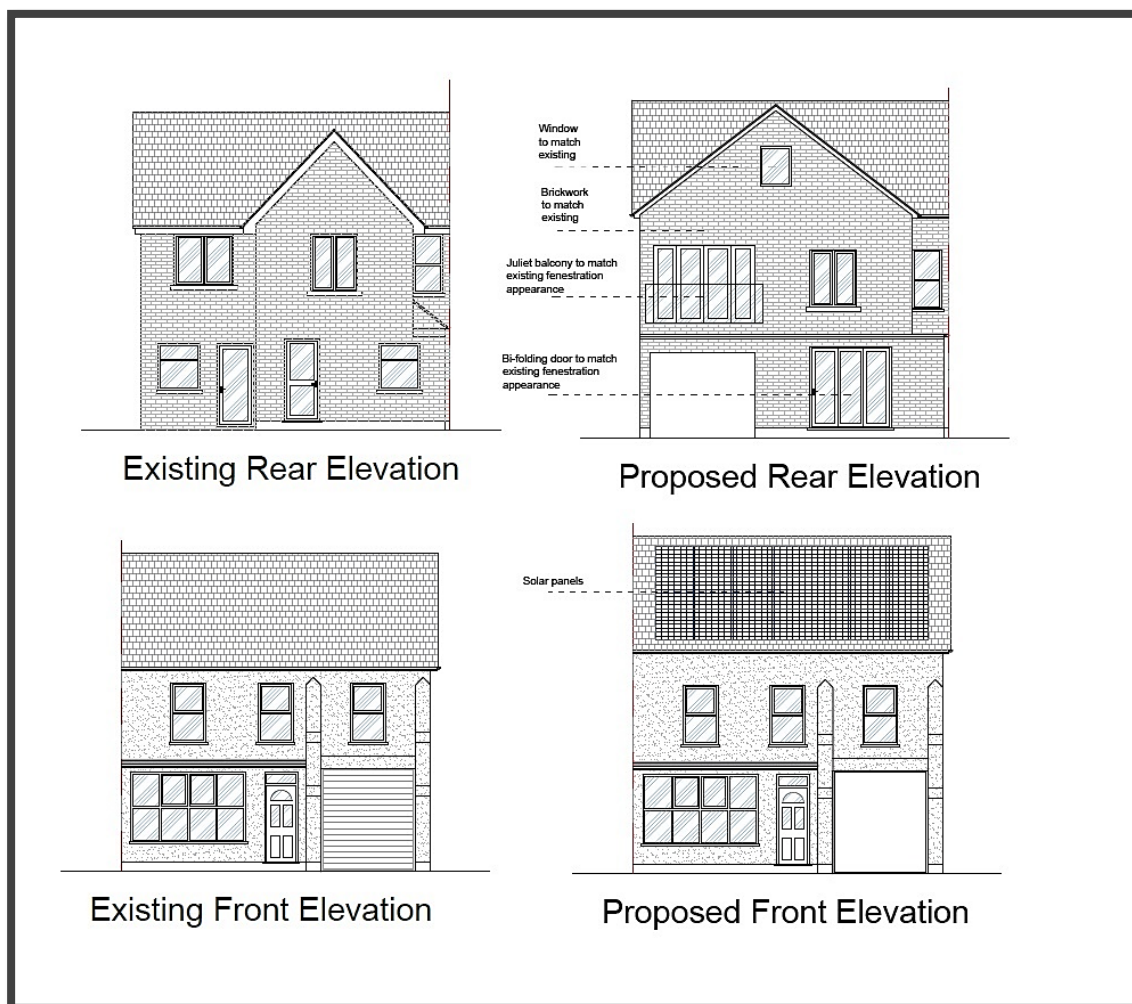
The overall aim of the proposal is to make efficient use of the existing site and its assets, by proposing extension and conversion of the existing two storey end-of-terrace dwellinghouse to 3x flats of improved design and sustainability (installation of solar panels), through the above proposal. The application property is characterized with a location within Reading settlement boundaries, which is partially fairly unified and partially mixed in terms of the design or scale, where such residential conversions are acceptable in principle. The proposal also includes an extension to the rear, which would contain part single part two storey enlargement with rearrangement of the back garden. A crucial factor for the proposed enlargement of the property is a fact that a materially similar extensions, were approved under reference 04/00982/FUL/BP on 12th of October 2004 and the most recent application ref. 190533.

3.2. Impact on the Character of the Area

The proposed development would include external extensions only to the rear of the dwelling, where its appearance and layout would be significantly improved as well. Furthermore, the application property, after numerous years of being in the current unfinished condition, would be significantly upgraded to a high-quality design and standard of living. The proposal includes some additional



fenestration elements installed within the existing building, in order to provide a more appropriate and residential character and improve quality of living of both, the future occupiers and neighbours of the application site. The proposal includes installation of sympathetic windows and doors on the ground floor and attractive Juliet balcony on the first floor. The proposed development also contains additional skylights within the top flat part of the main roof and side roofslopes with provision of typical white rendered elevation, in order to provide perfectly sympathetic and in keeping design, fully suitable for this prominent property. More contemporary flat rooflights, would serve as an additional source of light for the habitable accommodation within the loft and the proposed solar panels would be installed on the front roof, facing south. The use of renewable energy source would improve energy efficiency of the building and it would comply with NPPF paras 148 – 154. The proposed windows and bi-folding doors would be considered in keeping with the existing fenestration arrangement.

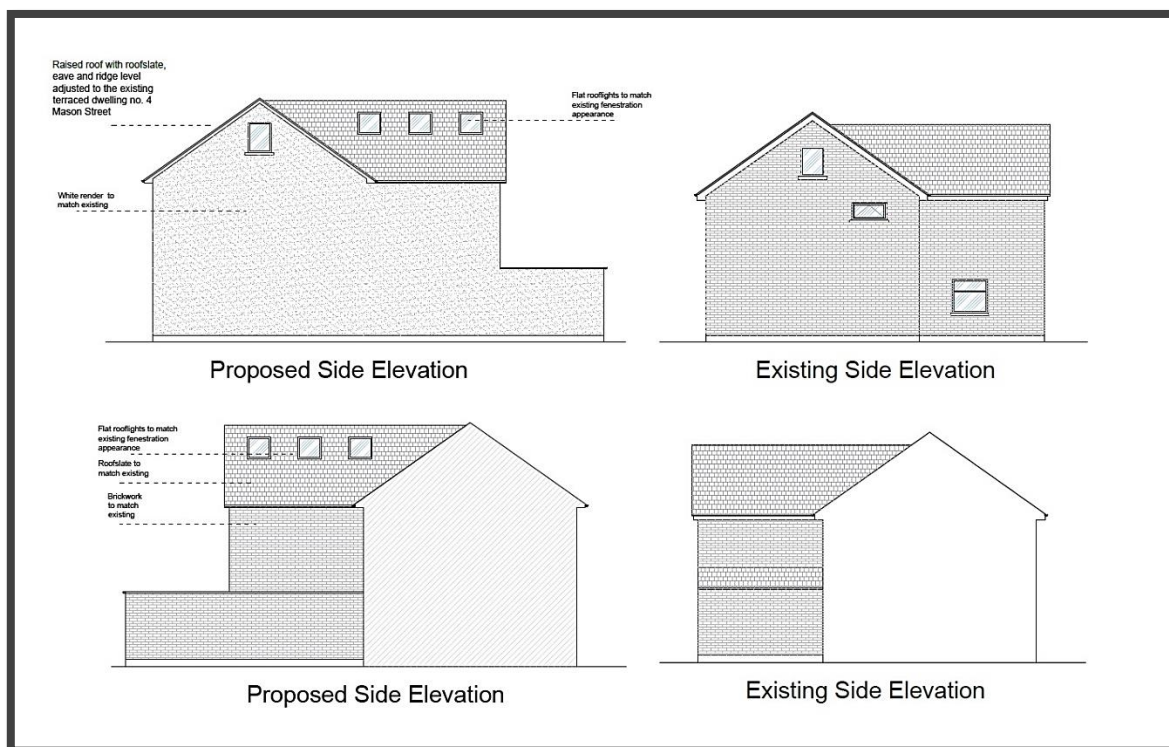


6. Existing and proposed front and rear elevations

Notwithstanding the above, the most crucial advantage of the proposed development would be raised roof, which would effectively be perfectly blended with the rest of terraced properties nos. 4-32 Mason



Street. Currently, the existing pitched roof is about 0.3m below the adjacent terraces level, which appears strange and at odds in relation to the uniformity of the neighbouring properties. Furthermore, the existing lowered eaves level negatively contributes to the neighbourhood's appearance as well. The proposed development would solve this issue through the erection of a raised roof, which would be perfectly and seamlessly blended with the existing ridge and eaves level of neighbouring terraced properties to the west. The extended and adjusted roof of the host dwelling would be considered more in keeping, therefore in connection with more contemporary design, it would appear well-balanced and more sympathetic upon the overall character of the established streetscene. The proposed alterations would be considered to successfully blend in within the residential character of the surrounding area. Below elevation drawings present the proposed amendments in comparison to the current form, with some additional, attractive and positive architectural details.



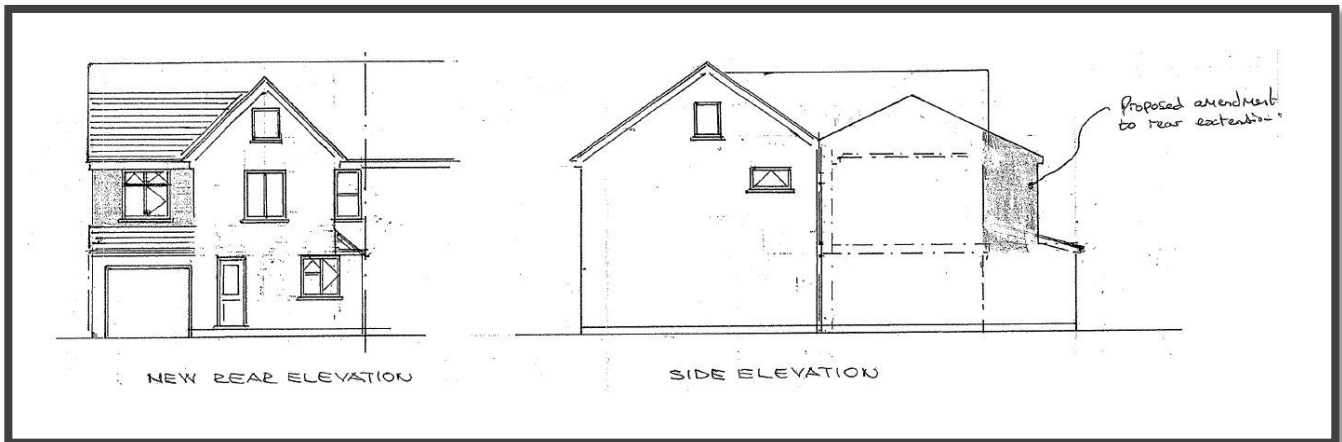
7. Existing and proposed side elevations

The combination of the proposed extensions is considered more coherent than the approved application for a part two part single storey extension in 2004 (ref. 04/00982/FUL/BP) presented on the picture 8, however it represents numerous enhanced aspects, which makes this proposal almost identical to recently approved proposal ref. 19053 :

- Sustainability of the proposed building with a positive impact upon climate change factors;
- Consistency in design, with more cohesive and well-balanced roof form;
- Lack of contrived, diverse roof angles and joints;



- Raised roof, which would provide a more sympathetic and cohesive design within the Mason Street streetscene.



8. Proposed elevations from application approved in 2004

3.3. Impact on neighbours

Loss of Light and Overbearing

Due to the proposed dwelling's situation, overall scale and form of the proposed development and sufficient separation distances from the neighbouring properties, no adverse changes to current (or in comparison to the already approved development 190533) overbearing and overshadowing arrangement would be considered to arise.

Overlooking

Due to the proposed dwelling's situation and sufficient separation distances from the neighbouring properties, no adverse changes to current overlooking arrangement would be considered to arise. The proposed side rooflights would be installed 1.7m above the finished floor level, therefore no loss of privacy would occur.

Noise

Additionally, the proposal would redevelop the existing single dwelling, what would entail a significant improvement in terms of noise disturbance provision of appropriate insulation, in accordance with Approved Document E - Resistance to the passage of sound (amended 2015).

3.4. Transport, parking and access

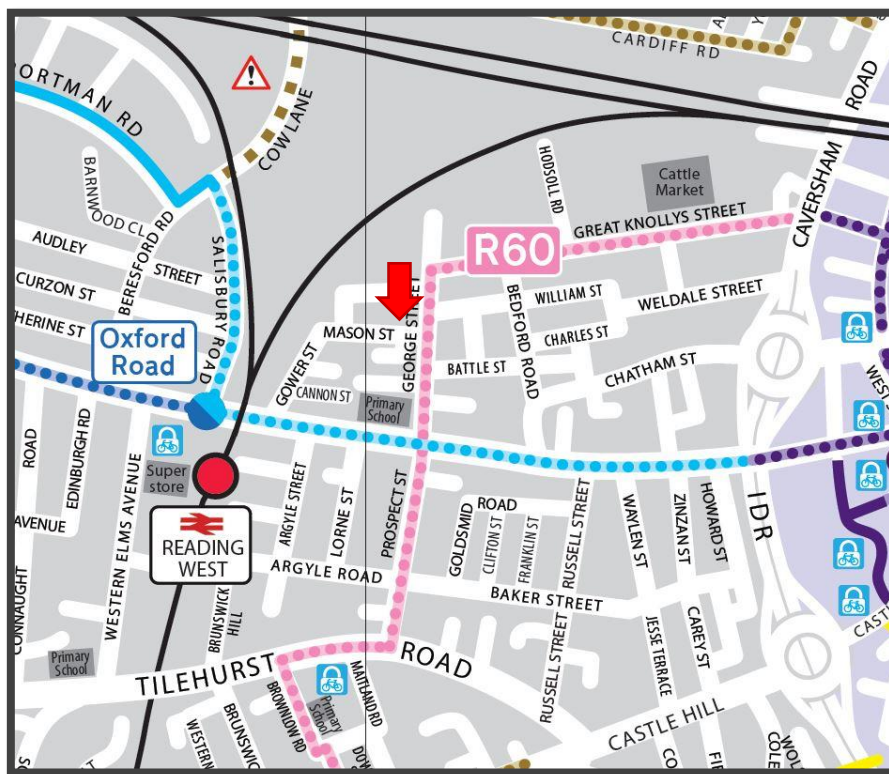
The proposed site is located in the western part of Reading Town Centre, on the northern side of Mason Street. Given close proximity from Oxford Road (250.0m - about 2 min walk), the application



property benefits from an extensive bus service including routes 15, 15a, 16, 17 and 143 with frequent links to Reading Centre and Wokingham Town Centre, Pangbourne, Upper Basildon and Calcot.

The application dwelling's close vicinity to Caversham Road provides vehicle access to the A329 and links with the M4 for towards the east to London and Wales to the west. The broad road networks around the site also provide huge choice and possibilities of cycle routes and walking paths in and around the area, from local amenities on Oxford Road to Reading Town Centre, which include wide range of services such as grocery shops, churches, temples, pharmacy, cafes, pubs, educational facilities, hospital or nursery. Range of services located within walking distance from the application site, makes it highly appropriate and sustainable for a residential development.

No. 2 benefits from an off-street parking in the front driveway and 2x vehicle specs in the car port – this arrangement would be retained within the proposed scheme. Additionally, the proposal includes lockable bike storage in the back, suitable for up to 5x bikes.



9. Cycle routes network map

3.5. Housing Mix

Policy H8 of the Reading BC Local Plan confirms that in case of proposal for self-contained flats conversions, it is required that, inter alia:

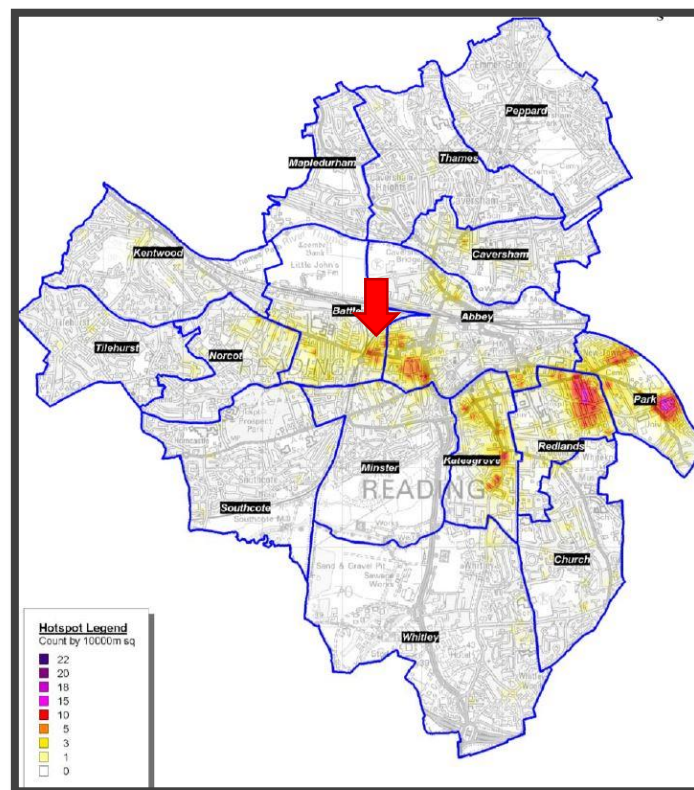
- “The property to be converted has four or more bedrooms or measures more than 120 m²;



- *At least 25% of the units formed and, where there are 4 or fewer units at least one unit of accommodation, should be suitable for family occupation with a minimum of two bedrooms;*
- *Individual units provide appropriate minimum internal floor standards and headroom in accordance with the Council's adopted minimum internal floorspace standards".*

Furthermore, 'Residential Conversions SPD' emphasises that "Any residential conversion must contribute to achieving an appropriately mixed and sustainable community by providing an acceptable housing mix, ensuring that, as appropriate, single family housing remains the dominant form of dwelling in the vicinity of the application".

It is considered that, as a result of the proposed development, the application property would stand in accordance with Residential Conversions SPD and Local Plan Policy H8. The proposal would comply in terms of housing mix guidance and requirements, due to provision of various affordable residential units, ideally suitable for young professionals or couples. Despite of 1-bed sizes, the proposed flats would result in increased number of more affordable units, positively contributing to the Council's Policy and in compliance with the NPPF. Furthermore, the application dwelling's location is considered extremely suitable to provide higher density of independent residential units, due to noticeable rate of existing HMOs within the closest vicinity (see below picture no. 10).



10. Distribution of HMOs across the Borough (Appendix 2 of Residential Conversions SPD).



In addition, picture no. 12 presents proposed floorplans of the application property. As required in Local Plan Policy H5, the host building originally included 4x bedrooms, therefore it is suitable for such conversion. Furthermore, the proposed internal space of about 197.0m², sufficient and appropriate for 3x flats:

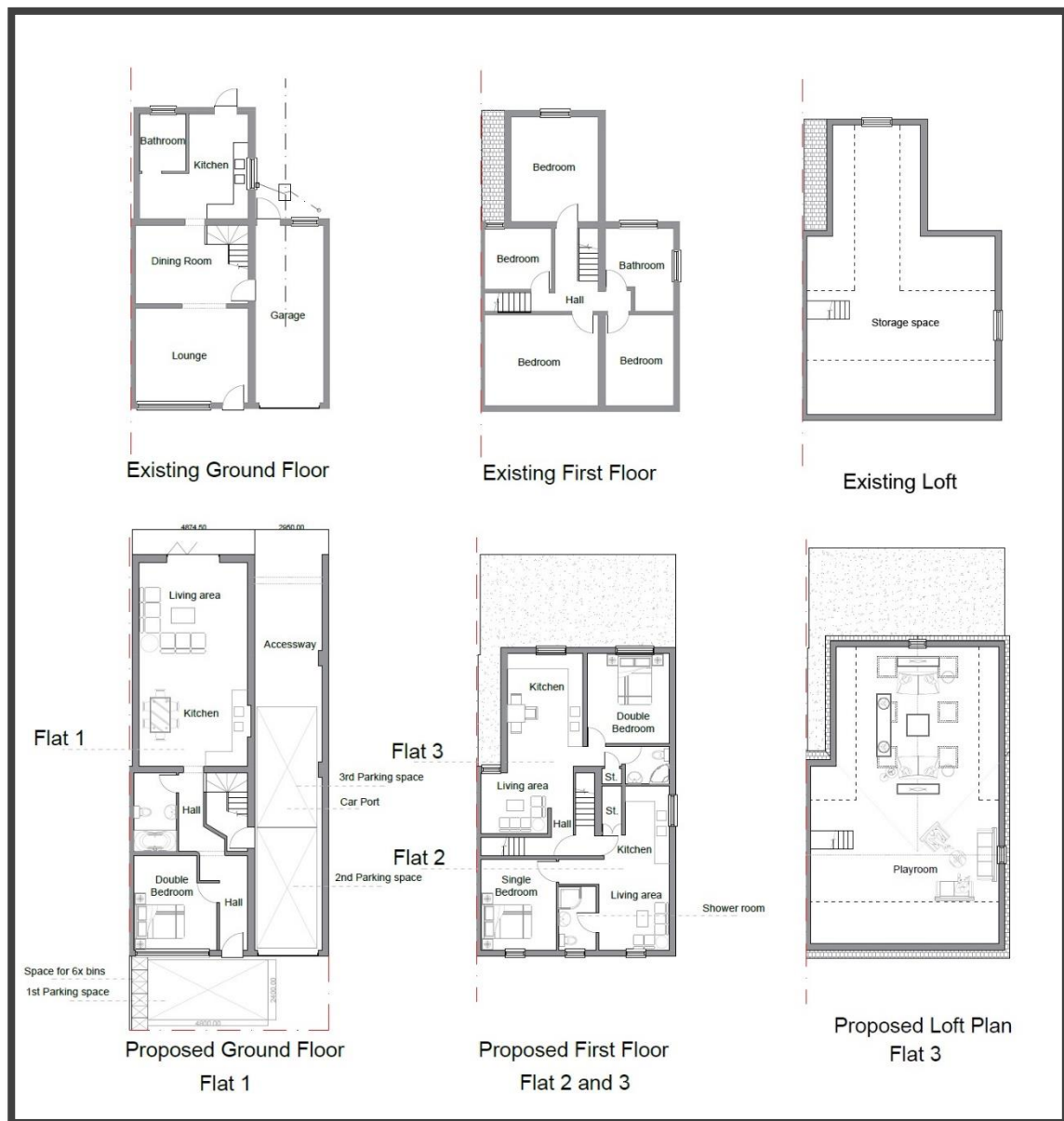
- Flat 1; 1x double bedroom (2 persons)– 63.0m² (ground floor);
- Flat 2; 1x single bedroom (with shower room) – 36.0m² (first floor);
- Flat 3; 1x double bedroom – 98.0m² (first floor and loft).

The layout provides appropriate level of privacy and living quality, due to appropriate internal ground and first floor arrangement with spacious loft accommodation. It is also confirmed by the attached table no. 11, which includes minimum internal space standards. It is therefore clear that all flats would be considered acceptable when compared with the 'Technical housing standards - nationally described space standard' adopted by Department for Communities and Local Government in March 2015. The proposal would also successfully meet requirements in terms of minimum height, storage area, bedrooms internal area and outdoor amenity space.

Number of bedrooms(b)	Number of bed spaces (persons)	1 storey dwellings	2 storey dwellings	3 storey dwellings	Built-in storage
1b	1p	39 (37) *			1.0
	2p	50	58		1.5
2b	3p	61	70		2.0
	4p	70	79		
3b	4p	74	84	90	2.5
	5p	86	93	99	
	6p	95	102	108	
4b	5p	90	97	103	3.0
	6p	99	106	112	
	7p	108	115	121	
	8p	117	124	130	
5b	6p	103	110	116	3.5
	7p	112	119	125	
	8p	121	128	134	
6b	7p	116	123	129	4.0
	8p	125	132	138	

11. Internal Space Standards (Technical housing standards - nationally described space standard, March 2015)





12. Existing and proposed floorplans.

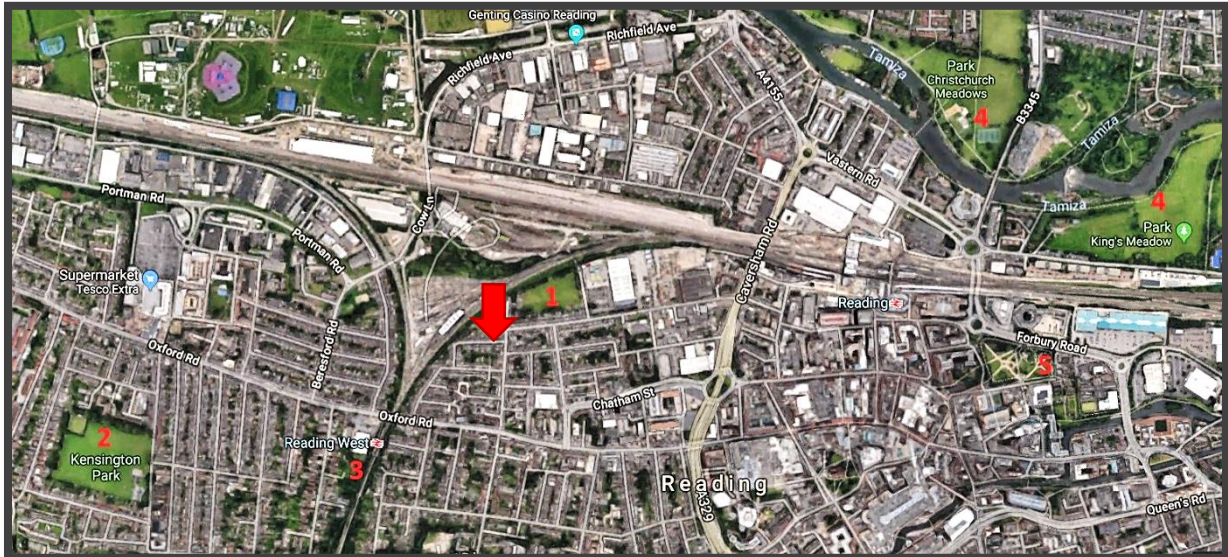
3.6 Amenity Space

It is acknowledged that the application property comprises a considerable outdoor amenity space of around 60.0m² (excluding two storey outbuilding – 32.0m²). It is considered that the proposal would stand in compliance with the Residential Conversion SPD, which states that any unacceptable reduction of amenity space should be avoided. Notwithstanding the above, the application site is located within close proximity of the Victoria Park (within 100.0m) and numerous green public spaces accessible within 20 min walk, presented on the below map. All recreational areas are of high quality, large and offering extensive activities (various sports, playgrounds, lake, or green open grass areas) and include:

1. Victoria Park;



2. Kensington Park;
3. Oxford Rd Community Garden;
4. Linear parks along river Thames;
5. Forbury Gardens.



13. Public parks within the area in walking distance of max. 20 min

4. Conclusion

By virtue of the scale and nature of the proposed development, it is considered that it would comply with the relevant parts of NPPF, Reading BC Core Strategy, Sites and Detailed Policies Document and with Residential Conversions SPD, therefore we kindly appeal, to approve the submitted application.

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1 Right Plan