



74 Bedford Rd, Reading, RG1 7HR

Proposed conversion of the existing building to 2x flats

Planning Statement

Author:

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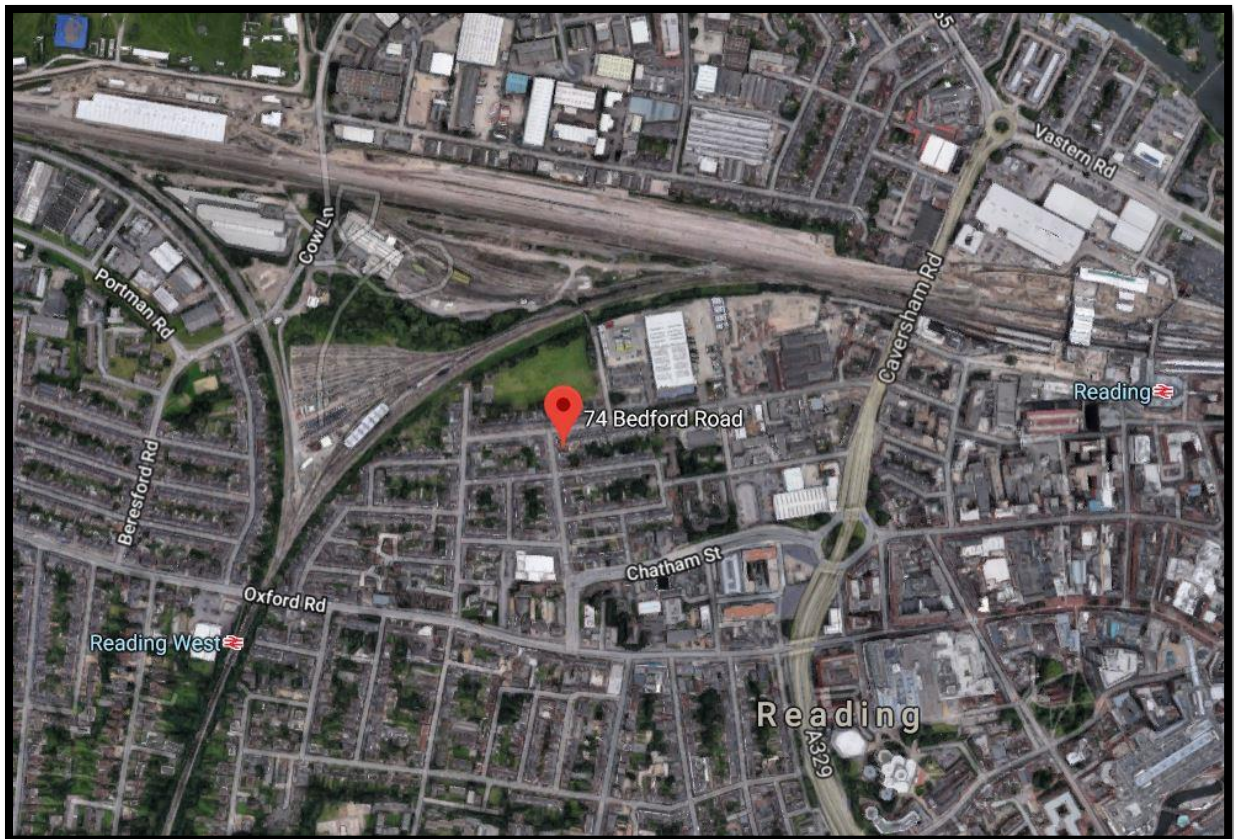
1. Introduction

1.1. Preface

This design statement has been prepared in support of a Full application for conversion of the existing single dwelling to 2x flats at 74 Bedford Rd, Reading, RG1 7HR.

The following statement covers the subject and information required for submission as set National Planning Policy Framework (July 2018) and Reading Borough Council Core Strategy, Residential Conversions Supplementary Planning Document. 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

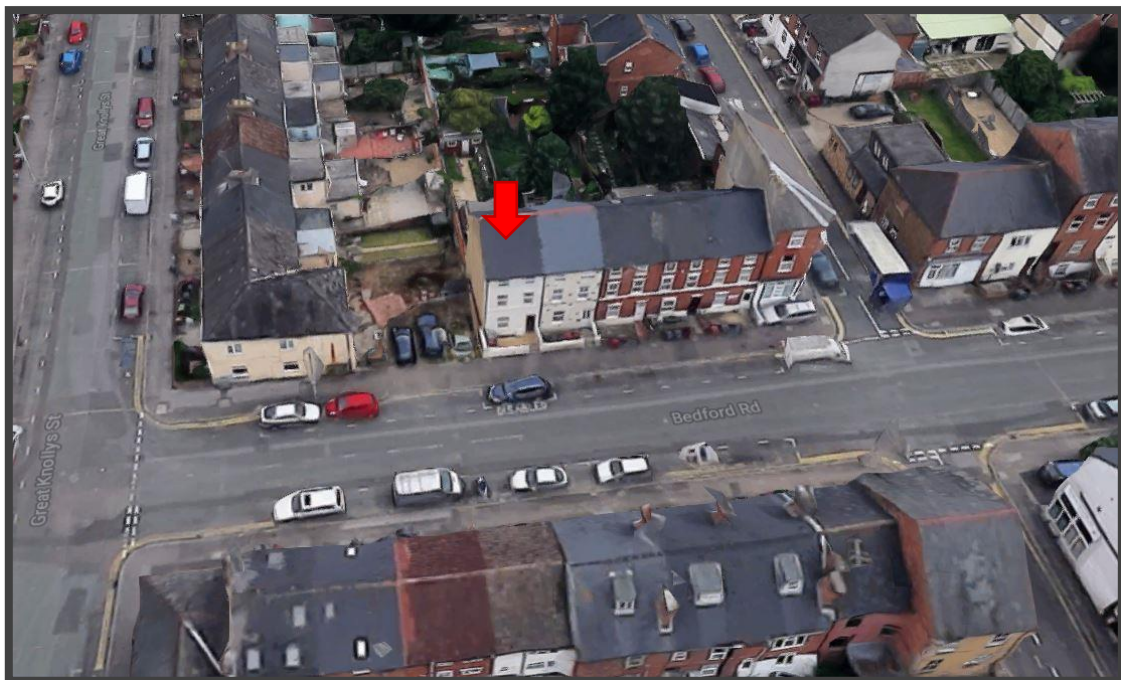


1. Aerial photograph





2. Bird's eye photograph (neighbourhood)



3. Bird's eye photograph (closest vicinity)

1.3. Site Description

The application site is located on the eastern side of Bedford Road, about 500.0m from the Reading Town Centre in between Reading Central and Reading West station. The application site is located within a group of similar terraced dwellings, unified in terms of their scale, roof forms, architectural details and design. No. 74 end of terrace property, sited approximately 10.0m from the adjacent properties on Great Knollys Street.



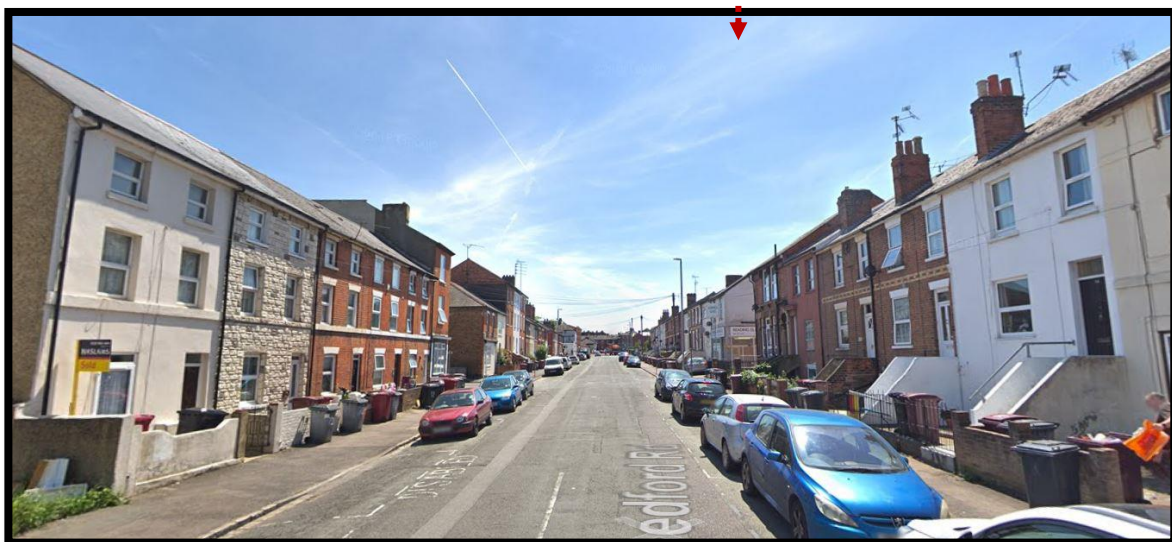
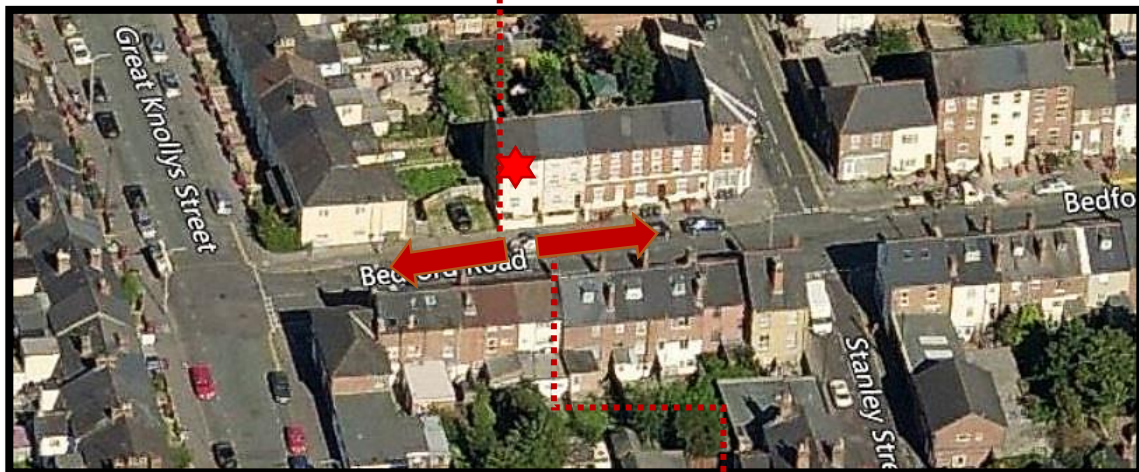
The site is occupied by a three storey residential building (Class Use C3), which is currently not occupied on a permanent basis. The host building comprises circa 56.5m² amenity space with some landscaping and an unused rear outbuilding. The entire area of the application property is circa 118.5m², where the host dwelling includes approximately 62.0m² footprint. There is no front driveway and parking arrangement is on-street. The building currently does not include any appropriate bike storage or any useable garden outbuilding. The application property is in majority exposed and visible from the public views along Bedford Road and Great Knollys Street, therefore its situation is considered prominent within the area.

The application property is an end-of-terrace unit, similar to adjacent buildings, however in comparison to the surroundings it benefits from an additional front elevation door with a ramp, in order to provide a sufficient entrance width and appropriate access for a wheelchair. The existing ground floor layout of the host property has been design to serve for an occupiers on a wheelchair, therefore the width of the rooms, doors and corridors has been increased to a proper standard and the internal furniture have been adjusted as well.



1.4. Surrounding Area Description

The majority of the Bedford Road streetscene is characterised by a unified type of development, repeatable design features and strongly uniformed roofscape with frontages arrangement.



4. Foxhill Road streetscene



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

- use (predominantly residential with some retail on the corner of Bedford Road and Great Knollys Street);
- type (terraced);
- fenestration and architectural details;
- roof forms (dual pitched);
- scale/footprint/volume;
- boundary treatment and driveways (low 1.0m brickwalls with pillars and metal gates, short front gardens, almost no landscaping);
- on-street parking.

The visual impression of strong uniformity of adjacent residential properties within the Bedford Road streetscene, has been presented on the above diagram.

2. Planning Policy

2.1. NPPF

Achieving Sustainable Development

Paragraph 7 of the NPPF (July 2018) 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 users; 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.Core Strategy



5. Local Plan Proposals Map

Residential redevelopment location

The application property is located within the settlement limits of Reading, therefore it stands in accordance with Core Strategy Policy CS6 ‘Settlement Boundary’, which states that *“No development will be permitted outside the settlement boundary as defined on the Proposals Map”*. Also, by virtue of its typically residential character, Core Strategy includes a clear assumption in favour of such redevelopment from industrial use, as described in this statement. Paragraph 3.26 states that *“In addition to the major development areas outlined above, development will continue to occur on previously developed land throughout the urban area in accordance with national government policy. Residual areas will be considered for allocation for redevelopment for mixed use or residential purposes”*.

Besides large developers’ investments, small-scale housing development has been strengthened in para 3.29, which emphasises that *“Although the spatial strategy focuses on the location of major development and the role of different areas of Reading, much of the development that occurs in the Borough is relatively small-scale and piecemeal and this is particularly true for housing development. A significant proportion of new homes result from infill and back land development, redevelopment of existing accommodation (both residential and commercial), conversion of larger properties to flats and the change of use of commercial buildings. The strategy expects this type of development to continue throughout the built-up area”*. Furthermore, it continues that *“National government policy seeks to enable this development to continue to make efficient use of urban land and to reduce the need to use greenfield sites.”*



Residential Conversions

The Core Strategy Policy CS18 is in favour for conversions for residential use. It has been confirmed in para 6.31 that such residential conversion *“does benefit the housing supply and mix of dwellings in the Borough”* and that the proposals should be appropriately justified in terms of *“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”*.

Accessibility

Number of Core Strategy Policies relate to sustainable development, such as CS3 and ‘Accessibility’ part or CS4 ‘Accessibility and the Intensity of Development’. Policy CS3 emphasises importance of sustainable communities – *“Planning has a key role to play in reducing the need to travel, in terms of shaping the pattern of development, and influencing the location, scale, density, design”* or in paragraph 4.27, which encourages to *“promote accessibility by alternative modes of transport, and reduce the need to travel by car”*.

Policy CS4 explains in paragraph 4.30 what 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.). In many parts of Reading (particularly the central area), it will be important to ensure that access to a range of facilities is unimpeded, and not affected by existing barriers (such as the River Thames, IDR and railway).”*

Design Quality

Policy CS7 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”*.

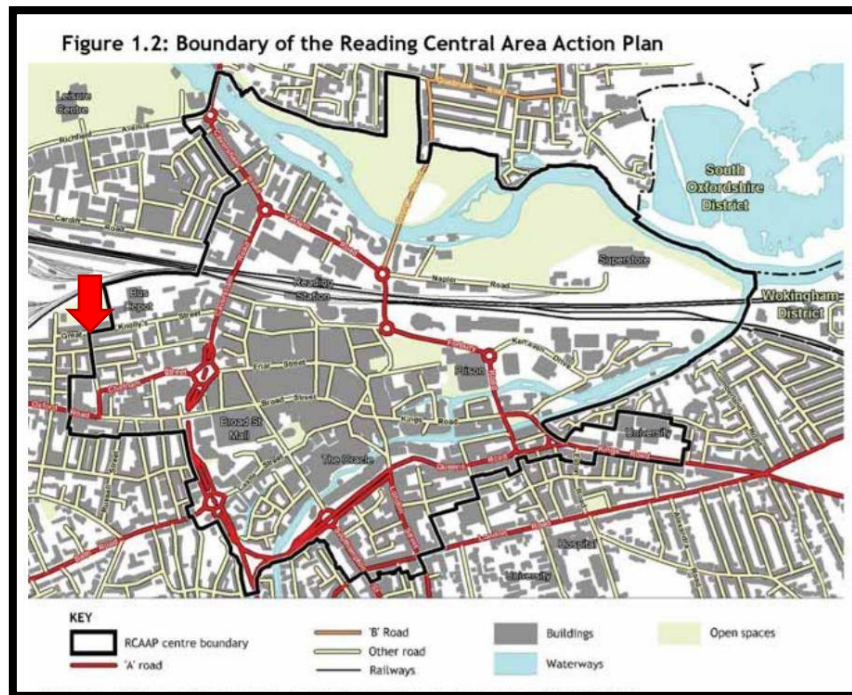
In addition, CS7 continues and encourages to ensure that proposed developments will *“positively to their local context and create or reinforce local character”* and *“are visually attractive as a result of*



good high quality built forms and spaces, the inclusion of public art and appropriate materials and landscaping”.

2.3. Reading Central Area Action Plan

The application property is location on the north-western edge of the abovementioned actions plan for the Reading Central Area – see map below.



5. Reading Central Area Action Plan – Location Map

Because of its location, a number of policies from the Reading Central Area Action Plan apply, where the most relevant for the above development are:

- Policy RC5: Design in the Centre;
- Policy RC9: Living in the Centre.

Importance of the design within the Reading Town Centre, is highlighted in Policy RC5, which provides three relevant for this application attributes, necessary to achieve a positive outcome:

- *“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 (...);*
- *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;*



-
- *Development should contribute to the diversity of the central area, be capable of easy adaptation over time (...)*

Policy RC9 Living in the Centre emphasises that *“Proposals for residential development within the central area will be assessed against the following criteria:*

- *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.*
- *ii). 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”.*

2.4. 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 a conversion of the existing three storey terraced dwellinghouse to 2x flats of improved design and sustainability, through the above proposal. The application property is characterized with a location within Reading settlement boundaries, which is strongly unified in terms of the design, where such residential conversions are acceptable in principle.

3.2. Impact on the Character of the Area

The proposed development would not result in any external extensions or any alterations in terms of its appearance, which would be visible from public views. Nevertheless, the existing internal layout would be significantly improved and some additional features would be provided, in order to meet requirements of well-designed flats, accordingly with the Core Strategy Policies or the Council's Supplementary Planning Documents. The proposal includes a replacement of existing bathroom window, within the existing single storey rear element. Besides this single amendment, the host property would retain its characteristic frontage appearance, residential character and improve quality of living of the future occupiers of the application property.

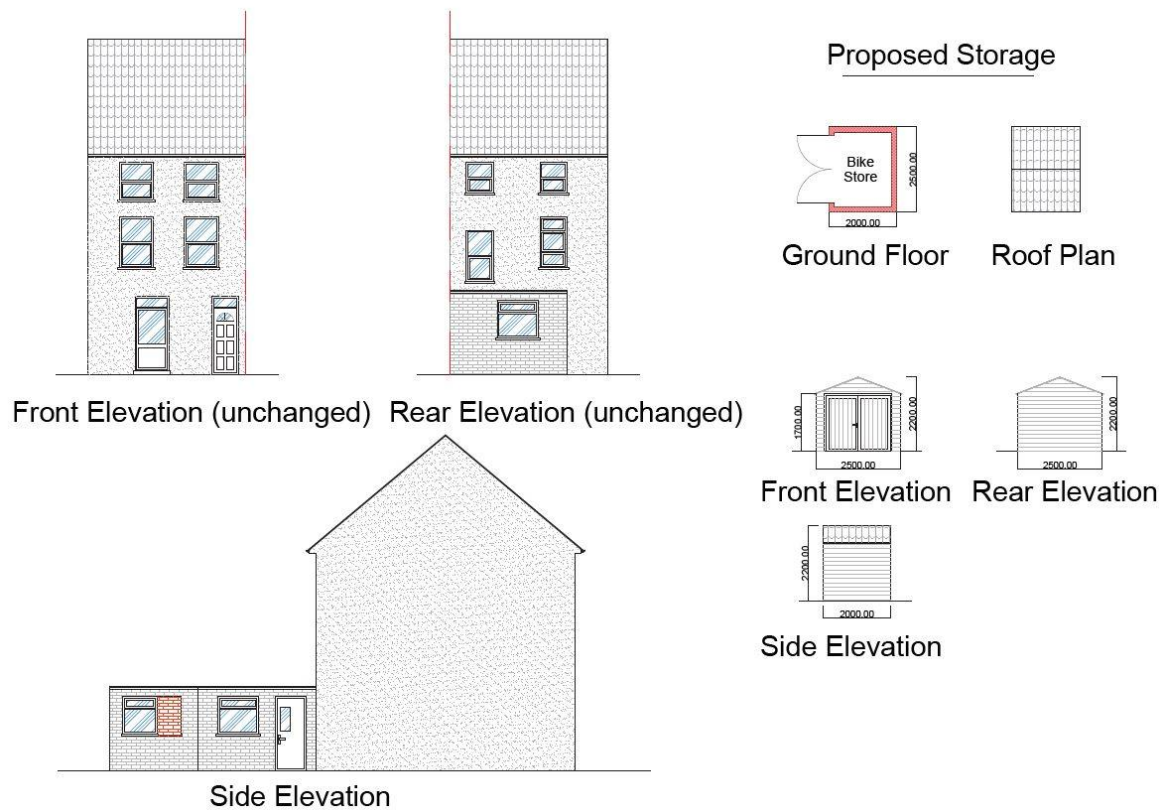
Notwithstanding the above, the most significant advantage of the proposed conversion, is a fact that it is materially identical as the current host building, in terms of the scale, mass, roof form and materials. Furthermore, it preserves the single storey rear extension in its current size, approved by the Reading Borough Council under reference 980947 on 20/10/1998. It is therefore considered that, by virtue of marginal external alterations, the proposal would comply with the Core Strategy Policies CS7 and CS18. Furthermore, the proposed converted building would respect the inter-relationship in the surrounding area and due to retained original development form, the proposal would not amend the current visual arrangement between adjacent buildings. Therefore, it is considered that the proposal would stand in accordance with the CS7 Policy, especially with regards to attributes related with urban design. Below elevation and floorplans drawings are presenting a marginal differences in comparison to the current form, with some additional, functional features for bins and bike storage.

3.3. Impact on neighbours

Loss of light, Overbearing and Overlooking

Due to the proposed dwelling's situation, overall unchanged scale and form of building and sufficient separation distances from the neighbouring properties, no adverse changes to current overlooking, overbearing and overshadowing arrangement would be considered to arise.





6. Existing and proposed elevations

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 eastern side of Bedford Road. 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 Wokingham 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. 74 benefits from an on-street parking on Bedford Road and adjacent streets. Additionally, the proposal includes lockable bike storage in the back and Sheffield stands in the front, for up to 6x bikes.

3.5. Housing Mix and Quality

Policy DM8 of Sites and Detailed Policies Document 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”.*

The same document comprises a crucial paragraph 16.17 for the disabled and older people accommodation, which says that *“With regard to housing, one of the key strategy objectives for the Council is to increase the availability of specialist accommodation especially for older people and disabled adults, with an emphasis on independence. Extra-care housing therefore forms a priority within the Council’s housing programme, as this offers a new way of supporting older people to live independently for as long as possible.”* The proposed development currently benefits from numerous features which meet the requirements of this paragraph, such as additional support in the bathroom, widened front access with ramp or winder than standard doors and corridors. This would be retained and would therefore contribute to the overall number of suitable accommodation for elderly or disabled residents of Reading, in compliance with Core Strategy Policy CS3 ‘Social Inclusion and Diversity’ which emphasises that *“Planning for social inclusion means planning for all age groups (...)”* and that *“New developments should be planned, located and implemented having regard to the varying needs of the population, including the elderly, disabled people and the young”.*

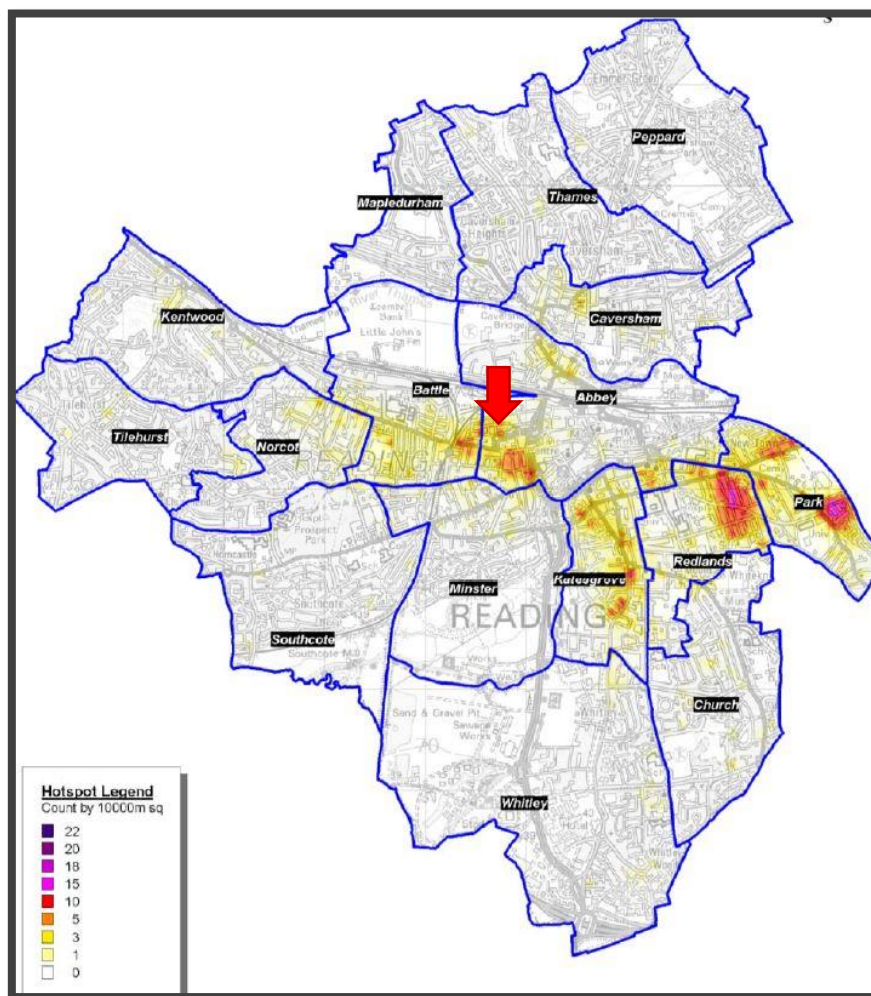
Furthermore, ‘Residential Conversions SPD’ emphasises that *“Any residential conversion must contribute to achieving an appropriately mixed and sustainable community by providing an acceptable housing mix, ensuring that, as appropriate, single family housing remains the dominant form of dwelling in the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

It is considered that, as a result of the proposed development, application property no. 74 Bedford Road would stand in accordance with Residential Conversions SPD, SDPD Policy DM18 and Core Strategy Policy CS18. The proposal would comply in terms of housing mix guidance and requirements,



due to provision of 100% family suitable residential units (at least two bedroom flats). Furthermore, the application dwelling's location is considered extremely suitable to provide more family units, due to one of the highest rate of existing HMOs within the closest vicinity (see below picture no. 7).

In addition, picture no. 8 presents proposed floorplans of the application property. As required in Policy DM8 of Sites and Detailed Policies Document, the host building includes an internal space of about 110.0m², sufficient and appropriate for 2x flats. The layout provides appropriate level of privacy and living quality, due to appropriate internal ground and first floor arrangement. The proposal would also successfully meet requirements in terms of minimum height, storage area and bedrooms internal area.



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





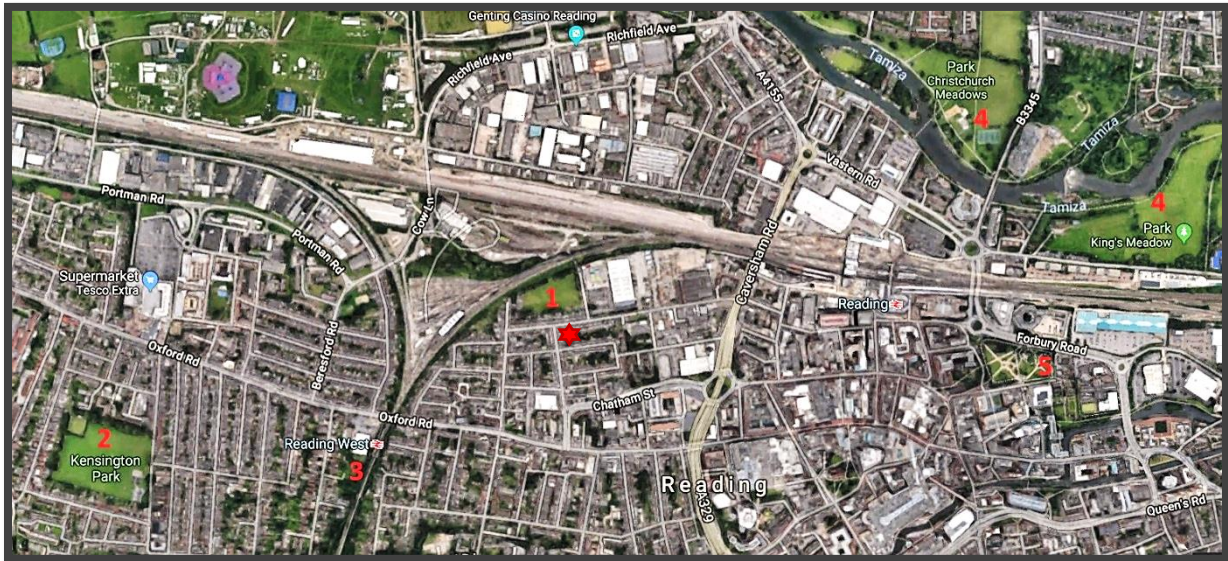
8. Proposed floorplans.

3.6. Amenity Space

It is acknowledged that the application property comprises a considerable outdoor amenity space of around 60.0m². It is considered that it 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.





9. Public parks within the area in walking distance of max. 20 mins.

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