



**CHANGE OF USE/ LISTED BUILDING CONSENT
CONVERSION TO 6 RESIDENTIAL APARTMENTS**

at 42 QUEENS ROAD

for Ivy Crescent Limited

PLANNING DESIGN HERITAGE AND ACCESS

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1. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

- 1.1 This Planning Design Heritage and Access Statement supports planning and listed building consent applications by Ivy Crescent Ltd to change the use of 42 Queen's Road from professional offices/ employment agency (use class A2) to residential (use class C3) and to form 6 apartments within the existing building.
- 1.2 It has been prepared by GW Planning with input from the developers and from the project designer Rammurti Design Ltd.

Site Location

- 1.3 42 Queens Road is within the Southern part of Reading Town Centre. It is in the middle of Queens Crescent a listed group of early Victorian buildings fronting onto a dual carriageway (A329) that forms a section of the inner ring road providing access to and around the main town uses.



Queens Crescent, Queens Road

- 1.4 42 Queens Road was originally built as a residential property. In recent years there has been mostly office/ employment agency use of all four levels (three storeys plus basement). At the rear and with access via Livery Close there is a single storey modern office extension and a parking/ service yard
- 1.5 The recent owner/ occupier has been a charitable organisation (Latitude Global Volunteering) who have relocated to more modern offices.



Rear extension seen from parking area

- 1.6 The site is in very close proximity to the full range of Reading Town Centre employment and services and within a short walk of Reading Rail Station and town centre bus stops. It is also within easy walking distance of the Royal Berkshire Hospital and the University's London Road campus. It is viewed as particularly suited to accommodate young single professionals.

Proposal

- 1.7 The proposal seeks to change the use of the existing building to residential apartments (use class C3) intended for private rental. The design approach has been to re-use the existing listed building in a sensitive manner with minimum intervention avoiding any significant structural alterations.
- 1.8 The listed building itself is proposed to be converted into 4 apartments, one at each floor level. This arrangement is particularly well suited to make efficient use of the floorspace available without significant structural alterations. It will allow four one bedroom apartments, 3 of these with a floorspace meeting national space standards guidance, to be created in the old building.
- 1.9 At the rear the modern single storey building currently provides a single open area lit by a full length central rooflight and windows at each end. It is proposed to convert this area into two smaller studio apartments. Although these will each be compact (27m²) in floor area they would not be untypical of smaller rental flats available in existing Reading town centre buildings.
- 1.10 The total of 6 new apartments will help to meet local housing needs and demands in a highly sustainable location.
- 1.11 A covered cycle store and bin store are proposed within the existing rear yard/service area. This area will also continue to provide some limited car parking provision with 4 spaces available.

Heritage Considerations

- 1.12 Queens Crescent (24-52 Queens Road) is listed at Grade II. The listing mainly refers to the significance of the frontage as an early Victorian crescent. No interior features are noted as of significance within the statutory listing. The stone façade and sash windows on the front elevation appear to be original. These would be retained and conserved. No changes (other than repairs) are proposed to the frontage above ground level. An existing pavement light/lightwell at the front of the basement is proposed to be enlarged with two new windows inserted. The amended frontage to the basement level will be screened from view by a grid over the enlarged lightwell.

- 1.13 An inspection of the building (described in a further section of this statement) has taken place to check for any surviving interior features of note. This indicates that the interior finishes and fixtures appear to have been extensively reworked during the 20th Century with limited evidence of original interior details or finishes.
- 1.14 As more fully described by the submitted plans and by the design section of this statement the internal structure of the listed building will be retained, with limited change only where necessary to provide new doorways. New lightweight partition walls will allow shower rooms to be inserted for each apartment.
- 1.15 The extent of alterations proposed are considered appropriate and limited to those works that are essential to achieve a positive re-use of the building as apartments.

Environmental Matters

- 1.16 The existing offices have modern internal secondary glazing which significantly mitigate the traffic noise and air pollution from Queens Road. This secondary glazing will be retained (or replaced) so that the interior will continue to be well screened. For all the proposed frontage apartments, sufficient ventilation provisions mainly related to the rear of the building will be provided, so that the (North facing) windows onto Queens Road do not need be opened. This will ensure suitable air quality for the new residents.
- 1.17 Following the recent conversion of neighbouring properties (at 38 and 40) to residential use there are immediate residential neighbours to be considered. The proposals will not involve any new windows overlooking adjoining properties nor any extensions that could affect light or outlook for neighbouring windows.
- 1.18 The four apartments proposed within the listed building will all make use of existing window openings. The first and second floor apartments will enjoy particularly good levels of lighting and outlook for a town centre location each having three windows fronting Queens Road and one facing to the rear. The ground floor apartment has one very large arched frontage window and a rear window to an external lightwell.

- 1.19 At basement level it is proposed to enlarge an existing window to the bottom of the same lightwell to improve lighting levels and to allow the base of the lightwell to be accessed as a small external courtyard amenity area for the basement apartment. The front of the basement has an existing pavement light/well. This is proposed to be opened out to provide a larger external lightwell, with a grid guard above. The basement wall will be amended with two new windows facing into the open well serving the kitchen/ living area of the basement apartment. A similar lightwell upgrade has been providing for basement residential use as approved at No 40 .
- 1.20 The two smaller studio apartments proposed in the modern rear block will have good levels of sunlight/ daylight mainly from upgraded clerestory rooflights. One of these studios also has large windows facing to the parking area. The other has a large window to the lightwell between the old building and the newer extension.
- 1.21 Like most of central Reading the application site is indicated by the Environment Agency as in Flood Risk Zone 2 (low potential risk of 1 in 100 yr flood event) being within 100m of the River Kennett. In practice there has been no previous record of any flooding at the crescent and the existing basement at no. 42 has been used for dry storage (including paper records).
- 1.22 A full flood risk assessment carried out in respect of another of the buildings on the crescent has previously demonstrated by detailed assessment that risks of flooding will be very low for the immediate site vicinity. Marginal risks can be further mitigated by appropriate basement waterproofing and drainage arrangements. Residential use (including basement level) has recently been approved at no 40 and the current proposals follow this recent precedent in terms of technical provisions.

Summary

- 1.24 The application scheme follows a number of recent neighbour precedents for conversions back to residential use. As explained fully in the following sections of this report, the proposals have been carefully considered and are appropriate to make best use of the existing listed building in a sensitive manner. They represent sustainable development in full accordance with national and local

planning policies and will make a relevant and positive contribution to meeting the needs and demands for more 'urban living' in Reading Town Centre.

2 SITE CONTEXT.

Location

- 2.1 The site is situated at the Southern edge of Reading Town Centre on the South side of Queens Road (A329) which is a major dual carriageway route serving and allowing access around the town centre. The surrounding land uses include modern residential apartments immediately opposite the site frontage with the full range of Reading's main town centre uses to the North.



Site location plan

- 2.2 The site is within 250m of the Oracle shopping centre and within 500m of most of the town centre retailing, offices and public buildings, It is also within 500m of the Royal Berkshire Hospital and the University's London Road campus.

- 2.3 This central location is highly sustainable, allowing access to a very wide range of services and activities by walk or cycle. There are bus stops within 250m of the site on London Road, Duke Street, Kings Road, Market Place and Minster Street, and Reading Rail Station is within 900m.

- 2.4 Rear vehicular access to the site is available via Livery Close.

Application Building

- 2.5 42 Queens Road is within Queens Crescent , a curving, early Victorian terrace which is statutorily listed at grade II. A full description of the building is provided by the Heritage section of this document.



Queens Crescent

- 2.6 Queens Crescent was built as residential property, but during the 20th Century much of this was converted to commercial uses (most typically for professional services). In many cases (including 42) office extensions have been constructed and parking areas provided to the rear over former garden areas.

- 2.7 The adjacent property no.40 Queens Road has recently been converted back to residential use and no. 38 beyond is complete with two units sold for a similar change of use. No 44 to the other side of the application site remains in office use.
- 2.8 The application site was until recently owned and occupied by Latitude Global Volunteering, a registered charity. This organisation had been operating at the premises for around 20 years with the older part of the building being partly occupied at some time as shared (student volunteer) living accommodation and with open plan offices in an extension to the rear. Latterly the building has been fully in office/ agency use with reception and interview rooms at the front and support offices at the rear. The organisation has now relocated to modern serviced office premises reflecting the fact that the old premises were no longer suited to their requirements.
- 2.9 The property has been recently sold by Savills acting for the charity. They advise that the property was placed into a closed bid process with Savills Commercial Property Management services in the first quarter of 2018, and received a total of 8 bids, 100% of which were from developers who were planning to convert the Grade II Georgian building from its current commercial use into full residential use with the intention to develop the building into several units. They did not receive a bid which looked to retain the building as a commercial unit.
- 2.10 This recent market experience at 42 (of an office user departing for more modern premises, of a lack of interest from office purchasers and of strong market interest in residential conversion) follows and reinforces the cases made previously in respect of the successful change of use applications for residential to replace office use at nos. 38 and 40.

Planning Applications History

- 2.11 The only applications made in respect of 42 Queens Road since 1988 have been listed building consent applications in respect of new doorways linking between 42 and 44. Application 013027 (approved August 2001) was submitted by Latitude who owned both buildings at that time.

- 2.12 Latitude subsequently sold 44 Queens Road. Application 091815 (approved December 2009) granted permission for these same doorways to be infilled.
- 2.13 The adjacent property 40 Queens Road has been the subject of numerous recent change of use and listed building applications and approvals since 2015 relating the progressive change of this building from a clinic (D1 use) to residential apartments.
- 2.14 The most recent of these, now implemented, have been;
 -to convert the modern single storey rear extension to one residential apartment. Application 160290 and related listed building approval 160291 were approved in July 2016
 -to convert upper floors into two apartments. Applications 161611 and 161612 were approved in November 2016.
 -to convert ground and basement levels of the original building to a duplex apartment. Applications 161614/15 were approved in January 2017.
- 2.15 Another recent precedent application of relevance is that in respect of the change of use of 38 Queens Road from offices to 6 self-contained apartments. Applications 170164/5 were approved in May 2017.
- 2.16 Subsequent to this approval the applicants applied for the removal of a planning condition requiring works to achieve compliance with BREEAM sustainability standards. The removal of this condition was approved with the planning authority accepting that it would be impracticable to demonstrate achieving such standards without significant and inappropriate interventions adversely affecting the listed building.
- 2.17 In respect of 44 Queens Road there have been no recent planning or listed building applications since approval of an aerial in 2001. Prior to this there were approvals for refurbishment of the building and for a porch extension in 1990/92.
- 2.18 From the recent planning history it is clear that there are immediate neighbouring precedents for the conversion of properties on Queens Crescent to residential apartments.

- 2.19 These precedents include conversions to achieve self-contained apartments at 38 and 40, both including residential use of basement areas.

Environmental Considerations

Statutory Environmental Assessment

- 2.20 The proposal does not include any of the specific uses for which a Statutory Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is required, nor does it exceed the threshold above which the question of whether EIA is appropriate has to be considered by applicant and planning authority.

Air Quality

- 2.21 The site falls within a designated Air Quality Management Area (extending along the main routes around and from the Town Centre including Queens Road) within which special attention is focused on reducing levels of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) and Particulates (PM₁₀) both primarily related to traffic emissions. Recent monitoring within the AQMA indicates that conditions are currently being maintained at acceptably low levels of pollution.
- 2.22 The nature of the proposed development is such that it will provide living accommodation within very easy walking and/or cycling distance of a wide range of Town Centre and central Reading facilities.
- 2.23 The scheme is likely to slightly reduce trip generation and car use compared to the previous offices, and does not increase car parking numbers on the site. Sustainable development re-using town centre buildings will help reduce the need for vehicular travel and will contribute marginally positively to Air Quality Management.
- 2.24 Emissions from the proposed modern electric heating system will be minimal, with a reduction from the removal of an existing gas boiler/ flue.
- 2.25 From an air quality perspective the principal issue in this case will not be the external effects of the scheme on its surroundings but rather the conditions

experienced by new residents, especially in respect of those rooms fronting onto Queens Road where the effects on air quality of traffic emissions are of greatest significance.

- 2.26 Queens Road carries moderate levels of two way (dual carriageway) traffic including Heavy Goods and Public Transport vehicles. It is fronted by existing residential property including Victorian homes around the application site and modern residential development opposite.
- 2.27 For the Queens Road frontage it is proposed to detail the conversion in such a manner that the frontage windows (which above ground level cannot be changed as they are significant to the heritage asset) need not be opened. They have existing internal secondary glazing providing a good seal. Alternative means of ventilation taken from and to the rear of the building will ensure that conditions for new residents within the building are expected to be acceptable in terms of acknowledged standards

Noise

- 2.28 The change of use is not expected to generate any additional external noise impacts.
- 2.29 The main external source of noise affecting the development site is traffic on Queens Road.
- 2.30 The frontage windows of the existing building have secondary glazing fitted internally. A noise survey carried out in respect of the conversion of no.38 demonstrated that similar secondary glazing there achieves a substantial reduction (approx 45db) in traffic noise such that traffic is not readily noticeable from within the building. Based on this very close comparator it is proposed to retain the secondary glazing to ensure that internal noise levels continue to meet the relevant standards. New windows to be inserted at basement level will also be double glazed but are in any case substantially shielded from noise by their positioning.

2.31 The application site is not within any statutorily or locally designated area of interest for nature conservation, landscape or special scientific interest.

2.32 The site does not include any trees or planting, being wholly covered by buildings and areas of hardstanding.

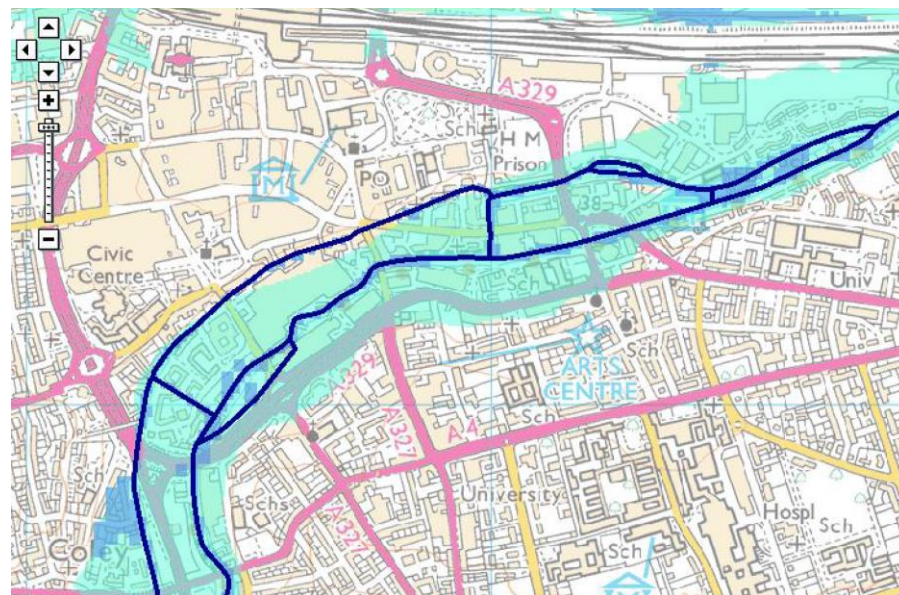
2.33 The application site is wholly occupied by maintained buildings and associated hard surfaced areas. In these circumstances it is evident that the site does not offer any significant existing eco habitat.

2.34 The site is approximately 100m from the River Kennet and in common with substantial parts of central Reading the site is within flood risk Zone 2 as designated by the Environment Agency's risk mapping. This status is such that more detailed Flood Risk Assessment is appropriate to more accurately determine site specific risks of flooding and any appropriate mitigation measures.

2.35 The EA online national mapping shows the application site to have a 'very low' probability of flooding. In practice the application site has no known history of flooding. The basement at no. 42 has been used as dry document storage for many years.

2.36 A full flood risk assessment was undertaken by Peter Brett Associates previously in respect of another property on Queens Crescent (no.28 Queens Road). This assessment was considered and accepted by Reading Borough Council as planning authority in respect of applications submitted in 2007-9 (application ref 070862 and subsequent variants). This document remains available to the planning authority and has been referred to by subsequent planning applications/ approvals including those at 38 and 40.

2.37 In essence this flood risk assessment concluded that a computer modelled 1 to 100 year risk event flood level would rise to 37.5m above ordnance datum when assessed for the Queens Crescent location. This is well below the actual ground level of 49.46m at the application site giving a significant margin of safety above the modelled level of flood risk at all levels including the basement.



Basic EA flood risk map-Queens Crescent just inside the indicative risk zone.

2.38 The rising ground to the South and East of the site also allows safe evacuation at all times.

2.39 Since the 2007 assessment the EA has generally increased the modelled allowances to allow for increased estimates of climate change effects. This remodelling may have reduced the margin of safety very slightly but will not change the basic conclusion that the application site is well above the level of modelled potential flood risk.

2.40 The proposals include continued use of the basement level. The detailed design of drainage arrangements will ensure robust protection of the basement level

from the highest potential levels of groundwater and from extreme storm (surface water run-off) conditions.

Neighbour Amenity

- 2.41 The application site has existing residential neighbours adjacent to the West at no. 40. They are separated from the application site by an original structural solid party wall between the listed buildings and by two separate cavity walls (with an air gap between) between the later rear extensions.
- 2.42 None of the application site building windows face over the neighbouring property and no extensions are proposed.
- 2.43 Queens Road is a dual carriageway and the distance across the road between the existing frontage windows at 42 and those of homes opposite at Kings Oak Courts is substantial at approximately 27 metres.
- 2.44 In these circumstances neighbours will not suffer any significant loss of privacy, increased overlooking or loss of sunlight/ daylight.

3 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

National

- 3.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was updated in July 2018
- 3.2 The NPPF has since 2012 represented a distillation rather than significant alteration of most previous guidance with additional emphasis on neighbourhood planning and housing delivery following the new provisions of recent Localism, Housing and Planning Acts.
- 3.3 The government is now embarking on a process of updating relevant sections of the online National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) which has been published from March 2014. This replaced the majority of previous supporting planning technical guidance which has now been withdrawn.
- 3.4 Prior to the NPPF it was not always easy to discern the balances to be struck as between the many issues covered by planning advice produced at different dates and with differing emphasis. The NPPF document provides more focus. Although the central concept of 'sustainable development' is repeated from previous guidance it is adjusted to emphasise delivering growth and positive economic, social and environmental change.
- 3.5 NPPF guidance relevant in this case includes;
Paras 7-14 Achieving Sustainable Development-Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development clarify the role of planning to help achieve a strong, responsive and competitive economy, strong, vibrant and healthy communities providing housing and a high quality built environment with accessible local services, and to protect and enhance natural, built and historic environment and biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy. The NPPF asserts a presumption in favour of sustainable development. It encourages planning authorities to "plan positively" and to act

by "approving proposals that accord with an up to date development plan without delay"

Paras 38-58 Decision-Making state that "Local Planning Authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way.....work proactively with applicants to secure development that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions in the areaand....Decision-makers at every level "should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible". Para 55 notes that " Planning conditions should be kept to a minimum and only imposed where they are necessary, relevant to planning and to the development to be permitted, enforceable, precise and reasonable in all other respects."

Paras 59-79 Delivering a Sufficient Supply of Homes require plans to support the Government's objective of "significantly boosting the supply of homes" informed by a local housing needs assessment. Within this context "the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies (including but not limited to, those who require affordable housing, families with children, older people, students, people with disabilities, service families, travellers, people who rent their homes and people wishing to commission or build their own homes" Para 68 notes the importance of small and medium sized sites which "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 take actions including "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."

Paras 80-84 Building a Strong, Competitive Economy require that "planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development" They should "set out a clear local economic vision and strategy"; "set criteria, or identify strategic sites, for local and inward investment"; "seek to address potential barriers to investment, such as inadequate infrastructure, services or housing, or a poor

environment”, and “be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan and to enable a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances”.

Paras 85-90 Ensuring the Vitality of Town Centres urge planning policies and decisions to support the role that town centres at the heart of local communities by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation. Amongst other actions policies should “recognize that residential development often plays an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres and encourage residential development on appropriate sites.”

Paras 91-101 Promoting Healthy Communities encourage healthy, inclusive and safe places, which promote social interaction, are safe and accessible and enable and support healthy lifestyles, including encouraging walking and cycling.

Paras 102-111 Promoting Sustainable Transport requires transport issues to be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making. “Significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of travel modes”, and “support an appropriate mix of uses across an area....to minimise the number and length of journeys needed for employment, shopping, leisure, education and other activities”

Paras 117-123 Making Effective Use of Land requires “an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, whilst safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions”. Policies and decisions should (amongst other actions) “promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings, especially if this would help meet identified needs for housing...” The framework encourages planning authorities to allow more intensive development to make efficient use of land including “when considering applications for housing, authorities should take a flexible approach in applying policies relating to daylight and sunlight, where they would result in making efficient use of a site (as long as the resulting scheme would provide acceptable living standards).”

124-132 Achieving Well-Designed Places include the guidance 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.” Developments should “function well and add to the overall quality of the area...”, be “visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping”, be “sympathetic to local character and history....whilst not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities).”. “establish or maintain a strong sense of place ” ..optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development”.....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”.

Paras 184-202 Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment requires local plans to set out “a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of heritage assets”. Planning applicants should “describe the significance of any heritage assets affected...” and “The level of detail should be proportionate to the asset’s importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance”. As well as considering “the desirability of sustaining and enhancing heritage assets” planning authorities should also take account of “the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities”.....as well as the “..desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness”. Paragraph 196 notes that “Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimal use.”

Assessment of the proposals in respect of the National Planning Policy Framework

- 3.4 *The overall thrust of the NPPF encourages positive change and ‘sustainable development’.*
- 3.5 *42 Queens Road is a listed building within a town centre. It is within easy walking distance of town centre activity and well served by public transport. The provision of new apartment accommodation in such a building and location will support town centre vitality relevant to economic progress and to social and environmental sustainability.*

3.6 *The NPPF requires requires planning authorities to plan for the needs of different groups within the community-in this case town centre living rental accommodation targeted at single professionals is proposed in a particularly relevant location.*

3.7 *The proposals take full account of heritage and environmental considerations as required by the NPPF. They will re-use a listed building making appropriately intensive use of a highly accessible site.*

Statutory Development Plan

3.8 The adopted statutory development plan for Reading comprises the adopted Core Strategy (2008 with alteration adopted 2015) and the adopted Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012 also with 2015 alterations).

Core Strategy

3.9 The Core Strategy sets out the strategy and principles for development in the Borough until 2026. It sets a vision for significant and sustainable growth, to develop the role of Reading as a significant growth point within its sub-region.

3.10 Core Strategy policies relevant to this planning application include;

Policy CS1 (Sustainable Construction and Design). This states that new development will be acceptable where design of buildings and layouts uses energy, water, minerals, materials and natural resources appropriately efficiently and with care and takes account of climate change;

Policy CS1 sets minimum standards of Eco-Homes 'Very Good' or BREEAM 'Very Good' and requires water conservation measures, sustainable drainage and (for larger projects) on site generation, CHP or energy efficiency measures to offset at least 20% of Carbon Dioxide emissions;

Policy CS2 (Waste Minimisation) requires developments to demonstrate how waste will be minimised and managed in construction and use of buildings;

Policy CS3 (Social Inclusion and Diversity) requires accessibility to services and facilities and to consider and contribute to the distinctiveness of the social and

cultural diversity of the community context;

Policy CS4 (Accessibility and The Intensity of development) encourages the scale and density of development to be proportionate to the site's levels of pedestrian and public transport accessibility to centres and services;

Policy CS5 (Inclusive Access) requires suitable access for all users including disabled people;

Policy CS7 (Design and the Public Realm) requires high design quality that maintains or enhances character and appearance of its locality, and achieves urban design objectives of character, continuity and enclosure, quality of public realm, ease of movement and permeability, legibility, adaptability and diversity;

Policy CS14 (Provision of Housing) targets an average of at least 572 dwellings per annum in 2006-2016 and 521 per annum in 2016-2026.

Policy CS15 (Location, Accessibility, Density and Housing Mix) encourages response to local context with a preference for higher density development in the most accessible locations;

Policy CS18 (Residential Conversions) states that "proposals to convert properties into self-contained flats or for multiple occupation 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."

Policy CS22 (Transport Assessments) requires proposals to ensure adequate accessibility and safety by all modes of transport but particularly by public transport, walking and cycling;

Policy CS24 (Car/cycle Parking) establishes maximum parking standards and cycle parking standards responsive to the accessibility of locations by sustainable modes;

Policy CS33 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment) states

that planning permission will only be granted where development has no adverse effect on historic assets and their settings;

Policy CS34 (Pollution and Water Resources) precludes development that would suffer unduly from or contribute to flood risk, water noise or air pollution and requires appropriate mitigation for contaminated land;

Policy CS38 (Trees, Hedgerows and Woodlands) protects trees and encourages additional tree planting.

Sites and Detailed Policies Document

3.11 The Sites and Detailed Policies Document (SDPD) adopted in 2012 and updated in 2015 allocates a number of specific sites for development and sets out detailed policies for development management.

3.13 The SDPD does not schedule any specific land use change allocation for the application site, but other detailed policies of general relevance to this application include:

Policy SD1 (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development) reinforces the NPPF and confirms a positive approach to planning, with planning applications that accord with the development plan being approved without delay unless material circumstances indicate otherwise;

Policy DM1 (Adaptation to Climate Change) requires development to demonstrate design to adapt to climate change, including orientation for natural heating and ventilation, resistance and resilience, use of trees and other planting to improve microclimates, and minimising surface water run-off.

Policy DM3 (Infrastructure Planning) requires appropriate contributions through planning obligations and/or CIL for relevant local infrastructure.

Policy DM4 (Safeguarding Amenity) seeks to protect the living environment of existing and new residential property in terms of avoiding undue overlooking/ loss of privacy, loss of sunlight/ daylight, dominance, noise, dust, vibration,

fumes or crime.

Policy DM8 (Residential Conversions) sets Borough wide standards that that:

“The proposal respects the physical character of the area and additionally 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 other residential properties arising from noise and disturbance in terms of the number and layout of units proposed and the proximity to other properties;”

“There is appropriate sound insulation between proposed and neighbouring units and layouts avoid 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”.

“The property to be converted has four or more bedrooms or measures more than 120 square metres gross”

“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”;

It is recognised however that exceptions may be made in respect of town centre sites where family housing may be inappropriate. Supporting supplementary guidance in respect of internal space standards refers closely to the governments national space standards but allows for exceptions may be made (in accordance with established local practice since 1994) to allow smaller single occupancy apartments within the town centre.

Policy DM10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space) states that dwellings should be provided with relevant, functional private or communal open space. It sets borough wide standards but recognises that exceptions may be made for new apartments in Central Reading

Policy DM18 (Tree Planting) requires provision for new tree planting on or off site to improve the amount of tree coverage, provide for biodiversity and help adapt to climate change.

Policy DM19 (Air Quality) requires attention to improving air quality and mitigating air pollution effects notably within Air Quality Management Areas

external space standards will be appropriate consistent with other town centre precedent approvals.

- 3.18 *The requirement to conserve the listed building (CS33) restricts the extent to which improvements can be made in respect of energy use, adaptation to climate change and disabled access.(CS1.CS2, CS3, CS34, DM1) .*

Overall assessment in respect of Compliance with Development Plan

- 3.14 *The proposals do not conflict with any allocations or proposals scheduled by the Development Plan. They fully reflect principles for sustainable development (CS1, SD1) and will make full use of a highly sustainable previously developed site (CS4, CS22) thus contributing to the overall vision for the growth of Reading. The provision of new homes for private rental in the town centre will help meet overall housing needs.*
- 3.15 *The proposals full account of the relevant development management policies. The proposed intensity of use is appropriate to the location (CS4, CS14, CS15), and relevant to help meet needs for more town centre rental housing supporting the further development of town centre growth and social progress, whilst taking full account of local environmental considerations (CS34,CS38, DM19)*
- 3.16 *The proposals will enhance a heritage asset (CS33), and have been carefully considered in terms of the quality of living conditions provided for new residents and maintaining amenity for existing neighbours (DM4, DM10),*
- 3.17 *The proposals are in general accordance with the Council's policies in respect of residential conversions (DM8) although the town centre site is not considered appropriate for family housing and as such exceptions to some of the internal and*

4 HERITAGE STATEMENT

Overview

- 4.1 National planning policies require careful attention to be given to the protection and enhancement of 'heritage assets'. NPPF Para 189 states that;

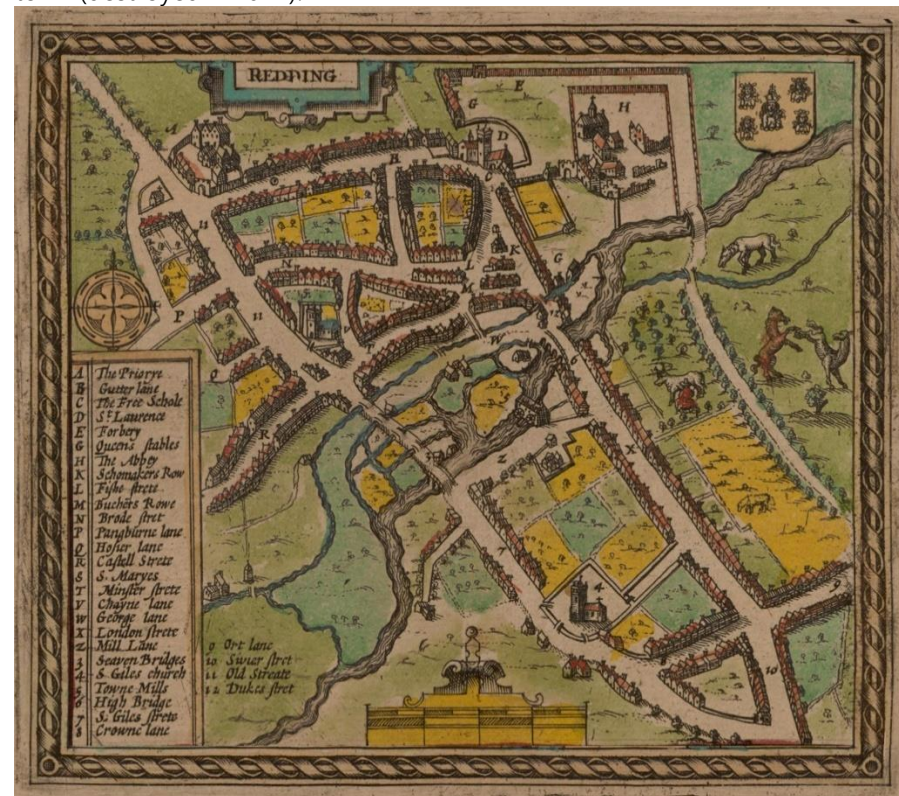
"In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should require a applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary..."

- 4.2 In this case reference has been made to the Berkshire Historic Environment Record. The application site is part of a designated heritage asset (listed building) but is not within a conservation area.

Site History General Summary

- 4.3 Reading may have existing in the Roman period as a trading point on the Thames but firm evidence of the town dates back to Saxon records of a battle (against Danish invaders) at the town in 871 AD.
- 4.4 The 1086 Domesday Book records 6 mills owned by the King and by Battle Abbey, and Reading Abbey was founded by Henry 1 in 1121.
- 4.5 By 1525 Reading was the largest town in Berkshire and the 10th largest in England (based on tax returns). The Abbey was largely destroyed by Henry VIII in 1538 who also granted a new charter allowing burgesses to elect a mayor in 1542. By 1611 the town had a population of over 5000 and was known as a rich centre of cloth trading. The town was significantly affected by battles and a

siege during the Civil War. During this time a defensive wall was in place for the town (destroyed in 1644).



1611 map of Reading

- 4.6 Industry in Reading in the 18th Century included significant ironworks and breweries, and the town retained significant roles as a market and as a coaching stop on the turnpike roads. By 1801 the population was about 9,400. Opening of the Kennet and Avon Canal in 1810 allowed barges from the town through to the Bristol Channel, and the Great Western Railway in 1841 was the first of three railway companies serving the town by 1856. The town expanding rapidly to a population of 59,000 by 1900 with extensive areas of terraced housing constructed.



Ordnance Survey Map of Reading in 1830

- 4.7 Infrastructure improvements made in the 19th Century including sewer, water and gas supplies, market, hospital and swimming baths and Reading became a borough in 1835
- 4.8 Further rapid expansion of the town continued throughout the 20th Century, notably southward as far as the new M4 motorway. In 1999 the Oracle Shopping Centre opened, symbolic of a new focus on regeneration of the Town Centre after a period of mostly out of centre office and retail developments.
- 4.9 The application site is not within the area of the mediaeval town, and is shown as farmland on the 1830 map which just predated the construction of the current building. It is not within an area of any particular archaeological interest in respect of potential earlier settlement remains.

The Listed Building

- 4.10 Queens Crescent (24-52) is statutorily listed at Grade II. The listing description which dates from 22 March 1957 reads as follows;

QUEEN'S ROAD 1. 5128 Nos 24 to 52 (even) (Queen's Crescent) SU 7173 SE 3/225 SU 7273 7/225 22.3.57. II GV 2. 1832-33. J J Cooper architect (according to Colvin). A very slight crescent with houses on a skew, following the curve of the road. 3 storeys Bath stone ashlar. Channelled ground floor. Band over ground floor. Plain cornice and parapet. 3 ranges of glazing bar sashes each, 1st floor centre of each with pediment. Ground floor windows round headed, one each, No 44 1+3 (formerly 2 houses). Bracketed hoods to 4 panel doors with rectangular overlights and architrave surrounds. Butterfly roofs with brick chimneys. No 40 rendered. No 24 has no door but 3 round headed windows on ground floor.

Listing NGR: SU7197873190



- 4.16 The crescent is primarily of interest as an example of early Victorian higher quality residential building, following the fashion carried through from the Georgian period for crescents. The heritage asset of primary interest is the group effect of the crescent frontage and this interest is not particularly dependent on or enhanced by any other current surroundings.
- 4.17 The listing description does not note any interior features and it is likely (given the early date of the listing) that no internal inspection was made at that time.
- 4.18 In order to assess the current significance of 42 as part of the heritage asset an inspection of the building was undertaken by Geoff Wright of GW Planning Limited on 15 August 2018.
- 4.19 With reference to the principal façade to Queens Road described by the listing, it was noted that the frontage of 42 and its adjoining neighbours have been maintained consistent with the 1957 listing description and would not appear to have been altered to any significant extent;
- 4.20 It was also noted that the sash windows of 42 (and many neighbouring addresses) would appear likely to be original. They illustrate the narrow glazing bars typical of Georgian (and early Victorian) detailing. Some of the windows at 42 are in need of repair/ refurbishment. The door may also be original.



42 (centre) and adjacent addresses



Frontage of 42 Queens Road

- 4.21 The stone façade is in generally good repair with some evidence of water staining notably from the guttering.

- 4.22 The rear of the original building has been significantly altered by the addition of a single storey element and reconstruction/ extension at first floor level of parts of an original rear extension. Rear elevation windows at second floor level might be original but at all lower levels appear to be modern sash windows:



Modern extensions (in yellow brick) to rear at ground and first floor levels

- 4.22 The single storey extension has a rendered rear elevation with a window treatment which seeks to reflect the sash windows and arched ground floor window on the Queens Road frontage:



Rendered rear elevation of modern extension

- 4.23 Internally the original part of the building appears to retain its basic structural layout. Extensive modern replastering makes it difficult to determine which internal walls are original but there is no obvious evidence of significant change. Areas of plasterboard infill suggest that openings between rooms have been made and filled in over time.

- 4.24 The only fireplace evident is a relatively modern replacement:



- 4.25 The staircases throughout the building are simply detailed in a manner consistent with basic Victorian detailing and could be mostly original:



- 4.26 All internal doors are modern (mostly fire doors with associated framing).
- 4.27 Most of the skirtings are detailed as a plain board with a simple capping piece. This detailing has been copied (not always exactly) by various alterations and repairs.
- 4.28 A plaster cornice detail is repeated throughout much of the building with some variations. Most of this cornicing appears too precise/ undamaged to be original and probably represents a copy of original cornicing associated with newer plaster/ceilings. At first floor level it was noted that a damaged and probably original section of cornice survives, with new work crudely abutting this;



Plaster cornice (first floor) front section possibly original majority a modern replica

- 4.29 At basement level there is a single space with good headroom and little or no original detail:



Basement looking towards lightwell



Ground floor rear of old building-modern window and typical skirting/ cornice details

- 4.30 The modern rear building is a single space with rooflights and end windows;



Rear extension -view toward lightwell and link to main building

- 4.31 In summary the interior of the Victorian building at 42 Queens Road does appear to retain the majority of the internal layout (including staircase positioning) of the early Victorian structure, but has no specific features of particular heritage interest. Some simple joinery and plasterwork details survive from the original but most would appear to be modern replication.

Effect on Heritage Assets

- 4.32 The principal heritage asset (listed façade as visible to Queens Road) will not be altered by the scheme and no harm will arise to this.
- 4.33 The only alterations to the exterior of the original building are those proposed at basement level. The proposed enlarged lightwell will involve the removal of a pavement light replacing this with an enlarged open well which will be covered by a metal grid. Below this, and mostly screened from street level view, the basement wall will be reworked to include two new windows.

- 4.34 The changes at basement level are not considered to adversely affect the heritage asset.
- 4.35 As outlined above the interior of the building is not of significant heritage interest. Most of the internal structure and some of the joinery would however appear to be original and has some heritage asset value accordingly.
- 4.36 The proposed scheme retains the staircase and most internal walls. The most significant alteration will be at basement level where partition walls at the base of the stair will be altered so a current boiler room can be enlarged to form a shower room. This and the addition of lightweight partition walls on upper floors to create shower rooms and the making of a limited number of new openings within existing internal walls will allow for continued active use and maintenance of the listed building in its original function as residential accommodation. These and other works including the enlargement of a modern basement lightwell window are not considered to harm the designated heritage asset.
- 4.37 The proposals for alterations to the single storey extension and parking/ amenity area to the rear are not considered to adversely affect the setting of the designated heritage asset.
- 4.38 In overall terms the scheme proposals are assessed as retaining and conserving the designated heritage asset without resulting in any harm.

5 DESIGN AND ACCESS

Design

- 5.1 The design approach is one of 'low intervention' seeking to achieve residential accommodation with a minimum of structural change.
- 5.2 The arrangement of one apartment at each floor level of the Victorian building will result in minimal change to the existing stairwell and the retention of several of the existing doorways from this.
- 5.3 At second floor level a new door (fitted to the existing modern partition wall at the top of the stairs) will enable a one bedroom apartment of 41.3 sq.m to be achieved using the existing internal layout. A shower room will be created within the existing rear room (which will become a bedroom) whilst the front of the building will provide a large living/ kitchen area with three large existing windows. This apartment will have additional hall/ storage space (at the top of the existing stairs) compared to those below.
- 5.4 At first floor level the existing doorways to the stairwell will be retained but the doorway from stair to rear room will become redundant and is proposed to be infilled. A new doorway between the existing front and rear rooms will allow internal flow within the 38.5 sq. m. apartment. As with the second floor apartment a shower room will be partitioned from the rear room and the existing front room will become a large living/ kitchen area with three large existing windows. At first floor level an existing bathroom accessed directly from the stairs will be converted to a utility room.
- 5.5 At ground floor level a similar arrangement with a new doorway between front and rear rooms and shower room partitioned from the rear room is proposed. The apartment will be accessed by an existing doorway from the existing entrance hallway. Due to the hallway the ground floor apartment will be smaller than those above at 32.5 sq. m. The bedroom will be the same but the living/ kitchen area is smaller although this room will benefit from the very large arched ground floor window facing Queen Street.

- 5.6 The ground and first floor apartments benefit from existing high ceilings giving a sense of additional space.
- 5.7 At basement level changes are proposed to the partitioning at the base of the stairs to allow for a shower room to be inserted (replacing a former boiler room). This allows for an apartment of 41.5 sq. m to be achieved.
- 5.8 The basement currently has a window at the rear facing into the lightwell and a pavement light at the front which provides a lower level of light.
- 5.9 In order to improve lighting levels within the basement it is proposed to replace the pavement light at the front with a larger external lightwell which will have two new basement windows facing into it. These will ensure that the front of the basement will have a substantially increased level of light sufficient to achieve suitable conditions for the kitchen/ living room of the basement apartment. The lightwell as viewed from within the basement will be painted white and will be suitable for container plants (accessed from the apartment via the large windows) to provide some limited external visual amenity in lieu of any longer external view.
- 5.10 At the rear of the basement it is also proposed to enlarge the lightwell window opening to allow for a deeper timber framed access window allowing increased light to enter and also allowing for occasional access for the base of the existing lightwell which can also be utilized as another small external amenity area for the basement apartment.
- 5.11 The bedroom toward the rear will as a result achieve light and amenity levels that are significantly improved from the existing situation.
- 5.12 The basement is a dry area but enhanced waterproofing is proposed using an internal cavity drain membrane lining system (as recently used at no. 38).
- 5.13 The existing single storey extension at the rear of the listed building is proposed to be subdivided into two smaller one bedroom apartments (each of 27.3 sq. m), with a corridor adjacent to the East wall providing access to these and a through route from the main building to the parking/service area.
- 5.14 Both of the apartments in the rear block will have an openable roof light (new double glazed lantern windows will replace the current rooflight) and an end

window (in one case facing the parking area, in the other facing into the lightwell).

- 5.15 There is currently a direct view between existing windows across the lightwell at ground floor level. As proposed these windows will serve a bedroom in the main building and a living/ kitchen area in the rear block.
- 5.16 To ensure privacy for occupiers of both apartments it is proposed to use one way directional glass to achieve privacy for both occupiers.
- 5.17 Directional glass is also proposed for the basement level rear window and for the first floor rear window-neither directly faces the window in the extension but in both cases this will ensure against a degree of potential overlooking between windows at various levels across the lightwell.
- 5.18 Throughout the proposed internal works, plaster and joinery details will copy the original skirting and cornice detailing (where applicable to original room edges).
- 5.19 Foul drainage for the apartments will be connected to the existing system. This leads to a manhole beneath the lightwell between old and new buildings. The shower rooms for the ground, first and second floor apartments in the original building will be stacked one above the other and the soil and vent pipe leading from these will be underslung over the rear of the basement to meet the existing external pipework. The basement shower room will have a separate pumped waste to the external pipework. Drainage from the apartments in the rear extension will be connected beneath the extension floor.

Access

- 5.20 Vehicular access to 42 Queens Road is from the rear via Livery Close. There is an area of hardstanding with shared rights for nos. 42 and 44 to manoeuvre around the boundary between these properties.
- 5.21 A bin store will be provided to better organize the storage and separation of waste. Refuse collection will continue to be from Livery Close as now.
- 5.22 A covered shelter for 8 bicycles is proposed. This will provide for both resident and visitor cycles.

- 5.23 The submitted plans mark out how the existing area allows for 4 full standard parking bays. Two of these would be 'trapped' spaces. This is not considered unreasonable within an urban context where residents will have good access by sustainable modes.
- 5.24 Access to the 3 proposed apartments at the upper and basement levels of the listed building is dependent on the use of stairs although level access is available to the 3 apartments proposed at ground level. Limitations imposed by retention of the structure of the listed building preclude improved provisions for disabled access.

Strategic

6.1 The proposals for 42 Queens Road will exemplify sustainable development as described by the National Planning Policy Framework and by Reading's Local Planning Policies for a number of reasons including;

- Locating new investment appropriately within an established urban area
- More intensive and efficient use of buildings making use of existing infrastructure.
- Sustaining the significant educational, social, cultural and economic roles of Reading Town Centre.
- Locating new use where it is highly accessible on foot, by cycle and by public transport and where there will be minimal need for vehicular traffic.
- Re-using and maintaining a heritage asset

Building

- 6.2 The proposed re-use of an existing building is inherently sustainable, providing additional residential accommodation with the minimum use of materials.
- 6.3 The accommodation will be mostly naturally ventilated.
- 6.4 Where practicable improvements will be made to improve thermal insulation standards but in the context of a listed building no significant changes to existing original walls or windows are envisaged.
- 6.5 Low energy lighting systems will be used throughout.
- 6.6 Water saving sanitary ware will be used throughout.

7 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The proposed change of use to self-contained apartments at 42 Queens Road represents a positive investment in accommodation that will complement and support Reading Town Centre activity.
- 7.2 The scheme will ensure continued use and good repair of a Grade II listed building.
- 7.3 The proposals clearly represent 'sustainable development' as defined by the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 7.4 The proposals are in full accordance with Reading's adopted planning and development management policies.
- 7.5 Full consideration has been given to heritage (listed building) and to designing to mitigate aspects of the local urban environmental context so that residents will have a suitable residential environment.
- 7.6 This is a carefully considered proposal which is in full accordance with the Development Plan and follows recent similar precedents. It is appropriate to grant planning consent accordingly.

GW Planning September 2018