

PLANNING STATEMENT

IN SUPPORT OF A PLANNING APPLICATION

FOR

**PRIOR APPROVAL OF A PROPOSED CHANGE OF USE FROM OFFICE USE
(CLASS B1a) TO RESIDENTIAL (CLASS C3)**

AT

33 BLAGRAVE STREET, READING RG1 1PW

ON BEHALF OF

AEW UK SOUTH EAST OFFICE FUND

JUNE 2018

SITE ADDRESS:

33 Blagrove Street
Reading
RG1 1PW

PLANNING STATEMENT

DATE ISSUED: JUNE 2018

JOB REFERENCE:

REPORT PREPARED AND APPROVED BY:

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Arcadis have been instructed by AEW UK South East Office Fund to pursue prior approval for the:

Change of Use from Office accommodation (Class B1a) to 28 residential units (Class C3) pursuant to class O of the General Permitted Development Order of (2016), at 33 Blagrove Street, Reading RG1 1PW.

- 1.2 The site is not located on Article 2 (5) land and therefore it does not fall within an area exempt from office to residential change of use permitted development rights.
- 1.3 Accordingly, the change of use from Class B1(a) office to Class C3 residential use is pursued by way of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2016. The Order amended the previous law on permitted development rights, and significantly, made permanent the right to convert existing offices to residential.
- 1.4 This Statement will consider the following areas:
- Planning History and Appropriate Policy;
 - Use of the Premises;
 - Transport and Highways Impacts;
 - Contamination Risks
 - Flood Risk; and
 - Impacts of Noise.
- 1.5 This Statement is accompanied by the following existing and proposed plans:
- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ▪ P-SITE P01 Site Location | |
| ▪ P-01 P01 Existing Ground Floor; | ▪ P-11 P01 Proposed Ground Floor; |
| ▪ P-02 P01 Existing First Floor; | ▪ P-12 P01 Proposed First Floor; |
| ▪ P-03 P01 Existing Second Floor; | ▪ P-13 P01 Proposed Second Floor; |
| ▪ P-04 P01 Existing Third Floor; | ▪ P-14 P01 Proposed Third Floor; |
| ▪ P-05 P01 Existing Fourth Floor; | ▪ P-15 P01 Proposed Fourth Floor; |
| ▪ P-06 P01 Existing Roof; | |
| ▪ P-07 P01 Existing Basement. | |

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION AND BACKGROUND

General Location

- 2.1 The application site, as highlighted in Figure 2.1, is a building in Reading Town Centre. The building is located on Blagrove Street in the heart of central Reading opposite Reading Town Hall and Museum and within a 2-minute walk of Reading Train Station.



**Figure 2.1 –
Application Site**

- 2.2 The building is arranged over a ground floor and four upper floors with a large reception area on the ground floor and open plan office space on each of the five floors of accommodation. The building has 18 underground basement parking spaces, which together with the office accommodation is accessed directly from Blagrove Street.
- 2.3 The building has been remodelled and refurbished to create a working environment which can accommodate a range of requirements. However, despite this work a number of the floors or parts of floors remain vacant and ‘to let’.

The Surrounding Area

-
- 2.4 We can confirm that the application building is not listed. However, it is located within the North of the Market Place/ London Street Conservation Area. As the proposal is for a change of use / internal changes there would be no effect to the Conservation Area in which it sits.
- 2.5 The building is located opposite Reading Town Hall and Museum and is approximately 0.3km from the Forbury Gardens and Abbey Ruins. It is within a short 5-minute walk from the Oracle Shopping Centre, which is one of Reading's main shopping destinations.
- 2.6 The central location allows very easy access to the amenities of the town centre with numerous restaurants, bars and shops situated within a 30-second walk of the building.
- 2.7 The application site benefits from good public transport links, Reading Train Station is located within a 2-minute walk of the site with rapid direct links to London, Oxford and the South East. Road access is good with junction 11 of the M4 motorway approximately 10 minutes-drive away. There is a bus stop 25m adjacent to the building.
- 2.8 The site has good access to educational facilities with Kendrick School, Reading College, The Abbey School, Reading School and All Saints Junior School all located within 1.9km.
- 2.9 The building is a short distance away from the Malmaison Hotel and the La Baguettes Hotel and is adjacent to Forbury View which is an office to residential conversion which includes office space on the ground floor and residential flats on the upper floors. Garrard House, another office to residential conversion lies adjacent providing six floors of residential accommodation. Surrounding the site are several office buildings.

Planning History

2.10 Upon conducting an online search of Reading Council's online planning records, which are relevant to the building:

- Red. Of 23-33 Blagrove St to provide a new vehicular access basement car parking for 14 cars and 5-storey above for office use.
Refused - November 1981
Granted conditional consent on appeal - November 1981 (Ref: 81/TP/0723)
- Redevelopment and erection off new building for office use with on-site parking.
Refused - January 1983 (Ref: 82/TP/0996)
- Redevelopment and erection of new building for office use with on-site parking.
Refused - January 1983
Granted conditional consent on appeal - January 1983 (Ref: 82/TP/0997)
- Redevelopment and erection of new building for office use on site car parking 15 spaces and provision of a vehicular access.
Reserved Matters granted conditional consent - May 1984 (Ref: 84/TP/0145)
- Alterations to the front elevation of the property including a new glazed entrance, partial extension over existing lightwell, provision of new window to match retained ground floor windows.
Granted conditional consent - March 2016 (Ref: 160035/FUL)

2.11 For adjacent building the following consents are relevant to the proposal:

9-15 Blagrove Street, Reading RG1 1PJ

- Conversion of existing office building into 14 flats (12 no. 1-beds, 2 no. 2-beds) and retention of office on ground floor. Elevational Amendments.
Application Permitted - January 2007 (Ref: 060337)

Garrard House, Garrard Street, Reading RG1 1NR

- Prior approval notification for the change of use from B1(a) Office to C3 Residential for the existing floorspace.
Prior Approval Notification Approval - October 2014 (Ref: 141277)
- Extension to include part new fourth floor and new fifth and sixth floors to provide 18 residential units.
Application Permitted - June 2016 (Ref: 160328)

3.0 PLANNING POLICY

- 3.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) makes it clear that a set of core land-use principles should underpin both plan-making and decision taking. Included within these are that planning should; encourage effective use of previously developed land; mixed use development; and always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings (Paragraph 17).
- 3.2 Local authorities should also recognise that residential development can play a significant role in ensuring the vitality of centres and set out policies to encourage residential development on appropriate sites (Paragraph 23).

Local Planning Policy

- 3.3 The Core Strategy was originally adopted in 2008 with alterations subsequently adopted in 2015. The Core Strategy sets out the Reading 2020 Vision for the town. The Core Strategy sets out the overall planning strategy and principles for development in Reading.
- 3.4 The Strategy recognises the need for the provision of housing and the requirement to continue to provide completions, including on windfall sites, with Policy CS15 noting that Town Centre sites should provide for a density of over 70 units per hectare. Policy CS18 specifically relates to residential conversions, thus demonstrating that conversions play an important part of housing delivery.

Submission Draft Local Plan

- 3.5 The Submission Draft Reading Borough Local Plan was submitted in March 2018 and sets out the Council's vision for the future of Reading, providing policies and proposals enabling Reading to grow.
- 3.6 Policy H1 reflects the importance of additional housing in Reading and the surrounding area to meet community needs, with targets for delivery per annum increasing over the adopted Core Strategy. Indicative density range is also increased to above 100 units per hectare for the town centre, with residential conversions being highlighted.
- 3.7 Policy CR6 specifically relates to living in central Reading, encouraging city centre living. The policy does note that 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.

4.0 THE PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The proposed change of use for 33 Blagrove Street would see the creation of a total of 28 residential units:

Floor	1 Bed 2 Person	2 Bed 3 Person	2 Bed 4 Person	Total
Ground	3	0	1	4
First	3	1	2	6
Second	3	1	2	6
Third	3	2	1	6
Fourth	5	1	0	6
Total	17	5	6	28

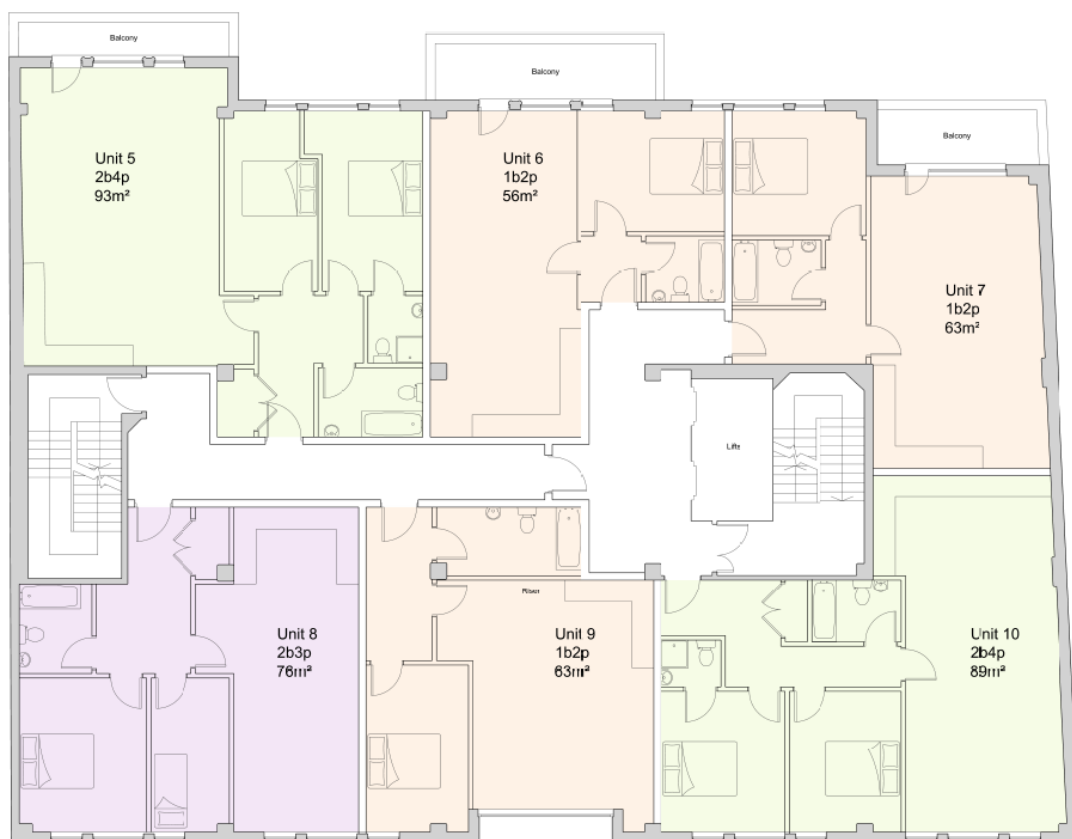


Figure 4.1 – Example Floorplate
(Proposed First Floor)

- 4.2 There are currently 18 underground car parking spaces available. These would all be retained for resident's use. This is entirely adequate as the site has excellent transport connections and is therefore not intended to be altered as part of this application.

Figure 4.1 – Basement Plan



- 4.3 No external changes to the layout of the site are proposed. Nor will the proposed use change materially affect the exterior of the existing building with all the existing window and door openings utilized.
- 4.4 The development changes will only be internal, causing no visible change to the street scene; setting and character of the existing character of the area.

5.0 COMMENTARY

5.1 As is required by Schedule 2, Part 3, Class O.2(a) of the General Permitted Development Order 2015, the following defined issues have been taken into consideration:

- Existing office use of the building;
- Transport and Highways impacts of the development;
- Contamination Risks on the site;
- Flooding Risks on site; and
- Impacts of Noise from commercial premises.

Existing Office Use of the Building

5.2 The building currently includes Class B1(a) offices and underground parking, in line with the original planning consent for the site.

5.3 The building is currently partly vacant; however, the property has been used for Class B1(a) office space prior to May 2013 and is currently in use. Therefore, the proposed development is in accordance with the permitted development rights. The current (2018) occupiers of the property are:

- Ground Floor – LET;
- First Floor – LET;
- Part Second Floor – VACANT;
- Part Second Floor – LET;
- Third Floor – VACANT; and
- Fourth Floor – VACANT.

Transport and Highways

5.4 The proposal will provide sufficient parking for the residential units, with all the current 18 basement parking spaces retained for the residential occupiers, which equates to 0.6 spaces per unit. Vehicle access to the building will be obtained from the main entrance which is off Blagrove Street.

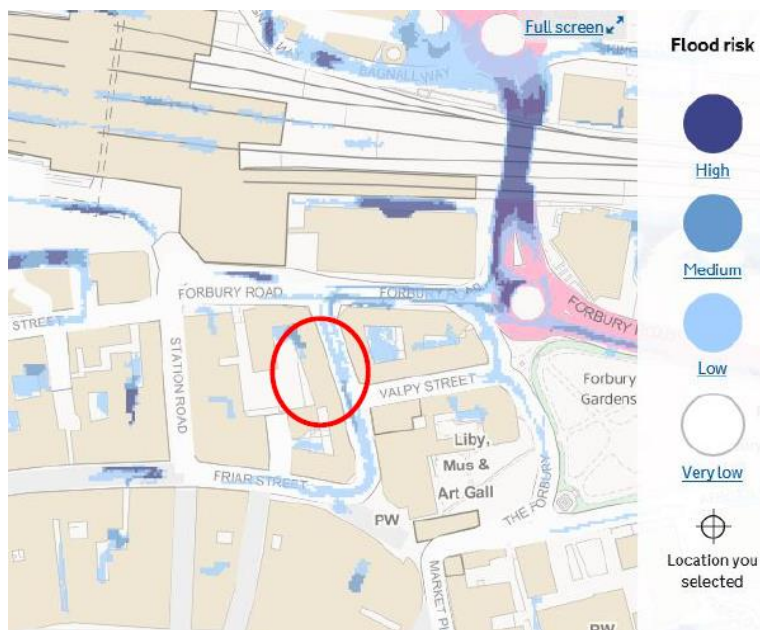
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- 5.5 The building is a sustainable location due to its positioning within Reading Town Centre, therefore being close to a wide range of local amenities with a range of retail and leisure offerings located within a short walk away.
- 5.6 Due to sites central location, the property has good transport links with its proximity to regional bus and rail connections with Reading Train Station being approximately a 2-minute walk away.
- 5.7 Traffic movements for the residential accommodation would be substantially less than the existing office use, with vehicle movements being ad hoc and not being chiefly peak time based, as would be the situation with the current use.
- 5.8 It is contended that the proposed change of use will not result in any transport and highways impacts and will not result in a material impact on parking requirements or traffic generation / highway safety. Indeed, it is contended that due to the change and reduction of peak time traffic movements highway impacts will be lessened.

Contamination Risks

- 5.9 According to the Environmental Agency, the site is not identified to have been a previous landfill site. There should be no contamination risks.
- 5.10 There are no previous planning applications on the proposed site in which would have caused any potential contamination risks to the proposed change of use. Furthermore, as the development proposed is for the change of use from office to residential, with no need to create garden space, any contamination risks from the car parking area would not warrant refusal.
- 5.11 The development does not intersect a pipeline or hazard zone, therefore HSE Planning Advice does not have an interest in the development.

Flooding Risks

- 5.12 The site is located within Flood Zone 1, the zone with the lowest probability of flooding from rivers or the sea, therefore possessing no issue for residential conversion.
- 5.13 However, limited surface water flooding is noted to occur on Blagrove Street and within the car parking area (not associated with the building) to the rear.



**Figure 5.1 –
Flood Risk Plan
(Surface Water Flooding)**

(Environment Agency)

- 5.14 Given that no additional built form would occur as the works are internal, there are no flooding risks in relation to the site.

Impacts of Noise

- 5.15 The site is in Reading town centre and is surrounded by several bars and restaurants which could result in potential noise issues for the residential units.
- 5.16 However, there are hotels located near the site including the 75-bed Malmaison Hotel and the La Baguette Hotel. In addition, Forbury View on Blagrove Street is an office to residential conversion where the ground floor has been retained as office space and the upper floors were converted from office space to 14 residential flats. Whilst Garrard House, provides residential accommodation on all its floors, including the ground and basement levels.
- 5.17 It is contended that should noise be a potential issue double glazing or secondary double glazing can be utilised to reduce the noise from commercial businesses in the surrounding area.

Compliance with Planning Policy

- 5.18 There are no conditions on the consent for the building that expresses the removal of permitted development rights relating to changes of use.

- 5.19 Whilst policy compliance isn't a consideration for a Prior Notification application it is important to note that this change of use is in line with both adopted and emerging national and local planning policy, which encourages town centre living.

6.0 SUMMARY

- 6.1 AEW UK South East Office Fund is seeking a change of use of office buildings located at 33 Blagrove Street, Reading RG1 1PW from office use to residential use. This is in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015, Schedule 2, Part 3, Class O.
- 6.2 From the evidence provided by this Statement, it is demonstrated that the proposed development contains no outstanding issues as to why the development should not be permitted. The site is in accordance to the regulations due to the buildings current usage as office space.
- 6.3 The site is located within the North of the Market Place / London Street Conservation Area, however as the proposed is for internal changes and will therefore not affect the Conservation Area. The site is not within the curtilage of listed buildings, monuments nor is it located within a wildlife site or contain any contamination risks.
- 6.4 Consideration has been given to the potential impacts of the change of use in relation to Transport and Highways; Contamination; Flood Risk and Noise from surrounding commercial premises. It is concluded that none of these issues would result in impacts which could warrant further investigation nor the hindrance of the development.
- 6.5 Additionally, the existing character and appearance of the building provides an attractive setting for the potential residential dwellings. The site is in a sustainable location within the town centre and has successful transport links both via public transport and motor to wider regions.
- 6.6 The site is not affected by an Article 4 Direction nor does it fall within the 'areas exempt from office to residential change of use permitted development rights', therefore the proposed change of use should be considered as there are no outlining restrictions on the site.
- 6.7 It is therefore respectfully requested that confirmation regarding the need for Prior Approval is not required and that the proposed change of use can proceed in relation to the details submitted.

ARCADIS - JUNE 2018



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