



**PLANNING, DESIGN AND ACCESS
STATEMENT**

Alterations and Extension to Western Elms Surgery

Western Elms Avenue

Reading

RG30 2AP

FOR

Western Elms Surgery



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Planning, design and access statement

Western Elms Surgery

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This application is made by the Partners at Western Elms Surgery (the Practice), owners of Western Elms Surgery (the Surgery).
- 1.2 The Practice is seeking planning permission to extend the Surgery to meet the growing needs of the community.
- 1.3 The Practice is a Partnership of Doctors. The Practice works under the umbrella of NHS England reporting to North and West Reading CCG.
- 1.4 The Practice is under significant pressure to offer expanded medical services to the West Reading Community. This is described in the attached letter from the Practice manager Lisa Trimble.
- 1.5 There are pressures on medical practices such as Western Elms Surgery. The attached letter from the NHS North and West Reading CCG
- 1.6 General Medical Practitioners like Western Elms Surgery are required to provide continued professional development for doctors in training and other medical staff. The proposed alterations include the required space for these training facilities.

2. Site location

- 2.1. The application site is a self-contained building on the junction of Western Elms Avenue and the Oxford Road in West Reading. The main building faces the Oxford Road and is a three storey stone and slate building. The building was extended in 1989 with a single storey extension (plus storage in the roof) linked to the original building. The 1989 extension was built to house consulting rooms and a waiting room for patients.

3. Planning history

- 3.1 The main building is likely to have been built around the turn of the 20th century. It was used as a Doctors surgery from 1947 with the inception of the NHS however previous to this it was a GP surgery probably from around 1900.
- 3.2 Planning permission was granted in 1990 (planning reference 900739) for Alterations and extension to the surgery - at the rear of the building (off Western Elms Avenue).
- 3.3 Also in 1990 a temporary permission was granted for buildings to accommodate the doctors' practice for the period of the construction works.
- 3.4 The other planning applications relating directly relate to works to the trees at the Oxford Road side of the site. Several trees have TPOs.

3.5 Many of the buildings adjacent to and close to the site have been subject of planning applications. The most relevant are:

- the application to extend the offices building at 319 Oxford Road – Application ref 101965 - which was approved in Feb 2011
- Application at 2-4 Western Elms Avenue – application ref 13/00078/FUL – which was approved in 2013 including amendments to the approved parking arrangements.

3.6 The site is within an urban and densely populated area where the majority of buildings are altered and adapted over time to reflect the ongoing and constantly changing social and economic climate and community.

4. Planning Policy

4.1 This application will be considered in the context of the policies set out in Reading Borough Council Local Development Framework - Core Strategy and other associated planning policy documents.

4.2 There are a number of principles stated within the Core Strategy that are relevant to this application:

- *The plan aims to “ensure that sufficient locations, premises and infrastructure are in place to enable smart economic growth”*
- *“Through the (South East) Plan and other measures, the South East will show a sustained improvement in its quality of life over the period to 2026, measured by the well-being of its citizens, the vitality of its economy, the wealth of its environment and the prudent use of natural resources”*
- *“For Reading, urban renaissance is about creating a high quality of life in towns and cities, making them places where people want to spend time and to live. It is about more sustainable living, putting people close to services and facilities, reducing traffic and reducing the need to travel by car. It is about maintaining and creating attractive living environments. It is about reducing the contributors to climate change. It is about social well-being, housing and jobs for all sectors of the community that need them; valuing diversity; having good transport; promoting good urban design; and meeting community needs”*
- *“Reading’s communities will be sustainable and have good access to a range of local facilities, services (including healthcare and education), housing and employment. The quality of the environment will continue to improve, and Reading will become a clean, safe and desirable place in which to live, work, study and visit”*
- *The predominantly urban character of Reading Borough, exacerbated by tightly drawn boundaries, means that the vast majority of any future development will be in the form of redevelopment and regeneration of previously developed land.*

The Application to improve the facilities at Western Elms Surgery recognises these principles and it is considered that the proposal is fully compatible with these principles and indeed without this type of facility in central locations this philosophy and the aims of the Core Strategy will be more difficult to achieve.

4.3 The policies within the adopted Core Strategy that are applicable to this application include:

- **Policy CS1** - *All new developments maximise the use of energy efficiency and energy conservation measures in their design, layout and orientation to reduce overall energy demand*

The proposed extension will improve the energy efficiency of the facility. The extended building will comply with current building regulations which require a much higher standard of energy efficiency in the building fabric and in water use than the existing building. The planning policy contains 18 test items for energy efficiency. An energy efficiency assessment statement is included as an appendix to this document. The assessment is based on the 22 items listed within the Core Strategy.

- **Policy CS4:** *Accessibility and the Intensity of Development The scale and density of development within the Borough will be related to its level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport to a range of services and facilities. Sites will be assessed in terms of their level of accessibility to a defined district or local centre with a good range of facilities by pedestrian routes, and to a bus stop served by a strategic bus service.*

The location of the application site clearly satisfies this policy.

- **Policy CS5:** *Inclusive Access All buildings should be located, sited and designed to provide suitable access to, into and within, its facilities, for all potential users, including disabled people, so that they can use them safely and easily.*

One of the main reasons for this application is to improve access within Western Elms Surgery. The application proposed a new lift and improved access to and within the building including improved stairs.

- **Policy CS7:** *Design and the Public Realm 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 extended building will be of a high quality in terms of its design and choice of materials. The materials palette is taken from the existing building and the surrounding area. The form of the building and its increased height relate very well to the original building and the adjacent properties. The retained single storey section retains the visual separation between the original building and the extensions.

- **Policy CS24:** *Car/ Cycle Parking Maximum car parking standards and cycle parking requirements will be applied in relation to the accessibility of locations within the Borough to sustainable transport facilities, particularly public transport*

The existing facilities include car parking and cycle storage facilities. The information given below addresses the local parking and general transport facilities on and immediately adjacent to the site.

- **Policy CS31:** *Additional and Existing Community Facilities Proposals for new, extended or improved community facilities will be acceptable, particularly where this will involve co-location of facilities on a single site. Community facilities should be located where there is a choice of means of travel (including walking and cycling), and in existing centres where possible. Proposals involving the redevelopment of existing community facilities for non-community uses will not be permitted, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that there is no longer a need to retain that facility.*

Western Elms Surgery is a community facility and clearly is appropriately located in the centre of the community with a wide choice of means of transport.

- **Policy CS35:** *Flooding Planning permission will not be permitted for development in an area identified as being at high risk of flooding, where development would reduce the capacity of the flood plain to store floodwater, impede the flow of floodwater or in any way increase the risks to life and property arising from flooding.*

The building is not within a flood risk location. A flood risk map is attached as an appendix below.

- **Policy CS38:** *Trees, Hedges and Woodlands Individual trees, groups of trees, hedges and woodlands will be protected from damage or removal, and the Borough's vegetation cover will be extended.*

There are a small number of trees on the site including protected trees on the Oxford Road side of the site. Because the proposal is to extend over an existing building, none of the trees or other planting will be adversely affected by this application. The TPOs relating to the trees on site are covered by order

OXFORD ROAD 210/06 (T2) 317 (Western Elms Surgery).

5. Proposed development

- 5.1 The Practice is proposing to alter and extend the existing building to respond to the requirements and demands placed on the practice by the NHS – locally and nationally – to provide health care for the local community. The practice has a need to provide for a growing community in this densely populated part of Reading and to extend the building is essential if the health care needs of the community are to be maintained.
- 5.2 The proposal is to build directly over the extension from 1990. The footprint of the building will not change.

- 5.3 The existing GF houses the majority of the consulting rooms. The first and second floors of the original building are admin and staff rooms. The extension built in 1990 is: the main waiting area, seven consulting rooms, toilets and stairs.
- 5.4 The proposal is to extend directly over the single storey consulting rooms. The waiting area will not be changed. The first floor accommodation will be 6 new consulting rooms, a small waiting area, one toilet and lift access to the upper floors. The stairs will need to be amended to allow suitable disabled access to first and second floors. The second floor, which will be within the roof space, will be used as a meeting / training facility and staff accommodation.
- 5.5 In order to provide suitable means of escape, the curved stair will be replaced by a new stair that will serve the three floors.
- 5.6 The building is designed to provide access for people with disabilities and so the new extension will include a small passenger lift from the Ground Floor waiting room to the two upper floors.
- 5.7 There are no substantial changes planned for the landscape or other external works. The existing landscape is to be retained. The extension does not affect any of the trees in the site. The existing car parking is to be retained.

6. Planning assessment

- 6.1 The proposal is very simple in its nature and form. The principle of an extension in this urban local is not contentious in principle. The technical issues relating to the extension are set out below.
- 6.2 The existing building has restrictions upon the hours of use. In order to comply with the governments stated requirement that General Practice Medical facilities should be available for seven days of the week this application seeks to have no restrictions upon the times when the facility may operate.
- 6.3 The principal planning requirement for this building is to provide a facility that is able to satisfy the national governments stated intention that every community has access to general practice health care in their community and for seven days of the week. The practice has assessed this demand amongst the other pressures that it faces because of the growing population and the increasing number of patients that it serves. The practices response is to provide a building to accommodate more consulting rooms and therefore more health care professionals. The surgery will need to be accessible to the community for longer hours every day and for seven days of the week. Because of the nature of the practice of health care it is not practical for several doctors to share consulting rooms however hot desking has become essential to manage the day to day needs of our patients to a point whereby we cannot share any further. The practice is well situated in a central location to serve the West Reading Community.

7. Other planning issues

Biodiversity and trees

- 7.1 Urban in character, the application site is sited on the busy Oxford Road. It is likely to be of low ecological value given the type and layout of the existing building – a relatively high density land coverage with hardstanding and minimal undeveloped area. The existing planted areas will be maintained
- 7.2 There are several trees within the application and two have TPOs. It is recognised that these trees are an important landscape feature. The proposal is however at the other part of the site and does not affect the trees. There will however be a condition placed on the construction contract that the area around the trees is not part of the construction site. It is not practical to erect tree protection but the distance between the trees and the construction work is sufficient to conclude that the trees will not be affected by the proposed extension.

Foul sewage and utilities

- 7.3 The building has full FW and SW drainage. The building is designed so that no new connections to below ground drains are required. Similarly, the building is already connected to all other utilities and no changes are expected.

Land contamination

- 7.4 The building has a long history of use as a doctors' surgery. Prior to use as a doctors surgery it is likely that the building was used for residential purposes. It is reasonable to assume that there is no risk of land contamination.

Landscaping

- 7.5 Only minor alterations are proposed to the existing hard and soft landscaping to accommodate the proposed extension.

Noise

- 7.6 Activities with the building will not change. The area of Oxford Road is a very busy urban location. The building is close to a mix of residential, commercial and retail properties. Reading West train station is a short distance from the site. The activities within the proposed extension will be broadly the same as the existing building. Although the proposal includes for the building to be utilised for longer periods there would be no noise nuisance created. There is no residential use proposed and so there is no scope of noise or other environmental disturbance as a result of this proposal.

Parking provision

- 7.7 The building is used only solely for use as a doctors' surgery with other associated health care provisions. Although the building is to be extended, a significant part of the increase in use of the building will be to extend the time when the building is in use. The proportional increase in the size of the building will not be directly proportional to the requirement for parking.
- 7.8 The building is within Zone 2, Primary Core Area of Reading. This area is described in the RBC parking standards and design guidance document adopted October 2011

This zone directly surrounds the Central Core Area and extends to walking distances of 2 kilometres from the centre of Reading. Typically this zone is well served by public transport, with buses continuing either into or out of the Central Core Area via this zone. Much of this area is within acceptable walking distance (400m) of either the main railway station, or Reading West railway station. Walking and cycling in this area tends to be encouraged through the provision of wide and safe footways, with some dedicated or shared cycle ways. The areas within Zone 2 also typically have smaller local centres, providing day-to-day access to retail and some commercial facilities. Future growth in these areas is likely to be more mixed than in the core area, with larger amounts of residential than commercial space

- 7.9 Existing parking spaces serving the building will be retained. These spaces will however be used solely for staff parking.
- 7.10 As shown on submitted drawings, there are three disabled parking spaces directly adjacent to the surgery. Also along Western Elms Avenue, there is adequate on street parking within easy walking distance of the site. There are other areas of unallocated on street parking in the general vicinity of the site. In many areas nearby the parking is restricted to 2-hour parking during the day. These areas are generally suitable for visitors to the surgery or patients. In addition, many of the patients registered at the surgery live within walking distance.
- 7.11 There is covered cycle parking adjacent to the entrance doors. This will be increased to provide space for 8 cycles.
- 7.12 Demand for car parking spaces will not increase in proportion to the size of the building. The proposed level of staff parking on site, with additional spaces nearby, is considered appropriate for the demand. The practice will however implement a travel plan for staff members. By the implementation of the plan the numbers of staff parking spaces is considered sufficient for the in-town location.
- 7.13 The site is located within the urban commercial area of West Reading (Zone 2). There are excellent public transport links with buses running frequently along the Oxford Road and with West Reading Train station just a few hundred metres away.

Transport and traffic impact

- 7.14 The extended use of the building will allow patients to visit the building over longer periods. For this reason and because of the public transport links to the building, the intensity of vehicle movements to and from the building will not change significantly.
- 7.15 As noted above in respect to parking, the traffic generated by extending the building will be spread over a longer working day. The vehicle movements to and from the building is predominantly staff and patients. There are few deliveries to the building and no regular heavy vehicles. If there were a small increase in traffic generation, this is likely to be negligible in the context of the other traffic generating uses across this area of West Reading and the Oxford Road.

8. Design and access

Site context

- 8.1. Located in a densely developed part of West Reading Western Elms Surgery is an existing two and three-storey, pitched roofed, traditional building. It is surrounded on all sides by other residential and business uses. This is an urban application.

Design

- 8.2. The main external changes in appearance to the building will be through the extension of the single storey section of the building. The existing building is a tall single storey with rooms in the roof that are used for storage. The proposal is to remove the roof, then to construct a second storey over the same footprint and then to rebuild the roof complete with rooms within the roof-space.
- 8.3. Changes internally involve additional consulting rooms and alterations to improve disabled access and fire safety.
- 8.4. The external design treatment is to follow the design of the existing building. The current design is a brick building with horizontal bands of different coloured brickwork. The roof is a relatively low pitch covered in blue slate. The proposal is to extend over the same footprint with brickwork external walls incorporating horizontally banding. The proposal is to utilise two different brick colours that are a reasonable match to those in the existing building. This treatment is shown on the drawings submitted with the application.
- 8.5. The new roof is to be similar to that being "lifted" as part of the application. The roof is proposed to be blue slate as the existing roof and at the same pitch. A number of rooflights are proposed. The height is raised to accommodate the rooms in the roof. The overall height of the building is lower than the height of the original building and

significantly lower than the height of the adjacent buildings – 2-4 Western Elms Avenue and 319 Oxford Road. The roof line of the extended building blends well with the varying heights of the retained surgery and the relatively tall adjacent buildings.

- 8.6. The windows and doors are designed to be similar to those on the existing building and which will be retained. The windows are to be white UPVC. Some of the small windows at the rear elevation will be steel framed but white in colour. These windows will be fire rated.

Access

- 8.7. Vehicle access to the property will not be altered from the existing access arrangements to and from Western Elms Avenue.

9. Conclusions

- 9.1. This application is for the extension of Western Elms Surgery to accommodate the growth and consolidation of the practice in line with Government and NHS requirements over the coming years. The Practice seeks to serve its existing patients and recognises that demand for health care services in West Reading will increase.
- 9.2. In addition to the extension to the building, the practice will be required to operate a 7 day service to provide Health Care to the West Reading Community.
- 9.3. Planning permission is sought to enable the continued provision of Health Care to the community. Western Elms Surgery has had a presence in this part of Reading for many years and The Practice continues to adapt to the changing Health Care needs of the community. The Practice aims to continue to provide excellent Health Care to satisfy the demands of its existing patients and the wider community. The extension of the existing facility is critical to achieve that aim.