

Planning and Design & Access Statement (Including Heritage Statement)

177 KINGS ROAD
READING
RG1 4EY

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T: 01344 299330 **F:** 01344 299331

Berkshire House, 39-51 High Street, Ascot, Berkshire, SL5 7HY

Contents

Introduction

- 1 The Site and Surrounds
- 2 Planning History
- 3 Planning Policy Context
- 4 The Proposal
 - (a) Amount
 - (b) Layout
 - (c) Scale
 - (d) Appearance
 - (e) Landscaping
- 5 Access
- 6 Heritage Statement
- 7 Access and Sustainability
- 8 Summary & Conclusions

Introduction

This statement has been prepared by Ascot Design Ltd to accompany an application for full planning permission and listed building consent for internal and external alterations associated with change of use from office (Class B1a) to 6No. residential units (Class C3) at 177 Kings Road, Reading.

It has been produced in accordance with guidance published by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) and covers the following:

- An analysis of the site as existing, the immediate area and the wider context.
- A description of the design process followed to reach the final design solution, covering the subjects of Use, Amount, Layout, Scale, Landscaping, and Appearance. It considers the constraints of the site and relevant local and national planning policies to demonstrate that the proposed scheme is well conceived with the aim of integrating with its surroundings.
- Considers accessibility within the site and the proposals relationship to transport links in the surrounding area, as well as inclusive access for the elderly and the disabled. It justifies the location of pedestrian and vehicular access points to the site and establishes accessibility to public transport.

It should be read in conjunction with all other correspondence submitted with the application.

1 The Site and Surroundings

The application site is located to the east of the town centre, fronting Kings Road with vehicular access to the rear from Orts Road. The site is in a highly sustainable location, being located in close proximity to Reading Town Centre with its wide range of public transport opportunities, shops, services and other local facilities.

The application site is located on the northern side of Kings Road, close to the junction with Eldon Road. The building is Grade II* Listed, as part of a list entry that covers 173-183 Kings Road (odd). The site also falls within Eldon Square conservation area.

No.177 is arranged over five floors and forms part of a terrace of similar properties. It is connected to Nos.173-175 on its western side and No.179 on its eastern side. Planning permission has been granted on the adjacent site (173-175 Kings Road) for the change of use of the building from offices (B1a) to residential (C3) – 13 Units. The buildings are constructed in Bath Stone with a slate roof. There is a landscaped garden to the front of the building, with steps down from the building to road level. To the rear of the building is a car park.

The building was previously in office use (together with the adjacent 173-175 Kings Road) but is now vacant and boarded up.

2 Planning History

The planning history of the site is set out below:

177 Kings Road

101721 – LBC for replacement windows and erection of cast iron gutters over upper floor dormers. Approved.

101155 – Repairs to roof. Approved.

090507 – Part retrospective application for Listed Building Consent for stripping out and treatment of materials affected by dry rot and resulting internal renovation works. Approved.

040822 – Change of Use – Class B1 to D2. Refused.

011198 – Improvement to ground floor ventilation by means of grilles and fans installed in windows at high level. Withdrawn.

991148 – Installation of two air cooling condenser units at rear of building below ground level. Approved.

960508 – Installation of security grilles to windows and door on inside face at lower ground level. Approved.

Adjacent site –173-175 Kings Road

151116 – Change of use from office (Class B1a) to 13 (1 x studio, 2 x 1, 7 x 2, 3 x 3-bed) residential units (Class C3) and associated works. Approved 30 October 2015.

151117 – Internal and external alterations associated with change of use from office (Class B1a) to 13 (1 x studio, 2 x 1, 7 x 2, 3 x 3-bed) residential units (Class C3). Approved 20 November 2015.

3 Planning Policy Context

Relevant planning policy guidance is contained within the National Planning Policy Framework and the Runnymede Borough Local Plan Second Alteration 2001.

National Planning Policy Framework

This guidance states at paragraph 14 that at the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development which should be seen as a ‘golden thread’ running through both plan-making and decision-taking. The NPPF identified three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. Development proposals that accord with the development plan should be approved without delay.

Chapter 12 concerns conserving and enhancing the historic environment. Paragraph 131 states that in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- The positive contribution that heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including economic vitality; and
- The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

It is recognised at paragraph 138 that not all elements of a World Heritage Site or Conservation Area will necessarily contribute to its significance.

Paragraph 197 states that “...*In assessing and determining development proposals, local planning authorities should apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development.*”

Reading Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2008 (Altered 2015)

Whilst a large number of policies are relevant to the proposal, the following policies are highlighted as being of particular importance:

Policy CS22 – Use of Employment Land for Alternative Uses. Outside of core employment areas, the following criteria will be considered when assessing proposals which would result in the loss of employment land:

- i) Is access by a choice of means of transport, including access to the strategic road network, poor, and likely to remain poor?
- ii) Is the continued use of the site for employment, including the potential for redevelopment for employment uses, viable?
- iii) Is there a surplus of a similar size and type of accommodation in Reading?
- iv) Would continued employment use of the site detrimentally affect the amenity and character of a residential area;
- v) Is the need for alternative uses stronger than the need for the retention of employment land.
- vi) Would the proposal result in a piecemeal loss of employment land where there is potential for a more comprehensive scheme.

Policy CS33 – Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment. States that historic features and areas of historic importance and other elements of the historic environment, including their settings will be protected and where appropriate enhanced. Planning permission will only be granted where development has no adverse impact on historic assets and their settings. All proposals will be expected to protect and where appropriate enhance the character and appearance of the area in which they are located.

Reading Centre Area Action Plan

The following policy is highlighted as being of particular relevance:

Policy RC9 - Living in the Centre. States as follows:

Proposals for residential development within the central area will be assessed against the following criteria:

- i. All proposals for residential development within the central area will be required to contribute towards a mix of different size units within the development. This will be measured by the number of bedrooms provided within individual units. Ideally a mix of one, two and three bedroom units should be provided. As a guide, in developments of 15 dwellings or more, a maximum of 40% units should be 1-bed, and a minimum of 5% units should be at least 3-bed, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that this would render a development unviable.
- ii. Proposals for new residential development within the central area will be required to demonstrate how the issue of potential noise disturbance from neighbouring land uses and other sources, and air quality

- implications of residential development, have been considered and if necessary, mitigated. New residential development should not be located next to existing town centre uses where those uses would give rise to unacceptable levels of noise and disturbance to the occupiers of the new scheme, unless this can be mitigated.
- iii Residential developments in the centre will contribute towards affordable housing in line with Policy CS16 of the Core Strategy. In the central area, an over-concentration of social renting for single persons will be avoided.
 - iv Development in the central area that would have an adverse impact in terms of increasing the need for additional community facilities will be required to provide mitigation measures in line with the scale of the impact.
 - v (Relates to serviced apartments etc)

Sites and Detailed Policies Document 2012 (Altered 2015)

Policy SD1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development – States that a positive approach to considering development proposals will be taken that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained within the NPPF.

4 The Proposal

The application site has mostly recently been used for B1(a) office purposes although it has been vacant for some time.

As stated above, the Council has already granted planning permission for the change of use of the adjoining building (No.173-175 Kings Road) from offices to residential and considered that the change of use was in compliance with Policy CS11 of the Core Strategy. The same circumstances apply to No.177 Kings Road. The officer report for 173-175 Kings Road recognised that whilst access to the site by private car was convenient, the choice of bus routes was more limited than in the office core of the Central Area and that the site was not within easy walking distance of the railway station. It was also recognised that many office uses along Kings Road had recently been granted planning permission to change to residential. This was considered to be indicative of the reduced viability of the area for offices. In addition, the current proposal at No.177 would not result in a piecemeal form of development, particular as the adjoining building is in the process of being converted to residential. A comprehensive redevelopment in the context of policy CS11 would not be appropriate in the context of the listed buildings. The principle of providing a residential use at the site would align with the objectives of policy CS14 in assisting in meeting the annual housing targets. It is therefore considered that the proposed change of use from employment use is appropriate in this instance, in accordance with policy CS11.

The current proposal is for a change of use to provide 6No. flats, together with internal and external alterations.

The current proposal provides for the following mix of units:

- 2 x studio flat
- 1 x 1 bed flat
- 3 x 2 bed flat

It is therefore considered that the proposal would provide a mix of unit sizes in accordance with the aims and objectives of Policy RC9. The limited size of the accommodation on each floor and the internal layout of the building make it difficult to provide a viable three-bed unit without more extensive alterations which would be inappropriate in listed building terms. There is also very little market demand for 3-bed flats in this location.

In terms of affordable housing provision, the application is accompanied by a viability assessment. Given that the building is Grade II* listed, the provision of on-side affordable housing units is not considered appropriate. A financial contribution was previously accepted by the Council in relation to the 13 unit scheme at Nos. 173-175 Kings Road.

The proposed alterations are limited and are aimed at preserving the character and integrity of the listed building in accordance with Policy CS33 of the Core Strategy.

The current proposal also proposes very few external alterations and only limited internal alterations. The proposed changes can be summarised as follows:

Staircase, hallway throughout:

All internal features: decorations, cornices, architraves, skirting to be retained.

Lower Ground Floor

All internal features (cornices, architraves, skirting retained throughout.
Internal partitions retained and new stud partitions/party walls added.

Ground Floor

Internal partitions and doors retained. All internal features (cornices, architraves, skirting) retained throughout. New en-suite formed with new stud partitions. The new stud partition height would be limited so the ceiling and internal perimeter cornice is exposed.

First Floor

All internal features (cornices, architraves, skirting) retained throughout.
Internal partitions:

It is proposed to remove a section of wall opposite to the original spine wall.
New partitions added in the middle to form a bathroom.

Second Floor

Internal partitions.

All internal features (cornices, architraves, skirting retained throughout.

Internal partitions:

It is proposed to remove a section of a stud wall opposite to the original spine wall.

Third Floor

Internal partitions.

Existing stud walls to be partially removed. There are no internal original features within proposed flat.

New stud wall partitions to be provided.

Please refer to drawings.

Roof, External elevation.

It is proposed to install a new dormer to match the existing one to allow for daylight and ventilation to additional bedroom.

Please refer to drawings.

GENERAL

Ventilation

In accordance with planning approval for adjacent property (173-175 Kings Road) Ref: 151116 condition no.10 (Air Quality) a ventilation system is to be provided which draws the fresh air from the rear side of elevation via external terminals. It is required to have two terminals for each Unit. It is proposed to provide external terminals in colour to match the stone on the rear elevation. The size of each terminal would be 214 by 65mm. Please refer to proposed elevation drawings for location of terminals.

There are external ventilation terminals positioned on the adjacent building, No.171, please see picture below:



None of the proposed changes are considered to materially affect the historic character and integrity of the building. Please refer to drawings for full details.

Front garden

It is proposed to retain existing front garden and to provide the additional planting in accordance with the Landscape Proposals (Draffin Associates drawing no: 673/02 rev. B).

Rear garden and yard

It is intended to retain all existing planting beds and provide new planting per Landscape Proposals.

Main bin storage area and cycle rack for all flats accessible from the main communal core is proposed to the rear side.

5 Design and Access

(a) Amount

The proposal is for the change of use of the building to provide 6No. flats (2 x studio, 1 x 1-bed and 3 x 2-bed).

(b) Layout

There are no major changes to the external layout of the building. The existing attractive front garden will be retained. There is an existing car park to the rear of the building which will be marked out to provide 6no. spaces. A new dormer window will be provided on the upper floor of the front elevation, to match existing windows. The proposed external changes are therefore limited and would not result in harm to the setting of the listed building or the character and appearance of the Eldon Square Conservation Area.

The alterations to the internal layout are fully described above.

(c) Scale

There is no change to the scale of the existing building.

(d) Appearance

The main external alteration relates to the provision a dormer window on the front elevation which will be behind an existing parapet and will match the appearance of existing windows.

Two ventilation external terminals per unit are also proposed located on the rear elevation: colour to match the stone, size of each terminal would be 214 by 65mm. Please refer to proposed elevation drawings for location of terminals.

The proposed new window and ventilation units would not harm the historic interest of the buildings.

(e) Landscaping

The existing front garden will be retained and additional planting will be provided.

It is intended to retain all existing planting beds and provide new planting within the rear garden / yard per the Landscape Proposals.

5 Access

The building will remain accessible to pedestrians via Kings Road or through the rear entrance from the car park.

The site is well served by public transport, being located within Transport Zone 2, the Primary Core Area.

There is an existing car park to the rear of the building, accessed from Orts Road. The parking layout will provide 6No. parking spaces for use in association with No.177 Kings Road.

6 Heritage Statement

The NPPF identifies Heritage Assets as including places or areas that have a degree of significance (i.e. conservation areas). The main points in the NPPF are as follows:

- The applicant should describe the significance of the heritage asset affected including any contribution made by their setting;
- The LPA should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of the heritage asset;
- When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation;
- Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm, LPA's should refuse consent. Where it would result in less than substantial harm, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits.

This Heritage Statement is in support of applications for planning permission and Listed Building Consent involving internal and external alterations associated with the change of use building to provide 6No. flats. The application proposal has had regard to a number of heritage assets as set out below.

Heritage Assets

Nos.173-175 is a Grade II* listed building and is part of a larger listing entry that includes 171-183 Kings Road:

After 1832. The principal houses in former Waterloo Place. Three separate blocks of 2 houses each joined together by single storey links of varying design Similar design apart from applied order. Modified Doric for Nos 173/175 and 181/183, composite Nos 177/179. Each block 3 storeys and basement, Nos 173-179 with attics. Bath stone. Slate roof with central chimney stack with many pots. Channelled ground floor with moulded string, entablature and blocking course with corner and central pilasters framing two 3 storey bows, each with 1 window. 4 bays, glazing bar sashes (cornices on 1st floor), centre creak with bows. Ground floor has 2 windows (French casements) with balconies and contemporary cast-iron rails and decoration. Doors in outer bays have segmented heads and 2 panels. No 169 linked to No 171 and No 183 linked to No 185 by recessed ionic porticoes in antis with parapets. To rear: Nos 177/179 have full height bows, Nos 181/183 have ground floor bows. Interiors: No173 contemporary staircase with moulded rail and stone steps, delicate undercut cornices (similar to contemporary ones in Cheltenham). No.183 contemporary staircase.

The site also falls within Eldon Square Conservation Area.

Internal Alterations

The proposed internal alterations are considered to be minor in nature and would not adversely affect the historic integrity of the building. The alterations are set out in full above and are also shown on the submitted drawings. Care has been taken to ensure that existing doors, architraves, skirting, cornices and other original features are retained as set out in the drawings.

Proposed external alterations:

The proposed external alterations relate to the provision of a front dormer window on the upper floor, behind an existing parapet. (See application drawings and text above). It will match the appearance of the existing dormer windows.

The proposal dormer window is considered to be relatively minor in nature and would not adversely affect the character and appearance of the listed building.

The proposal also involves external ventilation terminals: colour to match the stone, size of each terminal would be 214 by 65mm. The proposal ventilation terminals would not materially harm the appearance of the listed building.

The property is also located within Eldon Square Conservation Area. Given the limited extent of the external alterations, there would be no resulting harm to the character and appearance of the conservation area. The small front garden

would be retained and additional planting is also proposed to the front and rear of the building, which will enhance the appearance of the Conservation Area.

The proposal would not therefore adversely affect any Heritage Assets.

8 Summary and Conclusions

The planning application provides for the change of use of the building to provide 6No. flats. The proposal should be supported for the following reasons:

- The application site is located within a highly sustainable area in the central area of Reading, close to a range of facilities, services and public transport opportunities. The proposal provides for 6No. additional residential flats within a highly sustainable location in accordance with local and national planning policy.
- The proposal has taken into the designation of the buildings as a Grade II* listed building and the location of the site within Eldon Square Conservation Area. The proposal would not harm the above Heritage Assets and would enhance or preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
- The site is accessible to public transport modes and provides for unrestricted access to the elderly and disabled.