

Design and Access Statement

Change of Use from F1 to C3 and 2 Proposed Residential Buildings
Following Demolition of Existing Religious Building

at

30a Cumberland Road

Reading

Berkshire

RG1 3LB



29th April 2024



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1. Introduction

JE Architecture has been instructed by the applicant to prepare and submit this Design and Access Statement to support planning application at 30a Cumberland Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 3LB.

The description of the development is as follows:

“Change of Use from F1 to Class C3 and 2 Proposed Residential Buildings Following Demolition of Existing Religious Building”

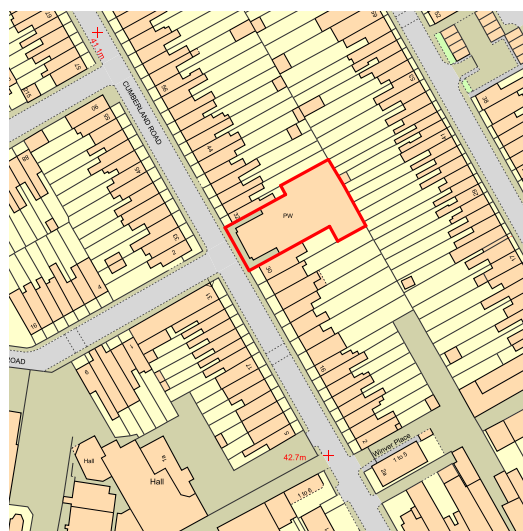
The application should be considered with the following documents:

JEA-PRO-001b Proposed Ground Floor
JEA-PRO-002b Proposed First Floor
JEA-PRO-003b Proposed Second Floor
JEA-PRO-004b Proposed Roof Plan
JEA-PRO-005b Building 1 Proposed Front and Rear Elevation
JEA-PRO-006b Building 2 Proposed Front and Rear Elevation
JEA-PRO-007b Proposed Side Elevation
JEA-PRO-008b Proposed Side Elevation
JEA-PRO-009b Proposed and Existing Street Scene
JEA-LOC-010b Proposed Site Plan and OS Map
JEA-EXI-011b Existing Ground Floor
JEA-EXI-012b Existing First Floor
JEA-EXI-013b Existing Roof Plan
JEA-EXI-014b Existing Side Elevations
JEA-EXI-015b Existing Front Elevation

The site is shown on JEA-LOC-010b and is currently being used as a place of worship.

The site is in a city centre location within a sustainable location close to the centre of Reading and within 50m of the District Centre of Cemetery Junction. It faces Cumberland Road where there are residential buildings with off street parking. Kings Road and London Road are less than 500ft away which has a number of bus routes.

The application site comprises the Sikh Temple which was acquired in 1976 from the Methodist Church. The building is currently in use as a place of worship under Class F1. The new scheme would result in 14 residential units comprising of 1 bedroom flats.



Site Location Plan

2. Description of the Proposed Scheme

This chapter explains the application proposal and the information that forms the application submission.

The Application Proposal

The change of use of the site from Class F1 to Class C3 and demolition of the existing building with construction of 2 new residential buildings (use Class C3) with landscaping. The scheme would result in 14 residential units comprising of 1 bedroom flats.

The application does not include parking as there is ample on street parking as well as being a city centre location with excellent transport links is not required. 16 cycle parking spaces are being provided as part of the scheme.

The Application Submission

The application submission comprises the information listed below:

- CIL Form 1: additional information
- CIL Form 2: assumption of liability
- Design and Access Statement
- Drawings
 - o JEA-PRO-001b Proposed Ground Floor
 - o JEA-PRO-002b Proposed First Floor
 - o JEA-PRO-003b Proposed Second Floor
 - o JEA-PRO-004b Proposed Roof Plan
 - o JEA-PRO-005b Building 1 Proposed Front and Rear Elevation
 - o JEA-PRO-006b Building 2 Proposed Front and Rear Elevation
 - o JEA-PRO-007b Proposed Side Elevation
 - o JEA-PRO-008b Proposed Side Elevation
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 - o JEA-EXI-015b Existing Front Elevation

The application supporting information demonstrates that there are no technical issues that prevent the application site being redeveloped.

Proposal Details

The site has been designed in such a way that it has drastically reduced the volume of the existing building on the site as well as lowering the eaves level to be in keeping with the surrounding dwellings. Both of the new buildings will be traditional in form with a contemporary feel.

Building 1 contains 8 new flats and is proposed to be the full width of the site and infill the terrace gap to match the existing street scene. There will be vehicle access from Cumberland Road to allow for easy access for removals and vehicle access with no parking on the site. The entrance to Building 1 is via the front elevation off Cumberland road and is to be recessed forming a pleasant social space in which the residents will be able to interact on arrival and departure.

Building 2 is of a similar style and design as Building 1 with the main entrance facing towards the rear of Building 1. Like Building 1 the entrance is to be recessed and A newly-formed courtyard to the side will create further opportunities for social interaction, enhanced by soft-landscaping features and specimen trees that frame the setting.

Character and Materiality

The specification of materials and choice of construction type has been considered from the earliest stages. There are a number of factors to consider in the selection process, including performance relating to Passivhaus, aesthetics, sustainability, cost and build-ability. A palette of materials has been selected to build upon the idea of achieving the feel and quality of a traditional terraced street. The consistent use of a limited palette of high quality materials looks to tie the different housing typologies together into a coherent streetscape.

Brick

A traditional buff clay Brick is to be used, in a stretcher bond, with a white lime mortar, all flush pointed.

A variety of brickwork textures, using hit and miss bricks for balconies, and protruding headers create patterns and texture across the scheme.

Energy and Sustainability

The focus with this scheme was how to minimise heating bills for residents, and thus lowering the carbon footprint of the whole scheme when in use.

Based on the proposed fabric enhancements and low zero heating technologies incorporated within the proposed design, the addition of PV panels on the roof of block A and B, could achieve or be very close to carbon neutral.

We discuss the benefits of energy efficient construction in the next section.

Energy and Carbon Dioxide Emissions

Fabric energy efficiency will be extremely high. Improved levels of insulation will mean low heating bills. (A household living in a 70m² Passivhaus with gas heating could spend as little as £25 on space heating each year) LED (low energy / long life) lighting street lighting throughout. Whole house ventilation with heat recovery units to be used throughout. Internal cycle storage is provided for all residents.

Materials with a low environmental impact will be used wherever possible, and timber will be sourced responsibly (no tropical hardwoods)

A full SUDS scheme has been designed as part of this application with allowable run-off rates as agreed with Thames Water as suitable for a brownfield site.

Storage of non-recyclable and recyclable waste to be considered within the detailed design of each dwelling. Minimising construction site waste to be considered.

Good levels of daylighting, sound insulation and private amenity space are to be provided throughout the scheme.

Home user guides will be provided for each home and the contractor is to be part of the considerate contractors scheme.

Good transport links can be found within close proximity of the site. There are a number of car club facilities within the area. There is no parking proposed to encourage pedestrian and cycle use over cars..

Accessibility

These space standard requirements have been drawn from Reading Borough Council's own requirements document (unless marked).

The Nationally Described Space Standards were introduced by the Government in 2015. This standard deals with internal space within new dwellings and is applicable across all tenures. The minimum gross internal floor areas applicable to this proposal are the 1-bed 2-person figure (50m²). The standard stipulates a series of technical requirements with which the proposal complies. Included within these technical requirements are the minimum area and width of bedrooms, and a recommended floor to ceiling height of 2.3m for 75% of the gross internal floor area. With particular reference to point F. in the requirements, there are no areas with a headroom of less than 1.5m, avoiding the need for any complex storage calculations.

3. Description of the Site and Surrounding Area

This chapter describes the Application Site and its wider context

Application Site

The application site comprises the Sikh Temple which was acquired in 1976 from the Methodist Church. There was a single storey extension for amenity improvements and elevational treatments as part of overall renovation works in 1990 which was approved under application no. 890660. The building is currently in use as a place of worship (Class F1). The site is not in the green belt, conservation area, AONB, Air Quality Management Area EN15 or on Article 4 land.

The application site has no current on site parking or cycle storage.

There is no change in level across the application site and is flat from front to back. There is a step at the front of the site.

The site history is this has always been used as a place of worship.

Application Site Surrounding Area

The site is in a city centre location within a sustainable location close to the centre of Reading and within 50m of the District Centre of Cemetery Junction. It faces Cumberland Road where there are residential buildings with off street parking. Kings Road and London Road are less than 500ft away which has a number of bus routes.

The application site faces Cumberland Road, which is a residential street which contains terraced dwellings and a number have been converted into flats. The application site is the only large scale building along the road and is also the only place of worship along the road.

To the west along Norwood Road there are a number of recently constructed newly built blocks of flats at Arthur Hill Pool and Crossway Point. Cumberland Road is a residential area containing terraced buildings of similar style and scale ranging from 2-3 storeys within pitched roofs. The rear of the application site faces onto the rear gardens of the dwellings along Amity Road.

The dwelling to the south of the application site is a 3 storey dwelling and to the north is a 2 storey dwelling. The application site does break the row of terraces and is increased in height compared to the neighbouring properties.

To the south of the Application Site is the Cemetery Junction District Centre containing a number of retail and commercial uses.

4. Planning History

This chapter describes the planning applications within the site.

Erection of wrought iron railings on the existing front boundary wall to a 2-metre height
Approved 27/06/2000

Application No. 890660

Single storey extension for amenity improvements & elevational treatments as part of overall renovation works.

Approved 17/01/1990

5. Policy Framework and Decision Making Process

This chapter sets out the development plan and the decision making process.

Development Plan

The relevant parts of the development plan comprise the recently adopted Reading Local Plan 2013-2036 (November 2019).

Relevant supplementary planning documents are material planning considerations, including the Affordable Housing SPD (July 2013) and Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (December 19), although both pre-date the NPPF and adopted Local Plan which limits the weight that can be given to them. The NPPF (December 2023) with additional guidance in the NPPG, is also an important material planning consideration.

Decision-making process

Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be “determined in accordance with the Development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise” (Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

THE NPPF explains that “Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development” (paragraph 11). For “decision taking” this means:

- approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; or
- where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out of date, granting permission unless:
 - o the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or
 - o any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole”.

In this case the policies which are most important for determining the application are up to date. As a result, the Application Proposal needs to be assessed on the basis of whether it is in accordance with the development plan.

The recently adopted Local Plan reflects the above approach in Policy CC1: presumption in favour of sustainable development.

In considering applications it is important to bear in mind the advice in the NPPF’s chapter on “decision making”, reflected in Policy CC1, which begins by encouraging local planning authorities to approve applications:

“Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available and work proactively

with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.” (paragraph 38).

The next chapter assesses the Application Proposal within this policy framework and decision making process.

6. Assessment of the Application Proposal Against the Development Plan

This chapter considers the principle of development and assesses the Application Proposal against the development plan in that it delivers housing in a sustainable urban location; makes effective use of scarce urban land; delivers affordable housing and is of a high quality design.

Principle of Development

The current applicant has sourced a new site to be able to increase the size of their congregation. This site is now longer needed which has opened the site up for redevelopment.

Policy OU1: New and Existing Community Facilities allows for the redevelopment of such facilities:

“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”.

The fact that the facility is no longer needed has been demonstrated and accepted at the Examination of the Local Plan and is reflected in its allocation for redevelopment.

The principle of development is therefore in accordance with Policies ER1 and OU1.

Delivers Housing in a Sustainable Urban Location

Policy H1: Provision of Housing sets out the councils housing target, noting that it is a minimum target:

“Provision will be made for at least an additional 15,847 homes (averaging 689 homes per annum) in Reading Borough for the period 2013 to 2036.” (emphasis added).

The supporting text emphasises that there is a “pressing” need for housing but that delivering it will be challenging and will rely on brownfield sites:

“There is a pressing need for additional housing in Reading and the surrounding area” (paragraph 4.4.1).

“However, Reading is a very tightly defined urban area, and sites for new development are limited. The undeveloped land that does exist is mainly either in the functional floodplain or is important public open space. Provision of new housing therefore involves a heavy reliance on previously developed land, and the supply of such sites constrains the amount of housing that can be delivered in the Borough” (paragraph 4.4.3).

The Application Site can therefore make an important contribution towards meeting Reading’s pressing housing needs in accordance with Policies H1 and ER1.

Make Effective Use of Scarce Urban Land

The NPPF (December 2023) has a specific chapter dealing with “Making effective use of land”. This begins by making clear that:

“Planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions” (paragraph 117).

It specifically highlights the need to make best use of underutilised land and buildings:

“d) promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings, especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing where land supply is constrained and available sites could be used more effectively” (paragraph 118, criterion d)

The Local Plan picks up this key issue. Local Plan Policy CC6: Accessibility and the Intensity of Development explains that more accessible sites can accommodate greater levels of development.

“The scale and density of development will be related to its level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport to a range of services and facilities, with the densest and largest scale development taking place in the most accessible locations”.

The supporting text explains what is meant by good accessibility:

“As a rule of thumb, a good level of accessibility is considered to be that within 400m of a defined centre with a good range of facilities by pedestrian routes, and within 400m by pedestrian routes of a bus stop served by a service with a frequency of better than one bus every 20 minutes in each direction within daytime hours (7.00 a.m. to 7.00 p.m.). In many parts of Reading, it will be important to ensure that access to a range of facilities is encouraged, and not affected by existing barriers, such as major roads, rivers and railways.” (paragraph 4.1.27).

Policy H2: Density and Mix explains that the densities on allocated sites are indicative and will be affected by numerous factors which will need to be considered at the application stage:

“Residential development capacity figures within the site allocation policies are often based on [indicative densities for different types of area in figure 4.5], but the capacity of each site will likewise depend on various factors that need to be addressed at application stage, including detailed design and layout, and may differ from the range set out in the allocation.”

This is reinforced in the supporting text which emphasises the need to make the most efficient use of sites whilst considering the characteristics of each site and each site’s location:

“With the significant need for housing in Reading and surrounding areas, it is important that efficient use is made of the land that is available to boost the delivery of new homes. However, there are other considerations that need to be weighed against this, in particular the character of the surrounding areas and any other particular sensitivities. Each site has its own particular characteristics, and it is not appropriate to set down exact densities in this policy. Likewise, dwelling figures and bed spaces in site allocations policies CR11-14, SR2-4, WR1-3, CA1-2 and ER1 should be treated as indicative, as the capacity of sites will ultimately depend on various factors that need to be addressed at application stage, including detailed design and layout. This may mean that dwelling and bed space totals for an allocated site fall outside the indicative range specified in the respective policy.” (paragraph 4.4.7, emphasis added).

This approach is reflected in Policy ER1: Sites for Development in East Reading for residential development. The Application Site is allocated as site ER1h: Arthur Hill Swimming Pool for 6-10 dwellings but the supporting text states that:

“Where dwelling or floorspace figures are included alongside the allocations, these are intended as a guide, and usually reflect an indicative maximum capacity. They are based on an initial assessment taking into account the characteristics of each site. However, the capacity of sites

will ultimately depend on various factors that need to be addressed at application stage, including detailed design and layout.” (paragraph 9.3.2, emphasis added).

Both the NPPF and the Local Plan emphasise the need to make efficient use of scarce brownfield land, in particular in accessible locations. The Application Site is in a highly accessible location being directly opposite a bus/cycle lane and bus stop and within c50m of the Cemetery Junction District Centre which contains a full range of services including two convenience foodstores, a post office and numerous cafés and restaurants. As the Application Site is in a highly accessible location it can accommodate a greater level of development in accordance with Policy CC6.

As both Policy H2 and Policy ER1 make clear, the number of units that it is suggested that allocated sites can accommodate is indicative and the actual number of units that a site can accommodate should be judged through the planning application process which allows an analysis of the characteristics of a site and its location. A detailed analysis of the Application Site and its context is given in Chapter 3 and in the Design and Access Statement which demonstrates that the Application Site can accommodate more than the indicative number of units suggested in Policy ER1h.

The Application Proposal (150 dwellings/hectare) meets the “indicative density range” set out in Figure 4.5 for a Town Centre location (above 150 dwellings/hectare), given that it is in a District Centre.

The Application Site therefore makes effective use of scarce urban land in accordance with Policies CC6, H2 and ER1.

High Quality Design

NPPF Chapter 12 on “Achieving well-designed places” begins by stating that:

“The creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. 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.” (paragraph 124).

Local Plan Policy CC7: Design and the Public Realm sets out a wide range of considerations that need to be borne in mind when designing schemes:

All development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. The various components of development form, including:

- Layout: urban structure and urban grain;
- Landscape;
- Density and mix;
- Scale: height and massing; and
- Architectural detail and materials

will be assessed to ensure that the development proposed makes a positive contribution to the following urban design objectives: -

- Character - a place with its own identity and sense of place
- Continuity and enclosure
- Quality of the public realm and provision of green infrastructure and landscaping
- Ease of movement and permeability
- Legibility - clear image and easy to understand
- Adaptability – capable of adaptation over time
- Diversity – meets a wide range of needs.

Developments will also be assessed to ensure that they:-

- Respond positively to their local context and create or reinforce local character and distinctiveness, including protecting and enhancing the historic environment of the Borough and providing value to the public realm;
- Create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder or fear of crime does not undermine quality of life or community cohesion;
- Address the needs of all in society and are accessible, usable and easy to understand by them, including providing suitable access to, into and within, its facilities, for all potential users, including disabled people, so that they can use them safely and easily;
- Are visually attractive as a result of good high quality built forms and spaces, the inclusion of public art and appropriate materials and landscaping.

Applications for major developments, or other relevant developments, should be accompanied by a design and access statement that deals with all the above matters.

Policy CC8: Safeguarding Amenity sets out a number of important considerations about the living environment of existing and proposed residential properties. Further guidance is provided in the supporting text.

Policy H5: Standards for New Housing sets out a number of space and energy standards that need to be incorporated into schemes, although a number are for schemes that are larger than the Application Proposal.

Policy H8: Residential Conversions relates to proposals to convert buildings into self-contained flats, which is relevant to the change of use and conversion of the front building. The Policy sets out various criteria that need to be considered.

Policy H10: Private and Communal Outdoor Space seeks to ensure residential dwellings have appropriate outdoor space. It states that:

‘Houses will be provided with private outdoor space whereas flats may be provided with communal outdoor space, balconies and/or roof gardens.’

It goes on to set out a number of considerations that should be borne in mind when designing outside space. The supporting text also sets out space standards for flats outside Central Reading of 25m²/1-2 bedroom flat, but indicates that this is only “a useful guide” (paragraph 4.4.87).

All of these considerations set out in Policies CC7, CC8, H5, H8 and H10 have been borne in mind in designing the scheme. Further detail can be found in the Design and Access Statement.

7. Summary and Conclusions

The application to which this Planning Statement relates is submitted on behalf of the applicant at 30a Cumberland Road and seeks Planning Approval for Change of Use and Replacement Buildings.

This Planning Statement demonstrates that the proposed development complies with the adopted development plan and national policy.

Chapter 2 explained the Application Proposal and the information that will form the application submission. Chapter 3 described the Application Site and its wider context.

Chapter 5 set out the relevant policy framework and the decision-making process, concluding that the Application Proposal needs to be considered in terms of its conformity with the development plan. Chapter 6 provided an assessment of Application Proposal against the development plan. It makes clear that the principle of development is acceptable as the fact that the facility is no longer needed has been demonstrated and accepted at the Examination of the Local Plan. The requirements of Policy ER1h are addressed in this Heritage and Planning Statement and in the Noise Impact Assessment and the Air

Quality Assessment submitted as part of the planning application. The Application Proposal is therefore in accordance with Policy ER1: Sites for Development in East Reading and Policy OU1: New and Existing Community Facilities.

The Application Proposal will make an important contribution towards meeting Reading's pressing housing needs in accordance with Policy H1 Provision of Housing and Policy ER1: Sites for Development in East Reading.

The Application Proposal makes effective use of scarce urban land in accordance with Policy CC6: accessibility and the intensity of development, Policy H2: Density and Mix and Policy ER1: Sites for Development in East Reading for residential development.

The proposals will not impact on the relationship the site has with either the highway network or the occupiers of adjoining properties.

The development can therefore be considered to accord with the relevant planning policies as detailed above and to be consistent with the aims and objectives of the NPPF that provides overarching guidance. In line with Paragraph 11 of the NPPF, the application accords with the Development Plan and accordingly should be approved without delay.