

Design and Access Statement

Change of Use from Dwelling House into
5 Flats with Rear Extension

at

5 Whitley Street

Reading

Berkshire

RG2 0EG



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Revision A



JE Architecture

School Hill

Farnham

Surrey

GU10 1HY

info@jearchitecture.co.uk

01252 781602

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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 the planning application for the change of use at 5 Whitley Street, Reading, Berkshire, RG2 0EG

The description of the development is as follows:

“Proposed Change of use from Single Dwelling House to 5 Flats”

The application should be considered with the following documents:

JEA-EXI-001a	Existing Floor Plans
JEA-PRO-002a	Proposed Floor Plans
JEA-EXI-003a	Existing Elevations
JEA-PRO-004a	Proposed Elevations
JEA-LOC-005a	Site Plan and OS Map

The site is shown on JEA-LOC-005a and is currently being used as a house in multiple occupation (HMO) and is classed as Class C3 (Dwellinghouse)

The site is in a central location within Reading with excellent access to local services, shopping and employment. The following map shows the location of the site:



2. Design & Access (D&A) Statement

Paragraphs 29-33 of Planning Practice Guidance advises on the matters a Design and Access Statement should discuss. In particular, Paragraph 31 advises that a Design and Access statement should:

- a. explain the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the proposed development; and
- b. demonstrate the steps taken to appraise the context of the proposed development, and how the design of the development takes that context into account.

The proposed development consists of minor changes to the front elevation and internal layout changes to the existing building. There is a first floor extension proposed to be able to meet the minimum housing standards to allow 5 flats to be accommodated.

Planning law (Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, including any local and neighbourhood plans that have been brought into force and any spatial development strategies produced by combined authorities or elected Mayors, unless there are material considerations that indicate otherwise.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a material consideration in planning decisions.

The current development plan for Reading Borough Council (RBC) applicable to proposal includes policies of the Local Plan Policy H8, Saved Policies of the Local Plan 2019.

Design

The remit of the development proposal has first and foremost been to ensure that the minor alterations to the dwelling are satisfactory having regard for the importance to not impact the surrounding dwellings and commercial properties.

The front elevation is to have minimal changes with only the recessed front being brought level with the street frontage to match the other properties along the road.

Internally, no alterations are proposed and there are no features of historic design. For a more detailed consideration of the design of the proposals in so far as how the internal alterations of the proposal have regard for the historic fabric of the building, please refer to the Heritage Statement that accompanies this planning application.

The proposed development comprises the conversion of a dwelling house into residential flats with waste and recycling storage for residents. Set over three floors, the accommodation would consist of five 1 bedroom flats.

A single storey rear extension has also been proposed to allow for the minimum space standards as detailed in the Technical Housing Standards. This rear extension has already been implemented along the road at number 17 Whitley Street. There is an extract below to show this.



No new buildings are proposed. The proposals involve the conversion of the existing building with minor external alterations to fenestration and extensions.

The layout has been designed to have regard for the importance of ensuring satisfactory living accommodation. Suitable waste, recycling and cycle storage are provided.

The works are entirely within the envelope of the site.

The proposed development will retain the visual appearance of the existing property. There are only minor alterations proposed to the fenestration, which is traditional in style and the building is not Listed and has no historical architectural interest.

Access

This development proposal confirms that in relation to access, the proposals provide safe pedestrian access for residents accessing the dwelling located on 5 Whitley Street, direct access is provided off Whitley Street for Flat 1 and via Highgrove Street for the other 4 flats. This is detailed on the proposed plans submitted with this Design and Access Statement.

Cycle storage for the dwelling will be located at the rear of the property with the capacity for 5 bicycles as shown on JEA-PRO-002a.

This provision is more than sufficient given its central location within Reading and its excellent access to community services and facilities as well as employment opportunities.

3. Site and Surrounding Context

Site Description

The site currently comprises of one existing building known as 5 Whitley Street Street. The site is located in central Reading, in the administrative district of Reading Borough.

5 Whitley Street is a 19th Century mid terrace townhouse and is the original building on the site with a two storey frontage on Whitley Street. This building has a large garden/parking area to the rear.

5 Whitley Street is currently being used as an HMO on all 3 floors. The property is currently classed as a

dwelling house and is occupied.

5 Whitley Street is not a Listed Building and the whole site lies outside of any conservation areas.

The site is also located within an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and is also located in Flood Zone 1 which carries the lowest risk of flooding.

Surrounding Area

The site lies in a predominantly built up urban area that contains a mixture of office, residential and retail buildings.

The site is situated in a sustainable location with accessible links to multiple forms of public transport. A bus stop is located outside of 27 Whitley Street and serves a number of bus routes. The main Reading train station is located within 0.9 miles.

The Oracle Shopping Centre, which contains a wide variety of retail and leisure facilities, is approximately 0.5 miles away; again highlighting its sustainable location.

4. Planning History

This section summaries the planning history which is of relevance to the site and the surrounding area.

Application Site

Online planning history records from 1971 onwards indicate that there have not been any planning applications for the site.

Surrounding Properties

13 Whitley Street
App Reference: 020342
Single Storey Flat Roofed Extension – Approved July 2001

21 Whitley Street
App Reference: 010239
New retail unit (Use Class A1) and two bedroomed flat (ancillary) over – Approved March 2001

21 Whitley Street
App Reference: 950595
First floor extension to form additional office accommodation ancillary to existing retail use – Approved July 1995

23-25 Whitley Street
App Reference: 151311
Second Floor extensions to an existing HMO to create an additional bedsit to the HMO – Approved May 2017

29 Whitley Street
App Reference: 191335
Change of use of first and second floors from Class B1(a) (offices) to C3 (dwellinghouses) to comprise 4 residential units. Prior Notification under Class O, Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 – Approved October 2019

5. Proposed Development

The description of development is as follows:

“Change of Use from Dwelling House into 5 Flats with Rear Extension”

Access to the dwelling would be via Whitley Street and Highgrove Street and both are a safe pedestrian route to the front and rear entrance of the building.

5 bicycle parking spaces will also be provided within the rear garden which will serve the dwelling located with the refuse storage area.

The existing front exterior of 5 Whitley Street consists of grey brick with stone architectural features and a slate tile gable roof. The window openings on the front elevation consist of white UPVC double glazed window frames.

6. Planning Policy Context

This section provides a summary of the relevant planning policy framework against which the planning application will be determined.

The relevant planning policy framework comprises the Core Strategy (2008, as altered in 2015), the Reading Central Area Action Plan (AAP) (2009) and the Sites and Detailed Policies Document (SDPD) (2012, altered 2015). Alongside this are several relevant Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) which are detailed below.

The National Planning Policy Framework (2012) is also a relevant material consideration.

National Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides the overarching planning policy framework against which all local plans and neighbourhood plans should be prepared and against which all planning applications are determined.

Paragraph 7 of the NPPF establishes that there “are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental.” These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles:

- “an economic role – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;
- a social role – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community’s needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and
- an environmental role – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy” (p.2).

As detailed in Paragraph 14, at the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as “a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking” (p.4). NPPF Paragraph 14 sets out how the presumption in favour will apply to plan-

making and decision-taking. As the development plan is already in place for RBC in the form of the adopted Core Strategy, Area Action Plan and adopted Site and Detailed Policies Document, it is the policy in the second part of NPPF paragraph 14 concerning the application of the presumption in favour to decision taking that is relevant. This advises that development that accords with the development plan should be approved “without delay”.

Paragraph 17 of the NPPF states that within the overarching roles that the planning system ought to play, a set of core land-use planning principles should underpin both plan-making and decision-taking. These principles include that planning should (pp. 5-6):

- “not simply be about scrutiny, but instead be a creative exercise in finding ways to enhance and improve the places in which people live their lives;
- always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;
- take account of the different roles and character of different areas
- support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change
- contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution. Allocations of land for development should prefer land of lesser environmental value, where consistent with the other policies in this Framework; and
- actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable”.

With regard to delivering a wide choice of high quality homes, paragraph 47 requires local planning authorities to “boost significantly the supply of housing” (p.12) and paragraph 49 states:

Housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development” (p.13).

Paragraph 111 of the NPPF supports the redevelopment of brownfield land provided that it is not of environmental value as detailed below:

“Planning policies and decisions should encourage the effective use of land by re-using land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value”.

When discussing development which relates to a heritage asset or Listed Building, 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 conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic viability; and
- the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness”.

The Government also attaches great importance to the design of the built environment, which is illustrated in section 7 of the NPPF. In particular, NPPF paragraph 58 states that planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments:

- “will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;

- establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit;
- optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development, create and sustain an appropriate mix of uses (including incorporation of green and other public space as part of developments) and support local facilities and transport networks;
- respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation;
- create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion; and
- are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.”

Local Policy

As indicated above, adopted local planning policy is currently set out within the Reading Borough Core Strategy (2008, as altered in 2015), the Reading Central Area Action Plan (2009) and the Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012, altered 2015).

Relevant local planning policies for this application are as follows:

Core Strategy

The Core Strategy provides the overall planning strategy and principles of development for the Borough. It was formally adopted in 2008, with an alteration made in 2015 to the affordable housing policy.

Relevant policies from the Core Strategy are summarised below:

- Policy CS1 – Sustainable Design and Construction: Proposals should ensure that the design of buildings and site layouts use energy, water, minerals, materials and other natural resources efficiently by meeting several requirements
- Policy CS4 – Accessibility and Intensity of Development: This Policy states that any new development must be at a scale, density and intensity appropriate to the level of accessibility to defined districts and local centres
- Policy CS5 – Inclusive Access: Policy CS5 states that all buildings should be located, sited and designed to provide suitable access for all potential users, including disabled people
- Policy CS7 – Design and the Public Realm: The Policy states that all development must be of a high design quality and that new development should make a positive contribution to the Council’s urban design objectives. The Policy states that development will need to respond positively to the local context and create or reinforce local character and distinctiveness and be visually attractive as a result of high quality built form and spaces
- Policy CS11 – Use of Employment Land for Alternative Uses: For sites located outside of Core Employment Areas, proposals which would result in the loss of employment land are assessed against a set of criteria which determines whether the loss of employment land for other uses such as residential, is viable
- Policy CS14 – Provision of Housing: Provision will be made for the completion of an average 521 dwellings per annum in the period 2016-2026 through various sources of supply
- Policy CS15 – Location, Accessibility, Density and Housing Mix: Policy CS15 requires an appropriate density and mix of residential development to be informed by an assessment of the characteristics of the site and surrounding area. In terms of density, the Policy advises that net densities below 30 dwellings per hectare (dph) will not be acceptable and that development in an ‘urban’ location should target a residential density of between 40-75 dph
- Policy CS20 – Implementation of The Reading Transport Strategy (Local Transport Plan 2006-2011): This policy states proposed developments should contribute to the transport network as defined in the Reading Transport Strategy, including the provision of making alternative uses to the private car more attractive

- Policy CS24 – Car/Cycle Parking: This Policy requires that maximum car and cycle parking standards are applied in relation to the accessibility of locations within the Borough
- Policy CS33 – Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment: This Policy details that historic features and areas of historic importance, which include Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas, will be protected and where appropriate, enhanced
- Policy CS34 – Pollution and Water Resources: This policy seeks to reduce the impact of pollution on proposed developments through mitigation measures
- Policy CS36 – Biodiversity and Geology: This policy states that any features of biodiversity or geological interest that are found on a site, should be retained and protected

7. Summary and Conclusions

The application to which this Planning Statement relates is submitted on behalf of the applicant for 5 Whitley Street and seeks full planning permission for the change of use and rear extension at 5 Whitey Street, Reading.

This Planning Statement demonstrates that the proposed development complies with the adopted development plan and national policy and will contribute to meeting the spatial strategy and housing needs within Reading.

The proposed development would provide a high quality dwelling in a highly sustainable location with associated refuse storage.

This Planning Statement demonstrates that the proposed development fulfils the potential of the existing buildings. Having addressed in this statement that a number of properties along Whitley Street have already submitted and been granted approval on similar applications gives greater support to the application for approval.

Overall, the proposed development is therefore considered to comprise a suitable and sustainable development that would contribute towards the Council's housing need. It has been demonstrated throughout this Planning Statement and the suite of technical documents that support the application submission that any harm arising from the proposals will not "significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits" of the scheme.

The planning application and proposals contained within are therefore commended to RBC for due consideration.