

Planning Design and Access Statement

73 Mount Pleasant
Reading
RG1 2TF

(Revised Scheme)

Our Ref: 1930
Date: March 2024

73 Mount Pleasant

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a revised scheme seeking Full Planning Permission for the development of 73 Mount Pleasant, Reading, RG1 2TF. This planning application seeks permission for the change of use of the building from C3 (residential) to C4 (HMO), together with a single storey rear extension. This revised scheme follows the approved application 220045.
- 1.2 This document has been prepared in accordance with both national and local planning policy and guidance. This document sets out the site in the context of its surroundings, sets the proposed development within the context of the relevant planning policy, describes and later examines the proposed development, providing a rationale as to why the application has been proposed in its current form and why it is considered that the proposed development is acceptable in both planning and design terms.

2.0 Site & Surroundings

- 2.1 The application site is located along Mount Pleasant which runs north to south from London Street until it conjoins with Southampton Street (A237) at a fork in the road. The current land use along Mount Pleasant is primarily residential dwelling-houses which is interspersed by some isolated examples of commercial properties, particularly at the northern-most end of the road where it forms into Silver Street. Notable non-residential land uses are the MAPP community centre as well as the '4-bays' shop and showroom.
- 2.2 Southampton Street partially runs parallel to Mount Pleasant before conjoining further south to form Whitley Street. Southampton Street also consists predominantly of residential dwellings some of which are currently in use as HMOs, operating as student accommodation for the nearby Reading University which is located under a mile away due east. Whitley Street accommodates primarily commercial, mostly retail, properties on the ground floor with residential units above.
- 2.3 Prior to application 220045 the site accommodated a two bedroom dwelling that was in poor condition. Reading Environmental Health were previously involved following infestation complaints made by neighbours. Forming part of a terrace of residential dwellings, the existing dwelling was constructed of traditional red brickwork under a plain tiled roof. Internally, there was evidence of significant damp and rotting timbers after the dwelling was vacant for over two years.
- 2.4 The site currently accommodates a 4-bedroom HMO. The conversion of the loft space has been completed which is able to accommodate a 5th bedroom, though this space is currently unused.
- 2.5 In terms of accessibility, the application site is located in close proximity to services with convenience shopping facilities located a short walk away along Whitley Street. Reading Railway Station is located approximately 17 minute's walk away to the north of the site which provides regular services to London Paddington, Cardiff Central, Cheltenham Spa, Gatwick Airport, London Waterloo, Manchester Piccadilly, Swansea and the surrounding areas. Bus stops are located along Mount Pleasant, providing links to Whitley Wood, Fleet and Reading Town Centre.



Application Site

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3.0 Planning History

- 3.1 This application follows a series of relevant planning applications at the same site. These are summarised below.

Application	Description	Outcome
220045 (FULL)	Change of use from dwellinghouse (Class C3) to 4 bedroom HMO (Class C4), including a single storey rear extension	Approved
221143 (S73)	Application for variation of condition 2 following grant of planning permission 220045 - Additional bedroom in loft.	Withdrawn - Full Planning Application required for the proposed development.
221905 (FULL)	Revised Application - Change of use from dwellinghouse (Class C3) to 5 bedroom small HMO (Class C4) including a single storey rear extension.	Refused - Bedroom 5 would provide inadequate living conditions to future occupants.

- 3.2 On 10th May 2022 permission was granted for the change of use from dwellinghouse (Class C3) to 4 bedroom HMO (Class C4), including a single storey rear extension at 73 Mount Pleasant.
- 3.3 Applications 221143 and 221905 were later submitted seeking permission for an additional bedroom in the loft space.
- 3.4 Application 221143 was withdrawn following advice from the council. It was considered that the proposed works were unable to be considered under a S73 application. Application 221905 (which followed application 221143) was refused as it was considered that the proposed 5th bedroom in the loft would provide inadequate living space for future occupants.
- 3.5 It was stated that the proposed rooflights due to their location would not provide sufficient outlook, while there was also concern regarding the size of the proposed room in terms of habitable space.
- 3.6 This decision was appealed and later dismissed due to an error in the determination of the appeal. The inspector was under the impression that it was application 221143 being appealed. This led to confusion and ultimately the dismissal of the appeal.

4.0 Planning Policy Context

- 4.1 As well as the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the Local Development Framework (LDF) for Reading consists of the Local Plan (adopted 2019) which is supported by the relevant Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). The Local Plan for Reading is the document that contains the policies for how Reading will develop up to 2036, which is the end date of the plan. It identifies the amount of development that will take place, the areas and sites where development is expected to be accommodated, and where it will be restricted, and sets out policies for how planning applications will be decided.
- 4.2 The proposed development has been designed in accordance with the Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS) as set out within the Technical Housing Standards. The proposed development has also given consideration to the relevant SPDs.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 4.3 Paragraph 11 of the NPPF states that there should be a 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. Local planning authorities should approach decision-taking in a positive way to foster the delivery of sustainable development. They should pro-actively look to drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, businesses and industry, infrastructure and thriving local places that the UK requires.
- 4.4 Design is another integral part of the NPPF with paragraph 131 stating that the "creation of high-quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve". Good design is deemed to be a key aspect of sustainable development although planning decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes and they should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative.
- 4.5 Paragraph 135 of the NPPF ensures that proposed developments are designed to a high architectural specification in terms of the functionality, layout and use of effective landscaping. The NPPF also highlights the need for safe and healthy spaces for proposed and future occupants of the development.

Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019)

- 4.6 The Reading Borough Local Plan sets out the planning policies that have been put in place in order to shape development within the borough.
- 4.7 *Policy CC1 - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development* states that, in accordance with the NPPF, the council will work pro-actively with applicants and the policy highlights that planning law dictates that decisions must be made in accordance with the Local Plan.
- 4.8 *Policy CC3 - Adaptation to Climate Change* highlights the need for all developments to consider design measures to adapt to climate change. These include heating methods and drainage designs.
- 4.9 *Policy CC5 - Waste Minimisation and Storage* highlights the need for developments to implement measures to reduce waste during the construction and occupation stages of the project where possible.
- 4.10 *Policy CC6 - Accessibility and Intensity of Development* requires higher density developments to be located in more accessible areas such as town centre locations. It is considered that due to the size and scope of the proposed conversion, as well as the good access to public transport services as outlined in the 'Site and Surroundings' section, that the density of the development is appropriate for the location. The development is therefore deemed to be compliant with policy CC6.
- 4.11 *Policy CC7 - Design and the Public Realm* requires all developments to respect the character and appearance of Reading through high quality design. Due to the scale and scope of the proposed development, it is deemed that there will be minimal impact upon the character and appearance of Reading in design terms. The only discernible alteration externally will be the conversion of the roof space into habitable ac-

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commodation. Paragraph 4.1.31 outlines the need for developments to actively improve the area where possible in accordance with the NPPF. As the current condition of the site is poor due to the presence of damp and rotting timbers, it is deemed that the site will actively improve the area as it will constitute the best use of land available for development. With the large bulk of the refurbishment occurring internally, it is considered that the proposed development is compliant with policy CC7.

- 4.12 *Policy H1 - Provision of Housing* highlights the fact that the council, along with neighbouring councils, is working towards increasing the provision of additional housing to meet the housing need.
- 4.13 *Policy H8 - Residential Conversions* states that residential conversions to create HMOs will be assessed against the impact upon the character and amenity of the surrounding area, particularly in terms of the intensification of the activity within the area.
- 4.14 The policy outlines the requirements that developments involving residential conversions must meet in order to be deemed acceptable by the LPA. It is considered that the proposed development, by way of the scale and nature of the development will be acceptable in terms of the impact upon residential amenity, physical character and appearance of the local area, and the existing mix and sustainable community.
- 4.15 As the proposed conversion will allow for 5 occupants, the proposed HMO falls under the C4 use class as the accommodation is for under 7 people. The site is located in an area where there is an article 4 direction restricting the change of use from C3 (residential) to C4 (HMO) under the General Permitted Development Order (2015 as amended).
- 4.16 As such, the policy requirement for the proposed development is to ensure that the conversion of the existing property does not result in the proportion of HMOs within 50m of the site exceeding 25%. This has been illustrated within Figure A below.

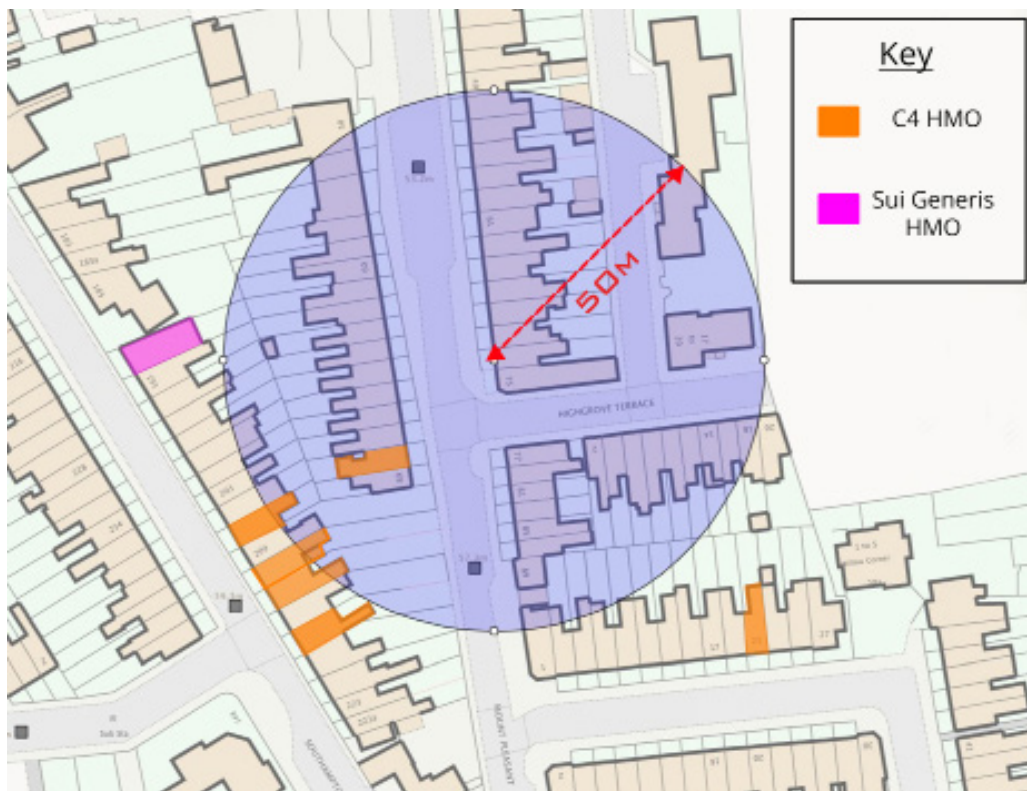


Figure A: HMOs within 50m of Application Site

4.17 Figure A demonstrates that out of a total of 64 buildings, only 4 buildings within a 50m radius from the front door of the application site are currently in use as HMOs. Therefore, within 50m of the application site, the current proportion of buildings currently in use as HMOs is 6.25%, which is well below the 25% threshold as set out within policy H8.

4.18 *Policy H9 - House Extensions and Ancillary Accommodation* outlines the requirements for residential extensions to meet in order to be considered acceptable in planning and design terms. The extension will be constructed of materials found within the immediate surroundings of the site to ensure that the character and appearance of the area is not adversely impacted.

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)

4.19 In addition to the above, in the preparation of this planning application Reading's Supplementary Planning Documents have been consulted. The following documents have been consulted, with particular regards to the Residential Conversions SPD (2013).

- Design Guide to House Extensions SPD (2021)
- Residential Conversions SPD (2013)
- Sustainable Design & Construction SPD (2019)

Technical Housing Standards - Nationally Described Space Standards

4.20 The Nationally Described Space Standards sets out standards for internal space within new dwellings. It sets out requirements for the Gross Internal (floor) Area of new dwellings at a defined level of occupancy as well as floor areas and dimensions for key parts of the home, notably bedrooms, storage and floor to ceiling height.

4.21 This document measures habitable space as the whole area within the external walls excluding any area with a ceiling height of less than 1.5m. This is also reiterated by The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) Code of Measuring Practice.

4.22 Paragraph 10c) states that in order to provide 1 bedspace, a single bedroom has a floor area of at least 7.5m² and is at least 2.15m wide. This is greater than the Reading Borough Council guidance which requires a minimum of 6.5m² of habitable space (within the 1.5m limitation) for one person, as stated within Guide to amenity standards for Houses in Multiple Occupation.

4.23 Further to this, It is noted under paragraph 10g) of the Technical Housing Standards, that area that is used solely for storage and has a headroom of 900-1500mm (such as under eaves) is counted at 50% of its floor area.

5.0 Proposed Development

5.1 This application is a revised scheme of the same description as approved application 220045 for the change of use of the existing 2-bedroom dwelling-house (Class C3) to a 5 bedroom HMO (Class C4) and the erection of a single storey rear extension. This revised scheme looks to provide an additional bedroom in the loft space. This involves internal alterations to include a stair case and the installation of 2x velux windows to serve bedroom 5.

5.2 Due to the article (4) direction in which the site, it is considered that although there is no proposed further change of use from the approved scheme, the inclusion of an additional bedroom necessitates planning permission for this alteration and for the changes to the approved plans under application 220045.

5.3 Regarding the proposed development as a whole, including the development approved under application 22004, the vast majority of the scheme will consist of internal refurbishment to the property. The proposed layout seeks to introduce two bedrooms at ground floor level, along with kitchen/living/dining space and a W/C, two further bedrooms and a bathroom at first floor level, and a further bedroom within the loft. Private amenity area has been proposed at the rear of the site as existing, this too will be refurb-

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bished to create a high quality HMO.

- 5.3 All of the proposed bedrooms exceed the requirements set out within the Nationally Described Space Standards, meaning that the proposed development will result in high-quality accommodation for prospective tenants. Given the councils previous concerns with the quality of living standards for bedroom 5, we outline below how this room in particular complies with both national and local standards. (Section 6.10)

6.0 Design Considerations

Use, Amount & Layout

- 6.1 The proposed development is for the change of use of the site from C3 (residential) to C4 (HMO). As discussed above, the majority of the proposed works will be relevant to the internal refurbishment of the property. In addition, the planning application proposes a ground floor rear extension which will extend approximately 3.5m in depth from the existing dwelling.

Height, Massing & Bulk

- 6.2 The proposed height of the building will not change as a result of the proposals. The ground floor rear extension is considered not to adversely increase the massing and bulk of the existing building.
- 6.3 The street scene will not be impacted as a result of the development as the new build aspect of the development is positioned to the rear of the building.

Outlook, Privacy, Amenity and Daylight

- 6.4 In accordance with local planning policy as well as the NPPF and associated guidance, due to the limited scale of the external development, it is considered that there will be a minimal impact upon the amenity and privacy of adjacent neighbours. There is a significant separation distance between the application site and the adjacent neighbours to the rear at Spring Grove. The separation distance is approximately 24 metres and the respective windows serving habitable rooms are blocked by large shrubs at the rear of the application site as well as fencing along the boundaries.
- 6.5 Due to the significant separation distance, there will be no adverse impact on the daylight and amenity of the adjacent neighbours to the rear of the application site at Spring Grove. Further, due to the location and scale of the proposed extension, there will be no adverse impact upon the adjoining neighbours in terms of privacy, amenity and overlooking. It is generally accepted that there is always a degree of overlooking amongst properties that form a terrace.

Access, Parking & Accessibility

- 6.6 Access to the site will remain as existing with pedestrian access to the site coming via the main entrance fronting Mount Pleasant. No additional off-street parking has been proposed and the common practice along Mount Pleasant is parking on-street providing the user has a permit. The site has already been allocated two on-street car parking spaces. As the likely tenants will be students at the nearby Reading University, it is deemed that additional parking spaces generally wont be required.

Landscaping

- 6.7 The existing landscaping around the site will be retained and supplemented where appropriate.

Refuse

- 6.8 Sufficient space will be provided for the storage of recyclables, food waste and residual waste as follows:

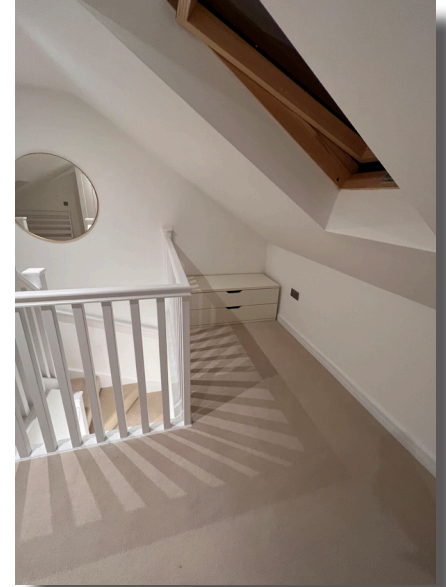
- Residual Waste - 60 litres bin
- Mixed Dry Recyclables 60 litre bin
- Compostable Kitchen Waste - 7 Litres Caddy

- 6.9 Externally, bins will be stored in the back garden with access to the highway provided at the rear of the site.

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Bedroom 5 Living Conditions

- 6.10 Application 221905 was refused as it was considered that bedroom 5 did not provide adequate living conditions for future occupants. This was due to the proposed placement of the velux windows being too high to provide sufficient outlook and the habitable space within the room to be insufficient, this is despite the provision being in excess of both national and local guidance.
- 6.11 During the construction work for approved application 220045, the loft space was converted. The below pictures of this space demonstrate that this room provides sufficient habitable space for a bedroom.



- 6.12 These images show the loft fitted out as present illustrating the available space for a fifth bedroom within the loft space of 73 Mount Pleasant. This clearly demonstrates a spacious area which would benefit from an abundance of natural light.
- 6.13 It is worth noting the perception of available space in regard to these images. Where floor space is visible, including views of the staircase, despite not being considered habitable space in terms of guidance, it would still provide the perception of additional space.

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- 6.14 The habitable space of this room is 10.5m² with a ceiling height of 1.5m or more which far exceeds both national and local policy guidance particularly section 10(c) of the Nationally Described Space Standards which requires a minimum of 7.5m² for a single bedroom.
- 6.15 This scheme also complies with 10(i) which requires that the minimum floor to ceiling height is 2.3m for at least 75% of the Gross Internal Area.
- 6.16 The term 'Gross Internal Area' is explicitly defined in Section 8 of the Technical Housing Standards as 'the total floor space measured between the internal faces of perimeter walls that enclose the dwelling.' This indicates that the calculations for Section 10(i) must consider the GIA of the entire dwelling. The total ceiling height of the dwelling exceeds 2.3m for far more than 75% of the total GIA of the dwelling.
- 6.17 It is also worth drawing attention to paragraph 2.28 of the Residential Conversions SPD (Adopted March 2023), stating that "there is no statutory minimum requirement for ceiling heights" though it is "generally recommended that residential accommodation should have a 'good practice' minimum floor to ceiling height of 2.3 metres.". It doesn't specify any percentage requirements.
- 6.18 Due to the unique nature of loft conversions, it is difficult to provide significant roof heights overall. The existing guidance and criteria are not tailored to account for the intricacies of loft spaces; instead, they primarily offer recommendations for more conventionally shaped rooms. This should not take away from the fact that this proposal provides sufficient habitable space for future occupiers.
- 6.19 We understand the importance of proposals providing acceptable living standards for future residents. Given the above, a more pragmatic approach is required which evaluates the reality of this space and moves away from decisions based solely on technical criteria that may not align with the distinctive nature of this development.
- 6.20 Finally, during the conversion of this space, the velux windows were installed so that they may provide ideal outlook with their height perfectly positioned to allow observation without the need for any uncomfortable bending or stretching. Therefore this would have no undue impact on the living conditions of future occupants of bedroom 5.

7.0 Conclusions

- 7.1 Both local and national planning policy and guidance seeks to optimise the use of urban land as well as promote sustainable forms and patterns of development. National planning policy is generally supportive of schemes that help to contribute to the government's objective of increasing the housing supply and, providing they meet necessary requirements, they should be permitted without delay.
- 7.2 The scheme, which is the subject of this application seeks the change of use and conversion of the existing dwelling in order to accommodate a HMO. The information provided demonstrates that it complies with the Councils policies on such changes.
- 7.3 The proposals follow a design-led approach and whilst it proposes a design that is suited to the area so that the development integrates well, using similar architectural features and materials to properties in the surrounding area. It has been designed in a way in which the amenity of potential residents as well as that of the neighbouring properties, have been respected.
- 7.4 Regarding the converted loft space, this is a spacious room with sufficient outlook, lighting and space for future occupants. It is therefore considered that permission should be granted for the use of the second floor of 73 Mount Pleasant bedroom resulting in the bedroom being a 5 bedroom HMO under Class C4.
- 7.5 Accordingly, we believe that the proposal complies with both national and local planning policy and guidance which promotes sustainable forms and patterns of development.