

Planning Statement

Non Material Amendment to Prior Approval Reference
220579

Site at
173-174 Friar Street Reading Berkshire RG1 1HE



December 2023

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Non Material amendment application seeks to provide some minor internal changes to the approved permitted development scheme for the conversion of the upper floors (and part of the ground floor) of this building from offices to 20 residential apartments.
- 1.2 Prior Notification permission was granted on this site under reference 220579 for:
- “Change of use from Class E (commercial, business and service) to C3 (dwelling houses) to comprise 20 flats. Prior Notification under Class MA, Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015.”*
- 1.3 This application was approved on 16/06/2022.
- 1.4 This NMA application proposal is to undertake the following amendments to the approved scheme :
- Ground Floor - New central stair core; creation of internal residential lobby and slight relocation of refuse and cycle storage area
- First Floor – New central stair core; Flat Nos 1-4 slight relocation of walls no change of unit types. Flat 7 reduced in size; Flat 8 a 2b4p reduced in size to a 2b3p; Flat 7 increased in size from a 1b1p to a 1b 2p flat.
- Second Floor - New central stair core; Flat Nos 10-13 slight relocation of walls no change of unit types. Flat 18 reduced in size; Flat 17 a 2b4p reduced in size to a 2b3p; Flat 16 increased in size from a 1b1p to a 1b 2p flat.
- Third Floor - New central stair core; Flat Nos 19-22 slight relocation of walls no change of unit types. Flat 26 a 2b4p reduced in size to a 2b3p; Flat 25 increased in size from a 1b1p to a 1b 2p flat
- 1.5 This application includes, in addition to this Statement, the following list of drawings proposed to be amended:
- As approved
- Jw1077 010 Rev A – Proposed Ground Floor
 - Jw1077 011 Rev C – Proposed First Floor
 - Jw1077 012 Rev C – Proposed Second Floor
 - Jw1077 013 Rev C – Proposed Third Floor
- As proposed
- Jw1077 010 Rev C – Proposed Ground Floor
 - Jw1077 011 Rev E – Proposed First Floor
 - Jw1077 012 Rev E – Proposed Second Floor
 - Jw1077 013 Rev E – Proposed Third Floor
- 1.6 S.96A of the Act was enacted to enable non-material amendments to developments to be formally approved, recorded and undertaken. It is deliberately a flexible “tool” and applies to “any” permission, therefore encompassing permissions the subject of express grant as well as deemed grant pursuant to a development order as in this case.
- 1.7 The definition of non-material is the responsibility of each planning authority to determine. The judgement on “materiality” in any particular case is one of fact and degree, also taking

into account the likely impacts of the amendment. Materiality is considered against the development as a whole, not just a part of it. The benchmark for forming the judgement on materiality is always the original planning permission.

- 1.8 If there have been previous amendments, then it is the cumulative effects of the amendments against the original planning permission which is the basis for the judgement. There cannot be a set of rules as to what is or is not “material” as each case is different. It is a matter for planning authority to decide, based on the individual circumstances.
- 1.9 Given the minor nature of the changes proposed with no variation in approved unit numbers proposed (20) or in terms of external changes which could impact upon neighbour amenity or the street scene we submit that these variations to the approved scheme can be dealt with as a Non Material Amendment to the prior notification application approved under reference 220579.

2.0 Site Location, Context

- 2.1 Nos 173-174 (Known as the Bristol and West Arcade) is part of a four storey terrace and the site's frontage is shown in Figure1 below.



Figure1 – Site Frontage

- 2.2 The site is not a listed building and does not lie within the Conservation area, albeit that the Conservation Area adjoins the site. The site is highly sustainable being within the heart of the town centre with access to several local bus services, as well as being located in close proximity to Reading Station, but has no off street car parking.
- 2.3 The site does not lie within an area at risk of flooding (Flood Risk Zone 1) and is only partially at low-medium risk from surface water flooding within the existing public walkway.
- 2.4 The building was constructed in the 1950s, following bomb damage from World War II, and the site now comprised of a (vacant) covered retail arcade at ground floor with three further floors of office accommodation above (now with permission to be converted to 20 flats).

3.0 Planning Assessment

- 3.1 The proposed variations to the approved development as set out above are minor in nature and propose no alteration to the approved unit numbers and no external changes to the building.
- 3.2 As a result these minor internal changes would have no adverse impacts whatsoever upon matters of local townscape or the amenity of surrounding buildings.
- 3.3 Given that prior notification consent requires strict adherence to the approved plans these minor internal alterations are submitted solely for that purpose in order that the proposed completed development would accord with the final plans submitted to Reading Council.
- 3.4 The minor internal alterations proposed through this application would improve the quality of the approved apartments to the benefit of the intended residents and would constitute an improvement in the quality residential accommodation when compared to the extant consent.
- 3.5 We set out in Section 1 of the Statement that there is no reason why section 96a of the Act cannot be used for a prior notification consent in the same way as for planning permission.
- 3.6 It is concluded therefore that these exceptionally minor internal only alterations to the approved scheme will not harm any matters of the overall design ethos of the approved scheme; and visual amenity of the local area, or indeed or the amenity of any proposed residents or indeed those of neighbouring buildings.

4.0 Conclusion

- 4.1 Given the minor alterations to the approved development proposed which are proposed and are set out in this Statement and the supporting plans we submit that these amendments can satisfactorily be dealt with as a non-material amendment to the approved scheme and can be approved as they would result in no demonstrable harm to material considerations.