



01325 469 236



info@elgplanning.co.uk



www.elgplanning.co.uk

Reading Borough Council,  
Planning,  
Reading Borough Council Civic Offices,  
Bridge Street, Reading,  
RG1 2LU

Our Ref. 24/391

20<sup>th</sup> December 2024

Dear Sirs,

**RE: EXTERNAL ALTERATIONS TO 40 CAVERSHAM ROAD, READING, RG1 7EB**

We write in relation to the submission of an application for external alterations to the above property, which is currently subject to a prior notification application to form residential apartments (C3).

**Site Context**

The application relates to the aforementioned property; a contemporary four-storey office block with undercroft parking, which lies immediately east of Caversham Road in Reading town centre. In terms of the local context, adjacent land uses are predominantly residential to the north east, east, south, and - beyond Caversham Road - west. Some commercial properties also exist nearby, as expected in a town centre location; this includes Premier House - an office block constructed in the late 1980's - located opposite the northern elevation of the application property, separated by Stanshawe Road.

With regards to access, the main (pedestrian) entrance and vehicular access to the building are both located on Vachel Road to the south. As a 'dead end', Vachel Road does not provide any access onto or from the adjacent Caversham Road, which is an A-road.

To confirm, the application property is not listed or lie within a conservation area.

In relation to planning history, applications at the building over the last ten years have been related to external alterations, refurbishment, and signage.

**Planning Policy Context**

Adopted development plan

For the site in question, the development plan in force for the area comprises of:

- The Reading Borough Local Plan (adopted 2019).

Given the site context together with the fact that only external alterations to the existing building are sought by this application, the following development plan policies are considered to be of relevance in this instance:

- CC7: Design and the Public Realm; and

Gateway House, 55 Coniscliffe Road, Darlington, Co. Durham, DL3 7EH

- CR2: Design in Central Reading.

## National Planning Policy Framework

The latest revision of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in December 2024, section 12 of which is of relevance to the current proposals, outlining the Government's approach to achieving well-designed places.

Pertinently, paragraph 135 of the NPPF states that, *inter alia*:

*'Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:*

- a) 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;*
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*
- c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities)...'*

## Proposed Scheme

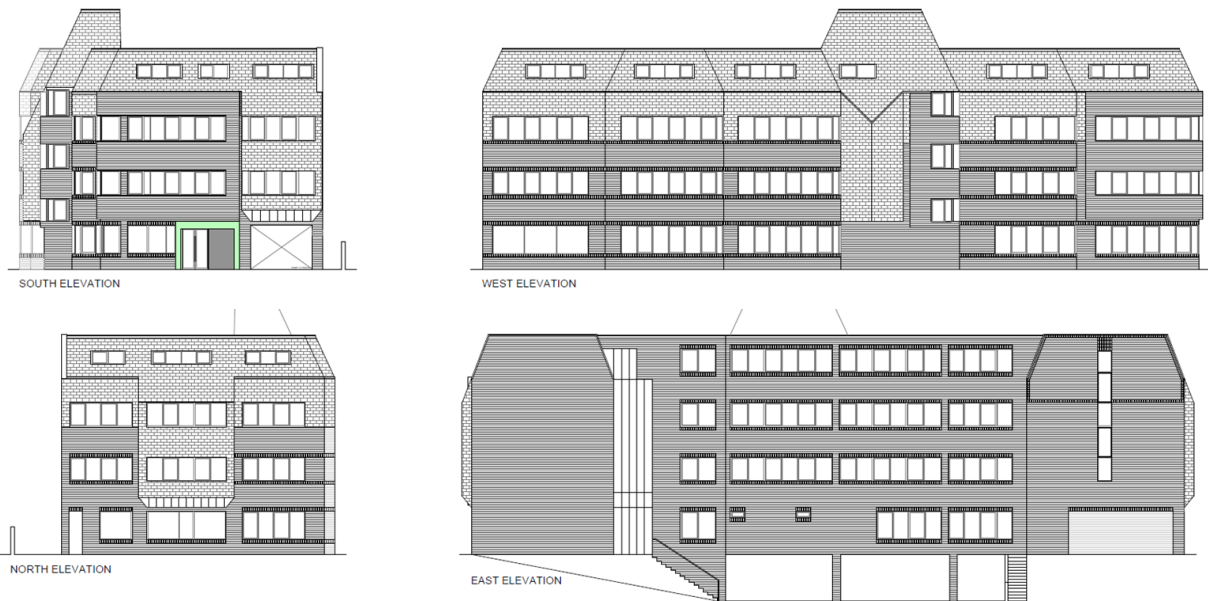
This application for external applications is needed in support of our client's current prior notification application (ref. PL/24/1572), in order to undertake the necessary work to the building to make it suitable for residential conversion and achieve a suitable degree of residential amenity for occupants. Most of the changes are needed to ensure compliance with Fire and/or Building Regulations.

The proposed changes are indicated on the proposed elevations at Figure 1 overleaf (shown alongside the existing elevations for context), and are summarised below:

- Areas with existing hanging tiles/slates (i.e., the present mansard roof) are to be replaced with standing seam steel cladding in anthracite/dark grey. This affects all elevations and is needed for Fire Regulations compliance;
- Within the new roofing system referred to above, new Velux windows are proposed on the north, south, and east elevations;
- Previous decorative cladding on the south and west elevations is to be removed, with the original brickwork made good. This is needed for Fire Regulations compliance;
- The full length window/panel recess on the east elevation is to be infilled with anthracite cedar cladding, other than at third floor level, where a window will remain to serve a bedroom. Compartmentation is needed between floors, hence the proposed removal of windows and the introduction of cladding, but given the present windows at first and second floor level would only be secondary windows, their removal is considered justified given the narrow nature of the feature and the limited extent of glazing to be removed;
- The existing high level ground floor windows on the east elevation are to be cut down to match the cill heights of adjacent windows at that level, in order to reintroduce some visual continuity to the ground floor fenestration pattern; and
- All existing windows are to be changed, albeit the new windows will also be of aluminium construction. The new windows will see glazing bars introduced, which are needed to pro

vide protection from falling and for ventilation purposes, both of which are required to satisfy Building Regulations for a residential scheme. Ground floor windows on the north and west elevations will also be narrowed to match those above, to ensure some visual consistency, and indeed are needed on the north elevation for corridor ventilation openings.

### Existing elevations



### Proposed elevations

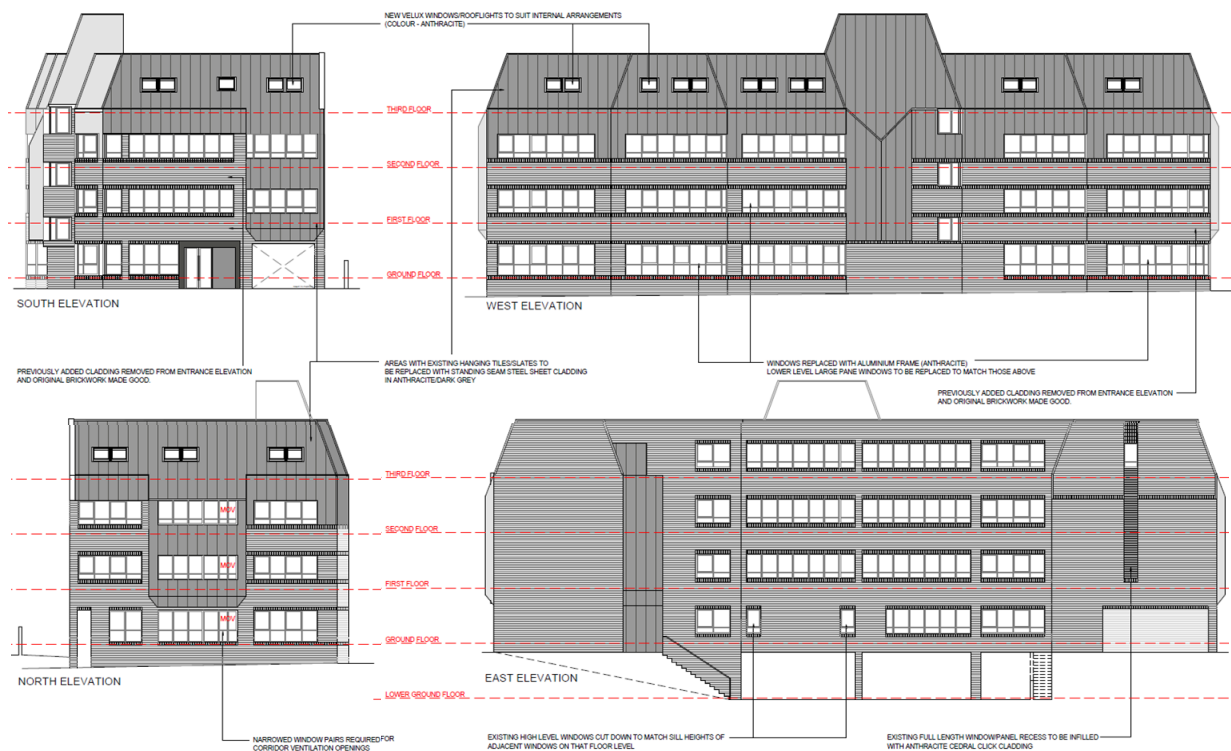


**Figure 1: Existing and Proposed Elevations**

## **Planning Considerations**

Based on the submitted existing and proposed elevations (see Figure 1), the general appearance of the existing building will not be unacceptably altered as a result of the proposals in our view. Whilst the appearance of the window units is set to change, the new windows will sit between the existing brick banding, with a consistent fenestration pattern maintained at each storey, thereby maintaining the architectural rhythm of the building. The use of grey colour aluminium windows is also reflective of the existing units, with the use of grey standing seam cladding for the roof similarly consistent with this. Moreover, many of the changes proposed are needed for technical and safety reasons, as explained earlier.

Given the above and with the building in question is not a sensitive building nor located in a sensitive area, the proposals are considered to comply with all relevant adopted development plan and NPPF policies in relation to design. Moreover, it is clear there will be no negative amenity implications for future residents or any neighbours as a result of the alterations.

## **Conclusions**

For the reasons stated in this letter, the current proposals represent an entirely appropriate form of development that would accord with all of the relevant development plan policies. As such, the proposals should be supported through the granting planning permission without delay, in accordance with the NPPF's presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Should you require any further information or wish to discuss any aspects of the above please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'David Marjoram', written in a cursive style.

David Marjoram  
**Principal Planner**