

PLANNING AND HERITAGE STATEMENT

86 London Street, Reading, RG1 4SJ

PLANNING AND HERITAGE STATEMENT TO SUPPORT PLANNING APPLICATION

Change of Use from Office (Class E) to Residential (Class C3)



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1. Introduction

This Planning and Heritage Statement is submitted on behalf of our client Mr. Philip Lee, in support of the proposed works at 86 London Street, a Grade II listed building situated in a designated conservation area in Reading. The proposed development seeks to convert the building from office use (E) to residential use (C3), with internal modifications to enhance functionality while respecting the historical character of the property. The works include the installation of en-suite bathrooms, internal reconfigurations, and cosmetic improvements to ensure the building remains suitable for residential use while preserving its heritage value.

2. Site and Context

The property at 86 London Street is a three-storey building with a basement. It is a Grade II listed building located within a designated conservation area in Reading. Given its historical and architectural significance, a sensitive approach to alterations and improvements is essential to ensure its heritage value is maintained while making it suitable for modern residential use.

3. Proposed Development

The proposed works include:

- **Conversion of Use:** Change of use from office (E) to residential (C3) to provide a more sustainable and appropriate function for the building.
- **Addition of En-Suite Bathrooms:** Installation of two en-suite bathrooms on both the first and second floors. Non-load bearing timber stud walls will be used to create these spaces, ensuring minimal impact on the original structure.
- **Basement Alterations:** Reconfiguration of internal walls to create more practical residential spaces, improving usability without altering the building's structural integrity.
- **New Flooring:** Replacement of worn-out flooring where necessary, using materials that complement the original character of the building.
- **Repainting of Walls and Surfaces:** Application of historically appropriate finishes that respect and enhance the building's existing character. All finishes will match the existing finishes to maintain consistency with the original design.

The external features will remain untouched.

4. Heritage and Conservation Considerations

The property's historical significance has been carefully considered in the design approach. All proposed works are internal and will not affect the external appearance or fabric of the building. The new en-suite bathrooms and basement alterations are designed to be reversible where possible, ensuring that the historical integrity of the property is maintained. Materials and finishes have been selected to align with the existing aesthetic, and no significant historical features will be removed or obscured. All finishes will match the existing finishes to ensure continuity with the original architectural details.

5. Policy Context

PLANNING AND HERITAGE STATEMENT

86 London Street, Reading, RG1 4SJ

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out national planning policy relating to the conservation of the historic environment. It advises that, in determining planning applications, "local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made to their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the asset's importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance" (paragraph 194, NPPF 2023).

Annex 2 of the NPPF defines a Heritage Asset as "a building, monument, site, place, area, or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions." Heritage assets are the valued components of the historic environment and include designated and non-designated heritage assets.

In determining planning applications, the NPPF advises that local planning authorities should take account of (paragraph 197, NPPF 2023):

- 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 vitality; and
- The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Specific guidance on the treatment of designated heritage assets (such as listed buildings) emphasizes the need to understand the significance of a heritage asset to determine impacts on the historic environment (paragraph 199, NPPF 2023). It advises that "when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm should require clear and convincing justification."

The Reading Borough Local Plan, adopted in November 2019, includes the relevant historic environment policy for the proposed development:

- Policy EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment

The Reading Core Strategy, adopted in January 2008 and altered in 2015, contains the following relevant historic environment policy:

- Policy CS33: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment

Policy CS33 states that historic features, areas of historic importance, and other elements of the historic environment, including their settings, will be protected and, where appropriate, enhanced. This includes:

- Listed Buildings;
- Conservation Areas;
- Other features with local or national designation, such as sites and features of archaeological importance and historic parks and gardens.

PLANNING AND HERITAGE STATEMENT

86 London Street, Reading, RG1 4SJ

Planning permission will only be granted where development has no adverse impact on historic assets and their settings. All proposals will be expected to protect and, where appropriate, enhance the character and appearance of the area in which they are located.

The Reading Central Area Action Plan, adopted in January 2009, contains policies related to the consideration of impacts on the settings of listed buildings and conservation areas. Policy RC4j applies to 25-31 London Street, but there is no specific policy for the southern end of London Street.

The Reading Sites and Detailed Policies Document, adopted in 2012, refers to guidance set out in the NPPF (2012) and to Policy CS33 of the Reading Core Strategy but does not include additional policies relating to the historic environment.

6. Compliance with Planning and Conservation Policies

The proposed development aligns with local and national planning policies, including:

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF): The works comply with the guidance on sustainable development and heritage asset conservation.

Local Development Plan: The conversion supports housing provision policies while respecting heritage assets.

Conservation Area Guidelines: Internal modifications ensure that the historical character is preserved in accordance with local conservation policies.

The proposed conversion complies with national and local planning policies that promote the sensitive adaptation of listed buildings to suitable modern uses while maintaining their heritage value. Specifically, the change of use aligns with the principles outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which encourages the conservation and sustainable use of heritage assets.

In addition, the proposals are consistent with Reading Borough Council's policies for the conservation of listed buildings and their sensitive adaptation for appropriate uses. The design and works proposed ensure that the building's historical significance is retained, and the overall impact on its character will be minimal.

7. Conclusion

The proposed works are necessary to adapt the building for modern residential use while preserving its historical significance. The alterations have been designed with sensitivity to the heritage context and comply with relevant planning policies. The development will enhance the long-term viability of the building, ensuring its continued use and appreciation within the community.

We respectfully request approval of this planning application for the change of use and internal alterations at 86 London Street, Reading, RG1 4SJ. The alterations will be carried out in a manner that is considerate to the building's history, and the change of use will secure the building's ongoing preservation and active use.