

Design and Access Statement

Proposed Conversion of Existing Mixed-Use Property to Four Residential Flats (Use Class C3)

Site Address: No. 1 Elgar Road, Reading, RG2 0BH

Applicant: Kathirgamanathan Balendran

Date: 31 May 2025

1. Introduction

This Design and Access Statement supports a full planning application for the conversion and extension of the existing mixed-use property at No. 1 Elgar Road, Reading. The current use includes a Class E commercial unit at ground floor and residential use (Class C3) above. The proposal seeks permission to convert the entire building into four high-quality self-contained residential flats, comprising a mix of 1-bedroom and 2-bedroom units. The scheme includes dormer extensions, internal reconfiguration, and minor external alterations.

2. Site Context and Description

The property is a two-storey end-of-terrace building with a basement and loft level, located at the corner of Elgar Road and Berkley Avenue. It features traditional brick construction and is set within a primarily residential neighbourhood. The site benefits from proximity to public transport, local shops, and Reading town centre. The property has an existing commercial shopfront and ancillary spaces, which are proposed to be fully converted to residential use.

3. Planning Context

This proposal aligns with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

Key applicable policies include:

- Policy H1: Supporting delivery of new housing
- Policy H5: Nationally described space standards
- Policy CC1 and CC6: Sustainable locations and accessibility
- Policy RL1: Supports residential uses in declining retail areas

4. Proposed Development

The proposed development consists of:

- Conversion of the ground floor commercial unit and upper floors into four self-contained flats.
- Basement and loft spaces will be incorporated into residential units via reconfiguration.
- Construction of dormer roof extensions to maximise usable floor space.
- Upgraded external finishes including removal of shopfront and enhancement of the front façade.
- New bin storage, secure access, and cycle parking as shown in the proposed plans.

5. Design Justification

Use: The transition to four residential flats reflects reduced commercial demand and high housing need.

Layout: All flats are designed for optimal space efficiency, daylighting, and functionality.

Scale and Massing: Proposed dormers are modest in scale and maintain roof symmetry.

Appearance: Modernised windows, removal of the shopfront, and enhanced landscaping improve the overall appearance.

6. Access and Servicing

Access: The site benefits from excellent pedestrian and transport connections. Separate entrances are provided for each flat where feasible, enhancing privacy and convenience.

Refuse: A dedicated area for waste and recycling is provided to the rear of the property.

Cycle Storage: Secure bicycle storage will be incorporated into the site layout.

Inclusive Access: The scheme aims to comply with Part M4(1) standards for accessibility.

7. Sustainability and Building Upgrades

Insulation and Energy Efficiency:

- All flats will be constructed/converted to comply with Part L standards for energy performance.
- High-efficiency insulation, glazing, and heating systems will be installed.

Structural Integrity:

- Structural surveys have been conducted and the design includes reinforcement of internal elements to support loft conversions and dormer extensions.

Ventilation and Fire Safety:

- Compliant mechanical and natural ventilation strategies.
- Smoke detection systems, protected escape routes, and fire separation walls in line with Part B.

Drainage:

- Existing drainage infrastructure will be retained and adapted for residential use, with Thames Water approval where necessary.

8. Summary and Conclusion

This application proposes a contextually sensitive and sustainable conversion of a disused mixed-use property into four residential flats. The scheme enhances the building's utility, appearance, and contribution to local housing provision while complying with Reading Borough Council's planning objectives.