

## **DELEGATED FUL PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT**

Ward: Abbey

App Ref: PL/25/0381

Address: 90 - 91 Friar Street, Reading, RG1 1EL

Proposal: Change of use of the basement, first and second floors of 90-91 Friar Street to form 2 no. 2-bedroom dwelling units (maisonettes), houses (use class C3) and the retention of the ground floor as a shop with associated alterations to the shop front.

Case Officer: Louise Coveney-Fuller

Agent; Mr Lloyd Rockall

Expiry date: (with e.o.t) 04.07.2025

### **APPLICATION SITE**

The application relates to a non-designated heritage asset; three storey historic mid terrace property on the south side of Friar Street. The building has been in Class E use but is currently vacant. The upper floors of the building were utilised as ancillary storage to the ground floor retail use. The area is characterised by retail uses at ground floor and is located within the Reading Central Area Central Core, Primary Shopping Area and Office Core. The building is located within an area of archaeological interest and adjoins a Grade II Listed Building the former Mitre Inn public house (no. 92 Friar Street) and is opposite Grade I Listed Greyfriars Church whilst in close proximity to Grade II listed W I Palmer Memorial Hall.

### **PROPOSAL**

Change of use of the basement, first and second floors of 90-91 Friar Street to form 2 no. 2-bedroom dwelling units (maisonettes), houses (use class C3) and the retention of the ground floor as a shop with associated alterations to the shop front.

### **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

PL/24/0604. - Change of use from shop (class E) to dwelling houses (class C3) to the first and second floors only to form 2 no. 2-bedroom dwelling units (maisonettes) and associated alterations to the shop front.- REFUSED

170501. Application for a change of use from A1 (Shop) to C3 (Dwelling Houses) to the first and second floors only to form 2x2 bed units. Alterations to shop front. APPROVED – not implemented

### **CONSULTATIONS**

A site noticed was displayed at the application site covering the consultation period.

No letters of representation have been received.

Heritage Officer:

No objection

**Equality Act 2010:**

In determining this application, the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. However, there is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application. Therefore, in terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

**LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT**

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. The following local and national planning policy and guidance is relevant to this application:

**National Policy**

National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (as amended)  
National Planning Practice Guidance 2014 onwards

**Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)**

CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development  
CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction  
CC3: Adaptation to Climate Change  
CC5: Waste Minimisation and Storage  
CC6: Accessibility and the Intensity of Development  
CC7: Design and the Public Realm  
CC8: Safeguarding Amenity  
CC9: Securing Infrastructure  
CR2: Design in Central Reading  
CR3: Public Realm in Central Reading  
EM1: Provision of Employment  
EN15: Air Quality  
EN1: Protection and enhancement of the historic environment  
EN2: Area of Archaeological Significance  
EN3: Enhancement of the Conservation Area  
EN6: New Development in a historic context  
H2: Density and Mix  
H5: Standards for New Housing  
H10: Private and Communal Outdoor Space  
OU5: Shopfronts and cash machines

**SPG/SPD**

Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2019)

## **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

### ***Principle of development***

The proposal entails a proposed change of use to the first and second floor of an existing vacant Class E use building, with retail on the ground floor and associated ancillary offices on the first and second floors, to Class C3 residential use for the first and second floors. A Class E use is proposed to be retained at ground floor level and will not result in the loss of any retail use at the site. Planning permission was granted to allow a change in use of the first and second floors in 2017 which was unimplemented.

The application site lies within an Article 4 area that restricts prior approval applications for a change of use to residential accommodation. The principle of a change of use to the first and second floor is considered acceptable, subject to meeting other policy requirements including impact on the locally listed building, safety and safeguarding amenity.

### ***Character and Design Considerations***

The application site is a non-designated heritage asset that is located opposite a Grade I listed Greyfriars Church, next to the grade II listed 92 Friar Street, in the vicinity of listed buildings. Although it is not specifically listed itself or located within a conservation area, the proposed changes are considered acceptable and will not result in significant harm to the character and appearance of the existing building or the wider street scene.

This submission is in line with the previously approved 170501 as it demonstrates that the conversion of the first and second floors can be achieved without substantially changing the historic shopfront.

The proposal is considered to be of an acceptable design and subject to appropriate conditions it will comply with Policies CC7, EN1, EN3 and EN6 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019), which seeks, amongst other things, to ensure that new development proposals conserve, sustain and enhance designated and non-designated heritage assets, take into account the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the asset and ensure new development is integrated into the historic character and local distinctiveness defined by the settings of listed buildings in which they are located in accordance with the advice in the Framework.

### ***Housing Mix***

Policy H2 requires that developments provide an appropriate density and mix of residential development, in accordance with the findings of a housing market assessment. The supporting text to this policy states that the provision of at least an element of family housing in all developments is a priority, based on the findings of the Berkshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2016) (SHMA).

The policy also states that the appropriate density and mix of residential development will be informed by the characteristics of the area in which it is located and accessibility. Given the sites location within the defined Reading Centre and Central Core, it is considered that the

proposed 2 x 2 bed units would be an appropriate mix in this specific instance. In accordance with Policy H2.

### ***Amenity Considerations***

#### ***Neighbour amenity***

The change of use and alterations are not considered to result in any material loss of light, overbearing impact or privacy given the position and nature of the surrounding properties. As such, it is not considered that the proposed change of use in itself would cause any significant adverse amenity impacts for neighbouring and nearby occupiers. This is in terms of overlooking, outlook, sense of enclosure, daylight/sunlight and overshadowing matters. As such, the proposals are considered to comply with policy CC8.

#### ***Amenity for future occupiers***

Policy CC8 seeks that new development creates a quality living environment for existing and future residents. The proposed room sizes are considered reasonably sized, with light to bedrooms at the rear not considered to be so detrimental to warrant a refusal on this basis alone. The accommodation was previously considered acceptable and remains largely unchanged from the previously approved first and second floor layouts.

The proposed gross internal floor areas of the new dwellings are as follows;

Unit 1 (two bedroom / 3 person) 64m<sup>2</sup> •

Unit 2 (two bedroom / 3 person) 64m<sup>2</sup>

As is the case with the majority of town centre dwellings, meaningful amenity space is not capable of being provided on site. Given the location of the site and access to nearby public amenities it is considered that in this instance the lack of amenity space is acceptable and is not considered to unduly compromise the overall quality of accommodation proposed.

### ***Sustainability***

*Policy CC2 of the Reading Local Plan seeks the proposal, as a 'creation of new residential units through Conversion', to comply with BREEAM Level of 'Very Good'. The application is accompanied by a BREEAM Pre-Assessment Estimator which identifies that this rating is achievable. It is considered acceptable to deal with this matter by way of a suitably worded condition. In accordance with CC2. In accordance with Policy CC2 of the Reading Local Plan*

## **CONCLUSION**

It is considered that the proposed change of use is acceptable in principle and would not result in an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the existing building, or the wider surrounding conservation area nor would the development result in an adverse impact on the amenity of neighbouring properties or future occupants.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**GRANT** Planning Permission subject to conditions.