

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Katesgrove

App Ref: a) PL/25/0426 Full planning permission

App Ref: b) PL/25/0427 Consent to display an advertisement

Address: 25-31 LONDON STREET, READING, RG1 4PS

Proposal:

a) Installation of new entrance door and ramped access on north elevation.

b) Display of four ground floor non-illuminated fascia signs, three on the north elevation and one on the west elevation (amended description)

Applicant: Mr Richard Elam

Received date: a) 19/03/2025 b) 19/03/2025

Extended Target Decision date: a) 04/07/2025 b) 04/07/2025

Case Officer: Nathalie Weekes

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

25-31 London Street is a five storey building known as Central Point, located on the eastern side of London Street, on the corner with Queen's Road. The building is in lawful use as Class E offices, based on the planning history (see below).

Prior approval was granted on 20 December 2024 under Class MA Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended) for the change of use of the first to fourth floors to 24 self-contained residential flats.

The building is not listed, but is located within the Market Place / London Street Conservation Area. Within the Conservation Area Appraisal, the building is not identified as a building of townscape merit, although trees to the north of the building are identified as significant trees. Moreover, the three neighbouring buildings to the south are all statutory listed buildings, including the landmark 33 London St (Grade II – presently occupied by 'Hotel 1843 x Calcio Bar & Eatery', formerly the Great Expectations pub and hotel).



Extract from Market Place / London Street Conservation Area Appraisal

The site is located within the Reading Central Area as defined by Policy CR1 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019. It is also within an air quality management area (Policy EN15) and area of archaeological potential (Policy EN2). The site is wholly within Flood Zone 1.

The site falls outside of the Article 4 area within Reading, which restricts prior approval changes of use.

Relevant Planning History

PL/96/0295 - Change of use of part of ground floor to A2 (Financial & Professional Services). Approved 27/06/1996.

PL/08/0886 (08/00863/FL) - Refurbishment of existing office building, external glass canopy, hard landscaping to front, re-surfacing car park/yard and air conditioning condenser units and transformer unit in rear yard. Granted 05/12/2008.

PL/09/0317 - Change of use of ground floor from A2 (Financial Services) to B1(a) offices and retention of upper floors as B1(a) offices. Refurbishment of existing office building, external glass canopy, landscaping to front, re-surfacing and re-marking of the car park/yard and air conditioning condenser units and transformer unit in the rear yard (Resubmission of 08/00863/FUL). Granted 06/04/2009.

PL/09/1646 - Minor amendment to permitted application 09/00184/FUL. Agreed 01/12/2009.

PL/10/0270 - Non material change to planning permission 08/00863/FUL for new acoustic louvres and relocation of air conditioning units to plant room on roof. Agreed 10/02/2010.

PL/10/0741 - Discharge of conditions 2, and 8 of planning consent 08/00863/FUL. Discharged 01/07/2010.

PL/10/1315 - Discharge of conditions 3 and 4 of planning permission 08/00863/FUL.M Approved 23/11/20210.

PL/24/0789 - Application for change of use of the 2nd and 3rd Floors of 25-31 London Street from Class E (Commercial Offices) to Class F1 (Learning and Non-residential Institutions); or Class E (Commercial Offices) (amended description). Granted 20/09/2024.

PL/24/1504 - Change of use of floors 1-4 from Class E (offices) to Class C3 (dwellinghouses) to comprise 24 residential apartments. Prior Notification under Class MA, Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended). - Granted 20/12/2024

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.

a) App Ref: PL/25/0426 Full planning permission

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The proposed works are to form a new entrance into ground floor unit, existing window opening to be replaced with power assisted door accessed via a ramp.

Plans considered

VAD.23.17-08_02 231 Rev C Proposed Ground Floor & Elevations

As received 1 July 2025

Construction Management Strategy, 2 May 2025 by Vaughan Architecture

VAD.23.17-08_02 132 Rev A Site Setup Plan

As received 3 June 2025

VAD.23.17-08_02_RevB_131_Existing_Front

~~VAD.23.17-08_02_RevB_231_Proposed_Front~~
As received 11 April 2025

VAD.23.17-08_02_Planning_Statement_Front
~~VAD.23.17-08_02_RevA_231_Proposed_Front~~
~~VAD.23.17-08_02_RevA_131_Existing_Front~~
CIL
VAD.23.17-08_02 100 Rev A Location Plan
PP-13866906v1 Location plan
As received 19 March 2025

3. CONSULTATIONS

A site notice was displayed at the site on 9 May 2025 for the required 21 day statutory consultation period. An advert was published in a local newspaper on 15 May 2025.
No letters of representation have been received.

The following were consulted:

- Conservation Officer – No objections
- Transport Development Control - No objections subject to a requirement for a CMS. A 1:15 ramped access is to be introduced designed to satisfy the requirements of Approved Document 'M'. The suggested gradients are deemed acceptable. RBC Streetworks have no objections subject to an application for the correct highways licence.
- Conservation Area Advisory Committee Consultations – No response was received at the time of writing the report
- Access Officer Consultations – No objections
- Building Control Consultations – No objection was received

4. 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'. However the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making (NPPF paragraph 12).

In this regard, the NPPF states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the Reading Local Plan 2019.

Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special interest which it possesses.

Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority in the exercise of its functions to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

Reading Borough Local Plan 2019

CC1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
CC7: Design and the Public Realm
CC8: Safeguarding Amenity

EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
EN3: Enhancement of Conservation areas
EN6: New Development in a Historic Context
OU5: Shopfronts and Cash Machines
CR1 Definition of Central Reading
CR2: Design in Central Reading

SPD
Design Guide for Shopfronts Adopted January 2022

Other guidance
Market Place / London Street Conservation Area Appraisal

Local Plan Update

The current version of the Local Plan (adopted in November 2019) turned five years old on Tuesday 5th November 2024. The Local Plan was reviewed in March 2023 and around half of the policies in the plan are considered still up to date. However, the rest need to be considered for updating to reflect changing circumstances and national policy. A consultation version of the draft updated version of the Local Plan was published on 6th November 2024. Subsequent to this consultation a submission draft was sent to the Secretary of State on 9th May 2025. At the time of writing, the examination-in-public of the partial update to the local plan is scheduled to take place in late 2025.

Although there is a five-year period for carrying out a review of a plan after it is adopted, nothing in the NPPF or elsewhere says that policies automatically become “out of date” when they are five years old. It is a matter of planning judgement rather than legal fact whether a plan or policies within it are out-of-date. This will depend on whether they have been overtaken by things that have happened since the plan was adopted, either on the ground or through changes in national policy, for example.

Officer advice in respect of the Local Plan policies pertinent to this application listed above is that they remain in accordance with national policy and that the objectives of those policies remains very similar in the draft updated Local Plan. Therefore, they can continue to be afforded weight in the advice given below and are not considered to be ‘out of date’.

5. APPRAISAL

Design and Impact on the Historic Character of the Building and Visual Amenity of the Area

The proposal seeks to allow the ground floor unit to be independently accessed from other parts of the Centre Point building that have permission for a change of use to residential accommodation. The new entrance will be fitted within an existing opening with an external ramp. Materials are proposed to match the existing building. The proposal is to be constructed to meet Part M building regulation requirements.

The RBC Conservation officer has no objections to the proposed plans. The proposed additional accessible entrance is not considered to have a significant impact on the historic character of the Conservation area subject to conditions being adhered to (Policy EN1, EN3, EN6, CC7, CR2).

The addition of signage on the external elevations is to be dealt with under a separate advert consent application.

Transport

Transport have no objections to the proposed works.

Amenity

The proposed separate door access and ramped approach will provide improved ease of access to the ground floor unit, to the benefit of all future users of the ground floor unit at this point. This is welcomed and supported from an amenity perspective, by providing access for all users.

6 RECOMMENDATION: PL/25/0426 Full planning permission

GRANT planning permission

Conditions

1. Time Limit
2. Approved Plans
3. Materials

Informatives

Terms

Highway

Construction work hours

P&P

b) App Ref: PL/25/0427 Consent to display an advertisement

7. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The proposal is for the installation of new lightweight aluminium tray fascia non-illuminated signage consisting three grey signs measuring 600 x 3000 stating dental care, centre point Reading in a white lettering on the north elevation frontage and one fascia on the west elevation frontage.

Plans considered

VAD.23.17-08_02 230 Rev D Signage Application Proposed Site and Elevations

As received 01/07/2025

~~VAD.23.17-08_02 RevC 230 Proposed Signage~~

As received 12 June 2025

Construction Management Strategy, 2 May 2025 by Vaughan Architecture

VAD.23.17-08_02 132 Rev A Site Setup Plan

As received 3 June 2025

130 Rev B Existing site and elevations

~~VAD.23.17-08_02 230 Rev B Proposed site and elevations~~

As received 11 April 2025

VAD.23.17-08_02 100 Rev A Site Location Plan

~~VAD.23.17-08_02 130 Rev A Existing site and elevations~~

~~VAD.23.17-08_02 230 Rev A Proposed site and elevations~~

As received 19 March 2025

8. CONSULTATIONS

A site notice was displayed at the site on 9 May 2025. An advert was published in a local newspaper on 15 May 2025.

No letters of representation have been received.

The following were consulted:

- Conservation Officer – No objections, the proposed signage would still result in some clutter due to the number of the signs, although I find the proposed materials, design and size of each sign is acceptable. A revised scheme would be preferred with fewer signs above the windows.
Case officer – the agent agreed to option B as recommended by the RBC Conservation officer.
- Transport Development Control – No objection
- Conservation Area Advisory Committee Consultations – No comments were received at the time of writing this report.

9. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 requires the Local Planning Authority to exercise its powers under these regulations in the interests of amenity and public safety taking into account the provisions of the development plan, so far as they are material; and any other relevant factors. Regulation 3 states that factors relevant to amenity include the general characteristics of the locality, including the presence of any feature of historic, architectural, cultural, or similar interest.

Factors relevant to public safety include highway safety and whether the advert would hinder security or surveillance devices, including speed cameras.

Relevant Policies

The application has been assessed against the following policies:

National

National Planning Policy Framework 2024;

Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019)

- CC7: Design and the Public Realm
- CR2: Design in Central Reading
- CC8: Safeguarding Amenity
- OU4: Advertisements
- OU5: Shopfronts and Cash Machines
- EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
- EN3: Enhancement of Conservation Areas
- EN6: New development in a Historic Context

SPD

Design Guide for Shopfronts Adopted January 2022

10. APPRAISAL

Policies OU4 and OU5 state advertisements and shopfronts will respect the building or structure on which they are located and/or their surroundings and setting in terms of size, location, design, materials, colour, noise, lettering, amount and type of text, illumination and luminance, and will not have a detrimental effect on public safety.

The signs will be an addition to the frontage of the building. Following discussions with the agent the number of fascia signs proposed was reduced to reduce visual clutter and to be non illuminated.

Transport have no objections to the proposed non illuminated signage (Policy OU4).

The revised plans are considered acceptable. The proposed signs are considered to have a less than substantial level of harm at the lowest level due to the number of signs proposed. However, it will have a negligible impact on nearby listed buildings and within the London Street Conservation area.

Conclusion

The development has been assessed and the works are considered to be in accordance with the above relevant policies and Advertisement Consent can be granted. The signage is not considered to have a detrimental impact on amenity (including visual amenity associated with the historic environment), or public safety.

11 RECOMMENDATION

GRANT advertisement consent

Standard conditions

Approved plans

Informative

Terms

P&P