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MATHEWSON WATERS ARCHITECTS



DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

Change of use of Existing Doctor's Surgery

to Two One Bedroom Flats at:

79, Russell Street, Reading, RG1 7XG



Introduction:

This statement has been prepared by Mathewson Waters Architects on behalf of the applicants, Dr Manohar Swami and Dr Sadhana Swami.

The purpose of this design and access statement is to explain:

“the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the proposed development and how issues relating to access to the development have been dealt with”

Para. 80, DCLG Circular 01/2006

This statement should be read in conjunction with the plans and other supporting documents that have been submitted with the planning application.

The application building:



Photograph 1: View of the surgery from the junction with Tilehurst Road

The existing building is a former semi-detached late Victorian property, the ground floor of which was converted into a doctors' surgery in 1989 by the applicants, Dr Manohar and Dr Sadhana Swami. A single storey extension was added on the rear, eastern side of the building at the same time. The Drs Swami have run their busy practice from Russell Street for 36 years during which time it has expanded into the large practice group that it is now with two other larger surgeries at Burghfield Health Centre and at Coley Park. The Russell Street Surgery building is less fit-for-purpose than it once was with outdated spaces for the work required. It currently houses two consulting rooms, a treatment room, a waiting room/ reception area, two administration rooms and sanitary accommodation. The first floor of the building is a two-bedroom flat, accessed from a doorway leading to a staircase on the south elevation. The first floor flat does not form part of this change of use application.

The practice group gained consent in March 2024 (ref. PL/24/1693) for three additional consulting rooms and a staff room at the Coley Park Surgery, located at 80, Wensley Road, RG1 6DN. The Drs Swami will be retiring at the end of this year and the practice group has made the decision to close the surgery at Russell Street and move the patients and staff to Coley Park which is 1.28 kilometres away (0.8 miles) to the south. This move has been approved by the NHS. The ground floor of the building will then become vacant.



Photograph 2: The surgery and adjoining building viewed from the front (west)



Photograph 3: The building viewed from the side (south) showing the access door into the first floor flat, known as number 79A.



Photograph 4: The track to the right of the site which leads to the existing access at the rear



Photograph 5: The building viewed from the rear (east) and the existing access



Photograph 6: The building view on entering the building



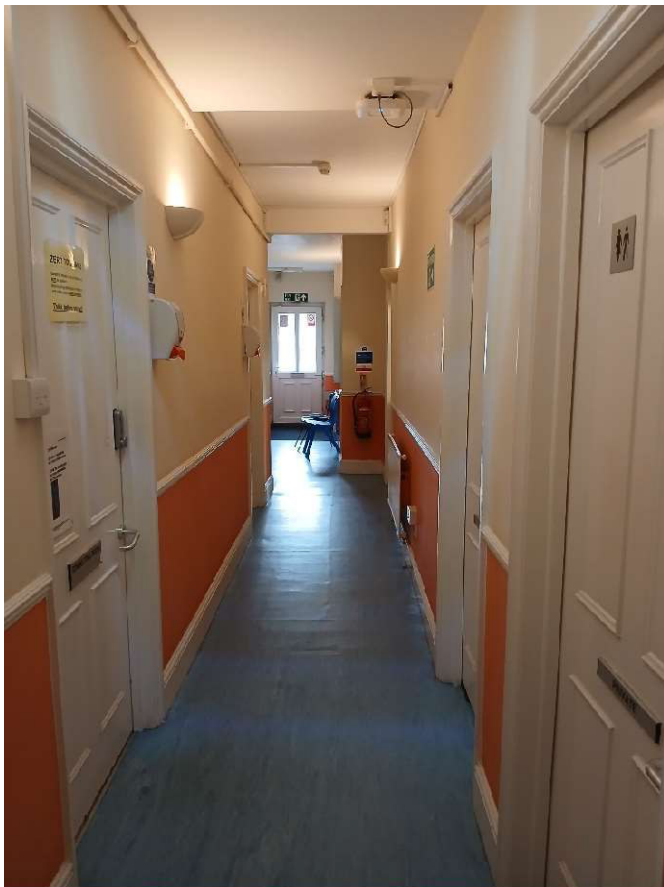
Photograph 7: The original fireplace and chimney breast in the waiting room



Photograph 8: The reception area and waiting room



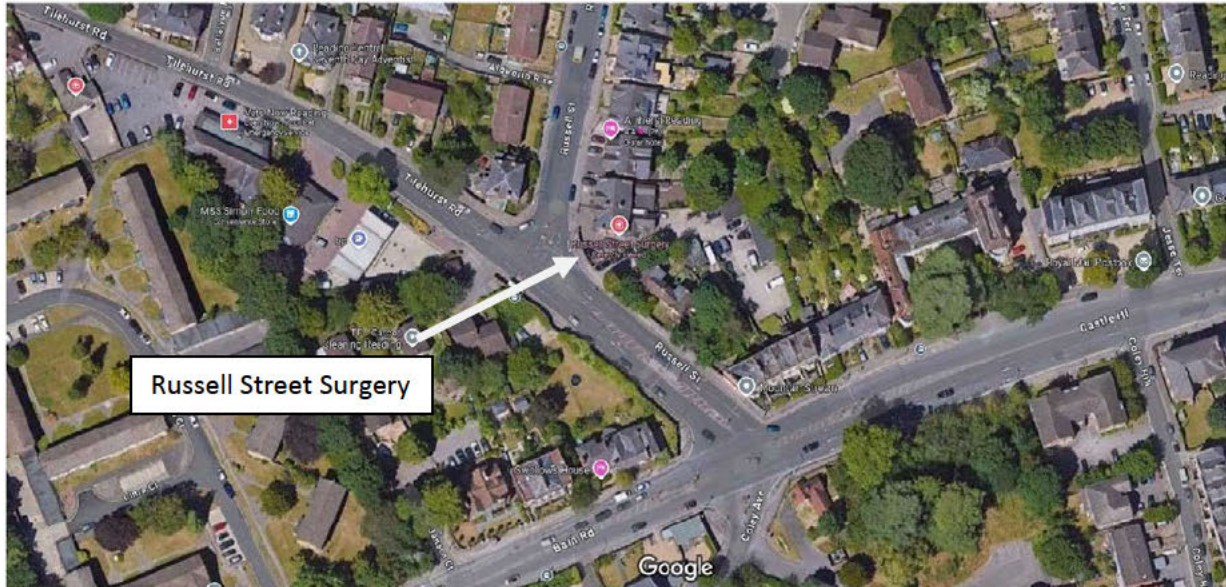
Photograph 9: The bay window in the waiting room



Photograph 10: The corridor, looking back towards the main entrance

The application site:

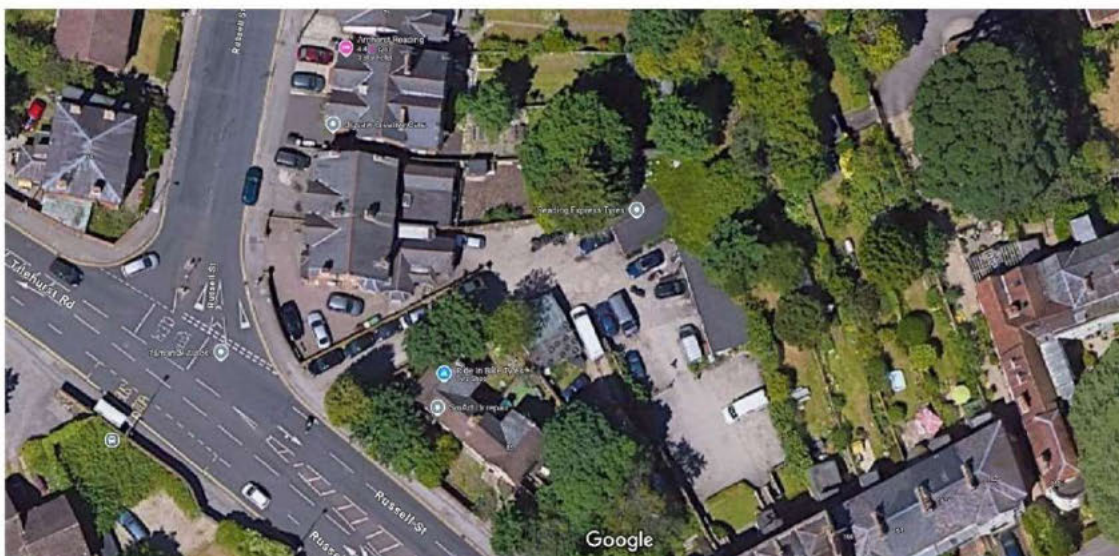
Russell Street is in the centre of Reading heading northwest off the A4 at the junction with Coley Avenue to the south, at the point where the Bath Road changes to Castle Hill, just east of the Inner Distribution Road (IDR) and the Hexagon roundabout.



Extract 1: Google overhead view of the site.

Imagery ©2025 Airbus, Maxar Technologies, Map data ©2025 20 m

The site is just inside a town Conservation Area. The surgery sits within a triangular plot, on the right-hand inside corner of Russell Street where it changes direction towards the northeast. There is vehicular access off Russell Street at the front, into a block-paved parking area. This is edged with a brick wall which continues along the boundary to the southeast, the other side of which is a bitumen macadam track leading to the rear of the site. Here there is further vehicular access into the property. Beyond that there is a busy vehicle car tyre business and rear access into other adjacent properties.



Extract 2: Enlarged view of Google overhead view.

Imagery ©2025 Airbus, Map data ©2025 5 m

Planning history

In July 1948, the Town & Country Planning Act came into force, from which date any new development required planning permission. There are no records available on Reading Borough Council's website for previous planning applications on this site.

The application proposal:

This Full Planning application is for the change of use of an existing doctors' surgery into two flats, each with one bedroom.

The proposal is fully contained on the ground floor of the building, within the existing footprint. There is a logical dividing line between the early original part of the building and the 1989 extension and this will be utilized to create the party wall between the two proposed flats.



Photograph 11: The part of the building which forms the 1989 extension, which will become Flat 2

The proposal will create two one bedroom flats each with an open plan space accommodating a living room, dining area and kitchen, a double bedroom, shower room and storage space. Flat 1 will retain the existing WC which will remain separate from the new shower room.



Photograph 12: The proposed entrance into Flat 1

Flat 1 will be accessed via the current main entrance/ front door to the surgery. Flat 2 will be accessed via the existing fire door to the rear, on the south elevation of the building, which currently opens outwards. This will be altered to open inwards with no change to the structural opening.



Photograph 13: The proposed entrance into Flat 2



Photograph 14: The rear external wall which will have a window inserted to match the one adjacent, mirrored on the centre-line of the gable

External alterations to the building's appearance will be minimal: A gabled canopy, supported on gallows brackets will be erected over the door into Flat 2 to give some protection from the weather. The roof of the new canopy will have a slate finish to match existing and the gable will have similar detailing to that of the existing canopy over the front door; although this

will be in white UPVC rather than painted timber. A new window will be inserted into the east elevation. This will provide additional natural light into Flat 2 living room area. The new opening will be the same size and shape as the existing adjacent window, with a brick arch to match. The

brickwork will be carefully chosen to match existing in colour, style and texture. The window will be white UPVC to match existing.

There is a need to have a regard for how the appearance of the building will be impacted by the proposal, given that the site is within the Conservation Area. The ground floor will be returned to its former use as residential accommodation; although this time as two flats rather than the ground floor of a single two storey dwelling. The works are mainly internal. The work to the outside of the building is minimal and comprises the installation of a new window and new canopy only. The proposed changes are located towards or at the rear of the building meaning that they are unlikely to be noticed within the street scene. The work will be done in such a way as to be as sympathetic to the appearance of the original building as possible, thus respecting the character and nature of the location and setting. The appearance of the building and its setting within the Conservation Area are very unlikely to be negatively impacted by the proposed work.

The position of the proposed new window, size of the existing plot and distance to neighbouring buildings will ensure that the new window will not impact negatively on neighbouring residents in respect of overlooking, noise or sun/ daylight.

It is also necessary to consider the impact the closure of the surgery will have on the local community. Existing staff will continue to work for the practice group. All staff (NHS and administrative) currently rotate between the three practice group buildings and this will continue between the remaining two once the surgery at Russell Street closes. Patients registered with the practice group have been given three months' notice in advance of the planned closure at the end of October 2025. Appointments and procedures which would have been conducted at Russell Street by NHS staff will be carried out in the new consultation rooms at Coley Park. A Mutual Agreement, signed by the partners, confirming the planned closure of Russell Street Surgery is included in Appendix 1.

There can be up to 30 appointments per day at the surgery during Monday to Friday, many of the patients visiting by car. The surgery is also open every other Saturday morning. Vehicle movements will thus be significantly reduced by the change of use during these times, both within the site itself and on the adjacent road which can be a busy T-junction during peak times.

Photograph 15: Looking south towards the surgery on the left and the T-junction with Tilehurst Road



Parking arrangements are further discussed below but one particular point to note is that the surgery currently has two spaces allocated for Doctor's parking on the street just north of the site. With the closure of the surgery, these car parking spaces will be freed up for use by local residents, their visitors and by delivery drivers.



Photograph 16: Looking northeast towards the two dedicated on street parking spaces marked 'DOCTORS'. Inset, close up of the wording.

Flood Risk

The Flood Risk for Planning Map is included in Appendix 2. This details the site as within Flood Zone 1, an area with a low probability of flooding. The site is not within a critical drainage area and the site area is less than 1 hectare. Therefore a Flood Risk Assessment is not required to support this application.

Waste Storage

Russell Street Surgery currently has one 1100 litre bin and two standard 240 litre wheelie bins for general waste, recycling and clinical waste. These are stored within the driveway alongside two 240 litre wheelie bins used by number 79A for general waste and recycling. With the change of use, the number of waste bins is expected to be reduced to two 1100 litre bins, for general waste and recycling, shared between the two new flats and number 79A. The existing waste storage area will be retained and it will easily accommodate the reduced number of waste storage containers.



Photograph 17: The existing waste storage area which will continue to be used. When the photograph was taken one of the recycling bins was in the street awaiting collection.

Biodiversity

Since the development proposal is within the existing footprint of the building, it is exempt from the mandatory requirements of Biodiversity Net Gain legislation in that the development is impacting less than 25 metre squared of habitat.

In addition, the site is completely covered in existing sealed surfaces, comprising the building, non-permeable block paving to the parking area at the front, concrete at the side and bitumen macadam (tarmac) at the rear. These are assigned a zero score in the statutory biodiversity metric, meaning that these surfaces are effectively exempted from the 10% net gain requirement.

There are no existing landscape features within the site which could be affected by the development.

Access and Parking

No alterations are proposed to the access from the highway on to the property.

The existing door into the building at the front is fully accessible and this will be used as the entrance for the newly created Flat 1. The existing fire egress door to the rear, on the south elevation of the building, will be used for the entrance to the new Flat 2. This has level access from the parking area to the entrance, however, it does not currently have a level threshold and this will be upgraded in line with the current Building Regulations.

The building currently has parking for four vehicles within the parking area at the front and side of the building. One of these is for use by number 79A. Another is marked for disabled use only and provides accessible (non-standard) parking for visitors to the surgery. There are also two car parking spaces at the rear of the building for use by surgery staff. The access at the rear will be retained and new gates will be added, however, these two parking spaces will be lost with the creation of a private amenity space for shared use by the occupants of the building.



Photograph 18 & 19: Elevational view of the type of new gates proposed on the rear access; from the inside, left (proposed shared private amenity space) and from the outside, right (track)

There is dedicated parallel parking on the road, outside the site, for two cars for the doctors' use (as discussed above). These will no longer be required following the change of use and they will be returned to general use by residents and their visitors.

The 'Revised Standards and Design Supplementary Planning Document' was adopted by Reading Borough Council in October 2011. This details Russell Street as being within Zone 2 Primary Core Area, well served by public transport. The requirement within Zone 2 for parking for one and two bedroom flats is one space per unit. The proposed site plan submitted as part of this application illustrates the proposed new arrangement for parking on the site. Three parking spaces will be provided within the existing parking area, one for each flat; the two new one bedroom flats created by the change of use and the existing two bedroom flat on the first floor of the building (79A).

Conclusion

The building is due to become vacant at the end of October 2025 with the planned move from Russell Street Surgery to Coley Park. The proposed change of use to two one bedroom flats will create much needed more affordable accommodation within the local area.

There is likely to be a reduction in vehicular movements during Monday to Saturday and the required parking for the proposed flats is greatly reduced from the current situation.

The appearance of the application building and its setting within the Conservation Area are unlikely to be negatively impacted by the proposal.

Marianne L Smith

BA. DipArch. RIBA

July 2025

Appendix 1 : Mutual Agreement for Russell Group Practice

Appendix 2 : Flood Map for Planning – 79, Russell Street, Reading

Flood map for planning

Your reference
79 Russell St, Reading

Location (easting/northing)
470806/173042

Created
9 June 2025 12:37

Your selected location is in flood zone 1, an area with a low probability of flooding.

You will need to do a flood risk assessment if your site is **any of the following**:

- bigger than 1 hectare (ha)
- in an area with critical drainage problems as notified by the Environment Agency
- identified as being at increased flood risk in future by the local authority's strategic flood risk assessment
- at risk from other sources of flooding (such as surface water or reservoirs) and its development would increase the vulnerability of its use (such as constructing an office on an undeveloped site or converting a shop to a dwelling)

Notes

The flood map for planning shows river and sea flooding data only. It doesn't include other sources of flooding. It is for use in development planning and flood risk assessments.

This information relates to the selected location and is not specific to any property within it. The map is updated regularly and is correct at the time of printing.

Flood risk data is covered by the Open Government Licence which sets out the terms and conditions for using government data. <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3>

Use of the address and mapping data is subject to Ordnance Survey public viewing terms under Crown copyright and database rights 2025 AC0000807064. <https://flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk/os-terms>



Flood map for planning

Your reference
79 Russell St, Reading

Location (easting/northing)
470806/173042

Scale
1:2,500

Created
9 Jun 2025 12:38

-  Selected area
-  Flood zone 3
-  Flood zone 2
-  Flood zone 1
-  Flood defence
-  Main river
-  Water storage area


0 20 40 60m