Tel - 0118 951 08 55 / Fax - 0118 951 08 66
E-mail - chriskeen@keenpartnership.co.uk
www.keenpartnership.co.uk

The Courtyard, Edinburgh Road, Reading Berkshire RG30 2UA

THE KEEN PARTNERSHIP

Planning Statement
Site Address: 155 Oxford Road, Reading, RG1 7UY
Proposal: Change of use of the first floor to a self-contained flat

1. Introduction

This Planning Statement is submitted in support of a full planning application for the conversion of the first floor at 155 Oxford Road, Reading, into a self-contained residential flat.
The unit has been vacant for approximately three years. Bringing it back into use represents an important opportunity to enhance the building's efficiency, deliver additional housing in a sustainable location, and contribute to Reading Borough Council's strategic objectives to reduce vacancy and increase housing supply.

The building is Grade II listed, and a detailed Heritage Statement has been prepared by Heritage Fusion to accompany this application. The Heritage Statement assesses the building's historic significance and demonstrates that the proposed conversion will preserve its architectural and historic interest.

2. Site and Surroundings
The application site is a two-storey mid-terrace building on the southern side of Oxford Road, a key corridor into Reading town centre. The ground floor is in commercial use, with residential accommodation established at upper levels.
The surrounding area has a vibrant, mixed-use character, with retail, food, and service businesses at street level and residential units above. The site benefits from excellent public transport links, proximity to Reading town centre, and a wide range of local facilities, making it an ideal and sustainable location for additional residential accommodation.

3. Planning History
The principle of residential use at upper levels is long established, with multiple applications confirming residential conversions and lawful use. The key history is as follows:

- **PL/24/0748** – Top Flat, 155 Oxford Road used as a self-contained dwelling for more than 10 years. *Approved* (Received: 11/06/2024, Decision: 20/12/2024).
- **PL/24/0749** – Flat 3, 8 Goldsmid Road, Reading, RG1 LRR used as a self-contained flat for more than 10 years. *Approved (Decision 8/11/24) (*accessed from the rear of the building)
- **PL/24/0750 –** Flat 4, 8 Goldsmid Road, Reading, RG1 LRR used as a self-contained flat for more than 10 years. *Approved (Decision 08/11/24) (*accessed from the rear of the building)
- **PL/08/1631** – Discharge of conditions 4, 5, 6 and 9 relating to permitted application 06/01525/FUL. *Split Decision* (Received: 05/11/2008, Decision: 30/12/2008).
- **PL/06/1123** – Change of use from A2 (Offices) to residential to form 4 self-contained flats. *Permitted subject to Legal Agreement* (Received: 13/12/2006, Decision: 29/03/2007).
- **PL/06/1122** – Conversion from existing A2 use on upper floors to residential to form 4 self-contained flats. *Approved* (Received: 13/12/2006, Decision: 20/03/2007).
- **PL/06/0943** – Conversion from existing use on upper floors to residential to form four self-contained flats. *Refused* (Received: 29/06/2006, Decision: 16/10/2006).
- **PL/05/0449** – Installation of 4 no. conservation roof lights to the front elevation. *Refused* (Received: 12/10/2005, Decision: 19/12/2005).
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This history demonstrates the Council's support for residential accommodation within the upper parts of the building, most recently confirmed by the lawful use approval (PL/24/0748)

4. The Proposal
The proposal seeks to convert the currently vacant first floor into a self-contained flat. The works will be limited to internal reconfiguration to provide a kitchen, living space, bedroom(s), and bathroom. We also propose to introduce secondary glazing to the windows due to the constraints associated with a listed building, this would alleviate any external work but still attenuate noise.
No external alterations are proposed. The commercial use at ground floor level will be retained, ensuring the mixed-use character of the property remains intact.

5. Planning Policy Context

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- **Paragraph 11**: presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- **Chapter 5**: requires local planning authorities to significantly boost housing supply and make effective use of existing buildings.

- **Paragraph 120(d)**: encourages the reuse of vacant and underused buildings to support housing delivery.
- **Chapter 11**: promotes the effective use of land, including previously developed and vacant land.

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

- **Policy H2 – Provision of Housing**: supports housing delivery in appropriate and sustainable locations, including the reuse of existing buildings.
- **Policy H5 – Standards for New Housing**: ensures new residential units meet national space standards and provide adequate internal and external amenity.
- **Policy CC6 – Accessibility and the Intensity of Development**: encourages development in locations with good public transport and access to services.
- **Policy CC7 – Design and the Public Realm**: requires development to respect local character and design principles.
- **Policy RL1 – Network and Hierarchy of Centres**: supports residential use above commercial units within centres such as Oxford Road.

6. Assessment

Principle of Development

The reuse of vacant space for housing is strongly supported by both national and local policy. The application site is highly sustainable, located within walking distance of Reading town centre, transport links, and local services. The upper floors already benefit from residential consent, and the proposal continues this established use pattern.

Vacancy and Housing Supply

The first floor has been vacant for three years, contributing nothing to the local economy or housing stock. The proposal will bring this unit back into use, providing a much-needed home in Reading. This aligns directly with NPPF guidance on reusing vacant buildings and with Reading Borough Council's strategic housing policies, which seek to maximise the use of existing stock and reduce empty properties.

Design and Amenity

The conversion involves only internal works, with no external changes required. We propose to include secondary double glazing as enclosed, to protect the occupants from traffic noise and improve energy efficiency. See attachment from Granada. The unit will be designed to meet or exceed the nationally described space standards, ensuring future occupiers enjoy a high standard of accommodation.

Neighbouring Impacts

The proposed use is entirely compatible with the established residential uses above and adjacent. There will be no harmful impacts in terms of noise, privacy, or amenity.

Transport and Accessibility

The property is located in a highly accessible area, reducing reliance on the private car. The site is well served by bus routes and is close to Reading station. Cycle storage can be provided to support sustainable travel.

7. Conclusion

The proposal represents a sustainable and policy-compliant form of development. By converting the long-vacant first floor of 155 Oxford Road into a self-contained flat, the scheme will:

- Deliver an additional dwelling in a highly sustainable location.
- Bring back into use a vacant space that has remained unused for three years.
- Support Reading's housing supply and objectives to reduce long-term vacancy.
- Retain commercial use at ground floor, ensuring the property continues to contribute to the mixed-use character of Oxford Road.
- Have no adverse impacts on design, amenity, or transport.
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For these reasons, it is respectfully submitted that planning permission should be granted.

Chris Keen MRICS MCABE