



81 London Street
Reading
RG1 4QA

October 2023

Planning Application

Excel Planning have been instructed by the applicant to submit a planning application for the following development:

“The Change of Use of the third floor from office space to residential; the creation of three flats and the removal of existing modern partitions and the addition of new partitions”.

Site and Surrounding Area

The application site contains a four-storey terraced property located on the eastern side of London Street. The property currently contains a mixture of retail use at ground floor level and office space at first, second and third floor level. The site is Grade II Listed and is located within the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area. The application site is in Flood Zone 1.

The application site is located within the Market Place/London Street is predominantly urban in character. The conservation area also contains various landmarks such as St Laurence’s Church, the spire of St Giles’ and the Town Hall, as well as containing key views and vistas. The surrounding area is characterised by a mixture of residential and commercial developments. The locality consists mostly of terraced properties, many of which are Grade II Listed.

We recognise that the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area provides an opportunity for enhancement through the preservation, enrichment and reinstatement of its architectural quality and unity.

Planning History

981048 – Change of use from retail use to an office for financial and professional services or business use. Decision unknown – 26th March 1999

120423 - Use of part of the ground floor and all of the first floor for education use, including ancillary admin functions. 26 November 2012



111770 - Application for a Certificate of Lawfulness for Existing Use for D1 Non-Residential Education Use – 26/08/2011

Proposed Development

The proposal seeks planning permission and listed building consent for the change of use of the third floor from office space to residential including the creation of three flats and the removal of existing modern partitions with the addition of new partitions.

The proposal seeks planning permission for the creation of windows at basement, ground and first floor levels to the front and side elevations of the host property.

Planning Policy

The policy documents appropriate for the site is as follows:

- NPPF
- Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019)
- Market Place/London Street Conservation Area Appraisal

The material planning considerations are set out and discussed below:

Change of Use and Quality of Accommodation

Policy H1 (Provision of Housing) of the Reading Local Plan states that the borough recognises that there is a pressing need for housing in Reading and in the surrounding areas. Furthermore, Reading is a very tightly defined urban area, and sites for new development are limited. The undeveloped land that does exist is mainly either in the functional floodplain or is important public open space. Provision of new housing therefore involves a heavy reliance on previously developed land, and the supply of such sites constrains the amount of housing that can be delivered in the Borough.

Policy H2 (Density and Mix) of the Reading Local Plan again states that there is a significant need for housing in Reading and surrounding areas, and furthers this by emphasising the importance of making efficient use of land available to boost the delivery of new homes. However, there are other considerations that need to be weighed against this, in particular the character of the surrounding areas and any other particular sensitivities.

Policy H8 (Residential Conversions) states that proposals to convert buildings into self-contained flats or for multiple occupation will be assessed against the impact on the



amenity and character of the surrounding area, particularly in terms of intensification of activity, loss of privacy, loss of external amenity space, the provision and location of adequate on-site car parking and the treatment of bin storage areas and other related servicing.

The site currently comprises a mixed use of commercial at ground floor level, and office space at first, second and third floor levels. The site provides a fabulous opportunity to make use of now redundant office space, to create accommodation in an area that requires such.

London Street predominantly contains mixed commercial, residential and office uses. The proposal at 81 London Street is to provide accommodation at third floor level only, and thus it is not expected that the proposal will result in an over-intensification of residential uses in the area.

Given that any proposed developmental changes to this Grade II Listed building will respect the physical character of the area in regards to scale, location, materials, design and the arrangement of fenestration given that there are no external changes proposed to the site. As such, the architectural quality of the host property will remain unchanged, both preserving its Grade II Listed status, and protecting the integrity of the surrounding Listed Buildings and the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area.

Flat 1 – 64.23 sqm

Flat 2 – 70.50 sqm

Flat 3 – 71.86 sqm

The proposed units have been designed to ensure they meet internal floor space standards and headroom for the occupants, in line with Technical Housing Standards and Policy H5 (Standards for New Housing). With regard to the proposal, Flats 2 and 3 have a minimum of two bedrooms thus suitable for family accommodation. This ensures that 66% of the units formed provide accommodation suitable for family accommodation, well over the 25% requirement as part of Policy H8. The existing site also has a floor area greater than 120 square metres, thus compliant with Policy H8.

A daylight/sunlight assessment has been provided as part of this application, demonstrating that each unit will receive liveable amounts of natural light during daylight hours.

As such, this creates an increased need for housing to be created in urban areas that are already developed. The proposed application seeks to make use of an existing building that



contains a use that is no longer viable. The proposed change of use to provide accommodation should therefore be considered acceptable in principle.

As per Policy H8 of the Reading Local Plan, bin and cycle storage has been provided. Flats 1 and 2 have been provided with internal bin storage given that they do not have direct access to the ground floor. Flat 3 has direct access to the ground floor, and thus 2 wheelie bins have been provided for their use at ground floor level.

Secure cycle Storage for 9 bicycles has been provided for all flats, located at ground floor level

The site already benefits from off-street car parking, and thus there is sufficient provision for car parking on-site for the residents of the proposal.

Impact on Character and Appearance

The application site is located within the Market Place/London Street is predominantly urban in character. The conservation area also contains various landmarks such as St Laurence's Church, the spire of St Giles' and the Town Hall, as well as containing key views and vistas. We recognise that the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area provides an opportunity for enhancement through the preservation, enrichment and reinstatement of its architectural quality and unity.

All proposed development is to be internal, and the impact of this development is analysed, assessed and explained in the heritage statement that is to be submitted as part of this application. As such, by virtue of development, the proposal will not have a detrimental impact on the external fabric of the host Grade II Listed property, nor the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area in which it sits.

The proposal should therefore be granted planning permission, after careful considering against Paragraphs 128 and 133 of the NPPF and Policies CC7, CR2 and EN1 of the Reading Local Plan

Impact on Neighbouring Amenity

Policy H8 states that there must be no unacceptable adverse impacts to residents of the scheme or surrounding properties arising from noise and disturbance in terms of the number and layout of units proposed and the proximity to other properties.

The layout of each individual unit has been designed with both neighbouring flats and neighbouring properties in mind. Furthermore, the proposed flats are either for single



occupancy or family occupancy and thus it is not expected that the proposed flats will result in an adverse impact on neighbouring amenity through excessive noise and disturbance.

There is no external development proposed as a result of the proposal, and thus the proposal would not result in a loss of daylight/sunlight or outlook to neighbouring properties.

Conclusion

The proposal seeks the change of use at third floor level from office to residential, creating three flats (1 x 1 bed, 2 x 2 bed). The proposal also includes the removal of existing modern partitions and the addition of new partitions. The proposal has been designed to ensure the integrity of the Grade II Listed host property and the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area is retained, and the living conditions of the future occupiers and neighbouring residents are not compromised.

In light of the above, and in the absence of identified harm, the proposal is considered to have planning merit and should be supported by officers.