



UNION4
PLANNING

Ash Cummings Properties Ltd

Proposed conversion to two flats, first
floor rear extension and external
alterations at 8 Blenheim Road,
Reading RG1 5NQ

Planning Statement

November 2025



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Document Control

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This planning application is submitted on behalf of our Client, Ash Cummings Properties Ltd. The application is for the conversion of the existing dwellinghouse to two flats with minor external alterations (to facilitate the conversion), at 8 Blenheim Road, Reading.
- 1.2 This is a minor planning application and is accompanied by the following plans and documents:
- This supporting statement and
 - Application drawings by Bluebird Design Services
- 1.3 These provide an appropriate level of detail for an application of this scale.

2.0 Background

Application Proposal

- 2.1 The full application description is: *"Conversion of existing dwellinghouse to two flats, first floor rear extension, associated external alterations and landscaping (part retrospective)."*
- 2.2 The site comprises an existing, end of terrace dwellinghouse, within the urban area of Reading. The site is in a sustainable location.
- 2.3 The proposed flats are a 1 bed unit on the ground floor and a 2 bed unit on the first and second floors. Each flat will have private amenity space in the form of a private rear garden, accessed from the rear of each flat.
- 2.4 No changes are proposed to the front elevation of the property, enabling the appearance and character of the area to be maintained.

Site Context

- 2.5 The site lies in East Reading, between Reading Old Cemetery and the Royal Berkshire Hospital. St. Joseph's College and the University of Reading are to the south. The immediate environs around the site are entirely residential, with dwellings of a similar scale and appearance surrounding the site and private rear gardens backing onto the site.
- 2.6 The site lies within a mature residential area with strong boundaries. The properties along Blenheim Road are almost exclusively terraced, two-storey dwellings, with larger, three storey properties at either end, fronting London Road and Erleigh Road.
- 2.7 The plot sizes along the road are uniform. The houses front the road in a linear form, with small front gardens.
- 2.8 The site lies approximately 200m walking distance to the bus stops on King's Road, which serve the following routes: 4, 12, 13, 14, 17, 127, 128, 500, 850 and the RailAir service to Heathrow Airport (which is at least an hourly service, 24hrs a day).
- 2.9 The above numbered services provide frequent connections to:
 - Reading Station
 - Reading town centre
 - Bracknell bus station
 - Wokingham Road, Earley
 - Maidenhead town centre
 - High Wycombe bus station

- Winnersh Park & Ride
- Wokingham, via Twyford, Sonning and Woodley; and
- The Calcot area of Reading

2.10 The site is therefore very well served by public transport.

2.11 There are also shops and community facilities nearby.

2.12 Blenheim Road has footpaths along both sides of the road, linking to the wider network.

Site Description

2.13 The site is accessed from Blenheim Road, which is a one-way street.

2.14 The rectangular site is occupied by a single residential building that has been extended to the rear and into the loft. There is a small front garden, which is largely hardsurfaced and enclosed by railings.

2.15 The rear garden has a patio area, with the remainder laid to lawn with a tree on the northern boundary.

2.16 The rear garden is otherwise enclosed by a close boarded fence.

Planning History

The site

2.17 The relevant planning records for the site are as follows:

- PL/20/2166/CLP Certificate of Lawfulness for Proposed single storey rear extension. Approved.
- PL/21/2060 Rear extension - Prior Approval Not Required 26/1/2022
- PL/21/2066 Rear extension - Certificate of Lawfulness for Proposed single storey rear extension. Approved 9/2/2022
- PL/21/1772/CLP Certificate of Lawfulness for a proposed rear dormer – Approved 2/2/2022

2.18 Earlier this year a pre-application enquiry was made for advice on converting the property to flats by adding a rear staircase and a roof garden.

3.0 Planning Policy Review

National Planning Policy

- 3.1 A new National Planning Policy Framework has recently been published (Dec 2024). It maintains a presumption in favour of sustainable development and seeks to continue to boost significantly the supply of homes across the country. This means approving proposals that accord with the Development Plan without delay.
- 3.2 Where a Plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date, permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of specific policies of the Framework which indicate development should otherwise be restricted.
- 3.3 Chapter 2 — Achieving Sustainable Development — includes the economic, social and environmental objectives and a presumption in favour of sustainable development, especially where Councils do not have a demonstrable housing supply in accordance with the amended rules. The development Plan does not have to be followed where material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 3.4 Chapter 5 — delivering a sufficient supply of homes — provides the national policy stance on the need to deliver new housing across the country. The Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes remains in place and LPAs are required to identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years-worth of housing for decision making purposes against their adopted housing figures. Alternatively, it should be against the Council's housing need requirement using the Standard Method if the Local Plan policies are more than five years old or have not been reviewed and found to not need updating.
- 3.5 Paragraph 73 states that, "Small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area, are essential for Small and Medium Enterprise housebuilders to deliver new homes and are often built out relatively quickly." To facilitate this LPAs should:
- (a) *"...accommodate at least 10% of their housing requirement on sites no larger than one hectare...,*
 - (b) *....*
 - (c) *Use tools...to help bring small and medium sized sites forward,*
 - (d) *Support the development of windfall sites...giving great weight to the benefits of using suitable sites within existing settlements for homes..."*

- 3.6 The presumption in favour of sustainable development also remains as set out within the Housing Delivery Test consequences.
- 3.7 In January 2025, the Government announced that it intends to go further and faster to deliver 1.5 million new homes over five years. Specifically in relation to untapped land near commuter transport hubs, the Government stated:

“In a major new growth push, the government will ensure that when developers submit an application for acceptable types of schemes in key areas – such as in high potential locations near commuter transport hubs - that the default answer to development is ‘yes’. This will unlock more housing at a greater density in areas central to local communities, boosting the government’s number one mission to grow the economy. These measures will transform communities, with more shops and homes nearer to the transport hubs that working people rely on day in day out.”

- 3.8 There is a new standard housing method calculation in the 2024 version of the NPPF used to determine future housing targets for new Local Plans or when old Local Plans are no longer considered in date.
- 3.9 The above provides a positive national picture to aim for particularly when Local Planning Authorities are working to out of date plans or cannot demonstrate a 5YHLS.

Local Plan

- 3.10 The Development Plan for Reading Borough Council and policies considered important for the site in principle are currently:
- Reading Borough Local Plan (Adopted November 2019) and
 - Local Plan Partial Update: Pre Submission Draft (some weight to be given to the Policies in this Plan)
- 3.11 The site lies within the East Reading area, for which there are specific policies in the Plan. These relate to specific sites for development, the University and the Hospital and therefore are not relevant to the application site. The Plan explains that the area can accommodate around 1,100 homes between 2013 and 2036 (paragraph 9.2.4). Given this is a small (<10%) contribution to the overall housing need, beyond protecting heritage assets and managing the relationship between residential areas and the University and the Hospital, the Plan does not set out a strategy for delivering housing in the area.
- 3.12 The key policies of relevance to the proposal are therefore:
- Policy CC1 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- Policy CC2 – Sustainable Design and Construction

Policy CC3 – Adaptation to Climate Change

Policy CC5 – Waste Minimisation and Storage

Policy CC6 – Accessibility and the intensity of development

Policy CC7 – Design and the Public Realm

Policy CC8 – Safeguarding Amenity

Policy H1 – Provision of housing

Policy H2 – Density and mix

Policy H8 – Residential Conversions (which, insofar as it is relevant to the proposal, states):

‘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.

Proposals to convert properties into self-contained flats or for multiple occupation will only be acceptable where:

- The proposal respects the physical character of the area in terms of scale, location, materials and design, the arrangement of doors, windows and other principal architectural features;
- The proposal would not, either individually or cumulatively, unduly dilute or harm an existing mixed and sustainable community through the significant loss of single family housing;
- There are 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;
- There is no inappropriate stacking and location of rooms between units;
- Bin and cycle storage is of an appropriate size and standard for the units proposed and should be located at ground floor level with easy access; and
- The resulting property or properties would provide adequate internal floorspace and headroom for residents.

Additionally, in the case of conversions of houses to self-contained flats:

- The property to be converted measures more than 120 square metres gross;

- At least 25% of the units formed and, where there are 4 or fewer units at least one unit of accommodation, should be suitable for family occupation with a minimum of two bedrooms.'

Policy H9 – House extensions and ancillary accommodation

Policy H10 – Private and Communal Outdoor Space

Policy H14 – Suburban renewal and regeneration

- 3.13 The Local Plan was reviewed in March 2023 and many of the policies in the plan are considered up to date. However, the rest are being updated to reflect changing circumstances and national policy. A draft version of the Local Plan Partial Update was submitted for examination on 9th May 2025.

Presumption in Favour

- 3.14 Given the Local Plan was adopted more than five years ago the Council has reviewed it and considers sufficient of the policies to be out of date to prepare a partial update to the Local Plan.
- 3.15 Since March 2023 the Council has been working on the Local Plan Partial Update and this is now fairly advanced, having reached the Examination Stage.
- 3.16 As of December 2024 (the most recent assessment) the Council could demonstrate a housing supply figure of 6 years.
- 3.17 However, the Local Plan Partial Update is being brought forward with the higher housing target of 825 dwellings per annum for the period 2023 to 2041.
- 3.18 This would indicate that the Council currently can demonstrate a figure of just over 5 years against their five year housing land supply figure of 825 per annum. Thus the presumption in favour of sustainable development is not engaged.

4.0 Assessment

Principle of Development

- 4.1 The site comprises a single building in residential use (as two flats), with a private front and rear garden.
- 4.2 It is surrounded on all sides by existing buildings and is within the urban area of Reading, which is a sustainable location. Given the existing use and location of the site, the principle of development is established.
- 4.3 The Plan acknowledges that there is a pressing need for additional housing in Reading. It goes on to explain that the provision of new housing is heavily reliant on previously developed land, such as the application site. Furthermore, the Plan explains the importance of using the land that is available efficiently to boost the delivery of new homes.
- 4.4 This site would fall within the small site windfalls category, for which an allowance of 127 units per year has been made (2019-2036). Notwithstanding this, the Adopted Plan acknowledges that it is unable to accommodate the total need for housing in the Borough (to 2036).
- 4.5 The NPPF provides significant levels of support for bringing small sites forward to aid small to medium housebuilders. It gives great weight to the benefits of using suitable sites within existing settlements for homes.
- 4.6 We therefore consider that the principle of development on the site is acceptable, subject to consideration of other policies within the Development Plan.
- 4.7 Finally, Policy CC1 states, "A positive approach to considering development proposals will be taken that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. Where appropriate, the Council will work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible."
- 4.8 The site lies in a sustainable location, where the principle of development has been accepted.

Technical Matters

Design/Layout

- 4.9 The Proposed Floor Plan (drawing no. A1010 Rev X), shows the proposed layout of the dwellings. This demonstrates the proposal maintains the character and appearance of the area, as no changes are proposed to the front elevation.
- 4.10 It is noted that the majority of the houses along Blenheim Road present as properties which stretch across the full width of their respective curtilages. This can be seen in the extract image taken below (the application site is outlined in red):

Figure 1: Site location



Source: Google Earth (2025)

- 4.11 Due to the above (i.e. the size of the plot and the position of the building on the plot), it is not possible to provide off-street parking. On-street parking is available to the front of the properties in the same manner as the other houses in the area. The existing metal railings that frame the plot frontage will be retained.
- 4.12 As a result, the only external changes are to the rear of the property. At ground floor, the existing window serving the kitchen is to be replaced with a door, leading to the private rear garden. The French windows will be replaced with a window and a single door, serving the stairs to the flat on the upper floors, providing access to its private rear garden.
- 4.13 It is also proposed to re-arrange the existing internal layout to avoid living rooms being positioned over bedrooms.

- 4.14 The proposed first floor rear extension has the same depth as the existing first floor rear extension. This ensures that there would be no adverse impact on neighbouring properties.
- 4.15 Both the proposed dwellings will benefit from a private rear garden, with a westerly aspect.
- 4.16 Also, as a result of the size, scale, position and orientation of the proposed first floor extension, there will be no impact on amenity from overshadowing or overlooking actual or perceived on the neighbouring properties. In addition, there will be no loss of privacy or light associated with the proposal. This is demonstrated in the image below, which shows the rear elevation of the property (and those of its neighbours) in 2022. The proposed first floor extension occupies the gap between the two existing first floor extensions (with white rendered rear elevations) and does not project beyond the existing first floor rear elevation. The proposed extension therefore fully complies with the requirements of Policy CC8.

Figure 2: Photograph of rear of property (taken in 2022)



- 4.17 The architects have carefully analysed the setting and potential impacts of making better use of this previously developed land to provide additional housing in the borough. This is a bespoke designed scheme which provides a suitable and acceptable response to the constraints and opportunities of the site.
- 4.18 In accordance with Policy CC7, the proposal delivers a high design quality that maintains the character and appearance of the area in which it is located. The proposal does not significantly

alter the key components listed in the Policy i.e. layout, landscape, scale, detailing and materials. These all remain as existing and thus the development as a whole maintains the existing character.

- 4.19 In addition, the proposal does not significantly alter the density and mix of the area. A single additional dwelling is proposed, which would have virtually no discernible impact. Indeed, the proposal enhances adaptability (the property could easily be returned to a single dwelling in the future) and diversity by providing a mix of unit sizes to meet the needs of the local community. In this regard, the Council has identified there is a pressing need for additional residential accommodation, particularly for smaller units, which the scheme delivers.
- 4.20 In accordance with Policy H8, the proposal maintains the physical character of the area in all respects. It would not result in the loss of single family housing as the proposal includes a two bedroom unit and there is no inappropriate stacking and location of rooms between units. As explained below there is sufficient space for bin and cycle storage, which is located at ground level with easy access.
- 4.21 The proposed dwellings also provide adequate internal floorspace and headroom for residents, meeting the nationally described space standards.
- 4.22 The appropriate level of sound insulation will be provided in accordance with the Building Regulations to ensure no unacceptable adverse impacts arise from noise and disturbance, to residents or the adjacent occupier. No other unacceptable adverse impacts arising from noise or disturbance are envisaged.
- 4.23 Also in accordance with Policy H8, the property to be converted measures more than 120sqm gross, without the proposed extension. Neither the Policy nor the supporting text require that the *original* property must be over 120sqm. The Policy states that:
- 'The property to be converted measures more than 120 square metres gross'*
- 4.24 As noted in the planning history, a Lawful Development Certificate has previously been approved for a rear dormer. As this has been built and was not an extension (or an extension purely for the purposes of enabling a conversion to flats), it should be taken into account as a material consideration in the calculation of gross floorspace.
- 4.25 As a result, it should be concluded that the floorspace of the property to be converted meets the 120sqm gross floorspace requirement. As a result, the requirements of Policy H8 are met.
- 4.26 Furthermore, the supporting text states that:
- 'Conversion to flats has also added a valuable supply of reasonably low cost private rented accommodation, meeting a need in the market. Generally, conversions provide for a market need for small, flexibly let accommodation reflecting household formation trends in the population and the more transient nature of parts of the labour market.'*

- 4.27 The requirements of Policies CC8 and H8 are therefore considered to be met in this development and there are multiple material considerations in favour of granting permission. This includes support from Policy H14, which explains there is scope for renewal and regeneration of some of Reading's residential areas to improve the built environment, modernise the housing stock and deliver additional homes.

Housing Mix/ Affordable Housing

- 4.28 The site lies in a residential area substantially made up of terraced dwellings, the vast majority of which appear to be single family dwellings. The proposed scheme sits comfortably within that character and would not unduly dilute or harm the existing mixed and sustainable community. Indeed, the proposal maintains a family unit through the provision of a two bedroom, four person unit at first and second floors. Both bedrooms to this unit are large enough to be used as twin rooms, providing flexible accommodation to meet the needs of a small family.
- 4.29 Policy H2 sets out criteria informing an appropriate density of residential development. The criteria are:
- Character and mix of uses in the area – the proposal maintains the existing character and mix of uses (which are overwhelmingly residential)
 - Current and future accessibility – the site is in a highly accessible location by walking, cycling and public transport
 - The need to:
 - achieve high quality design
 - maximise the efficiency of land use
 - minimise environmental impacts
- 4.30 The proposal achieves all the above criteria as set out above and below.

- 4.31 As an extension to the existing building is proposed, there is a requirement to contribute towards affordable housing under Policy H3. The Policy requires a financial contribution to enable the equivalent of 10% of the housing to be provided as affordable housing elsewhere in the Borough. The applicant is agreeable to this contribution.

- 4.32 As demonstrated in the accommodation schedule in Appendix 1, the proposed dwellings conform to the Nationally Described Space Standards.

Outdoor amenity space

- 4.33 As noted above, both proposed dwellings will benefit from a good sized private rear garden, with their own direct access.

- 4.34 Sufficient and directly accessible amenity space is provided to both flats in accordance with Policy H8.

Highways/ Access/ Parking

- 4.35 The proposed dwellings will be accessed via Blenheim Road as existing. The site, as has already been noted by the Council's Officers, is considered to lie within a highly sustainable area. There is good access to public transport and shops and facilities within acceptable walking and cycling distance. As Blenheim Road is a permit only street, on-street parking is controlled. As a result, one of the units would be ineligible for a parking permit.

- 4.36 Thus, there would be no change to the impact on the highway network.

- 4.37 Suitable cycle spaces are proposed in accordance with Policy TR5 and the Council's Parking Standards for New Development SPD.

- 4.38 The requirements of Policies TR3 and TR5 have therefore been met. Policy CC6 also supports the proposal, by seeking increased densities in the most accessible locations.

Surface and Foul Drainage

- 4.39 This is a minor planning application for residential development that does not lie within an area liable to surface water, river or sea flooding, sitting within Flood Zone 1.

- 4.40 The scheme is also below 1ha in size and therefore there is no requirement to submit a Flood Risk Assessment.

- 4.41 The proposed scheme will connect to the existing foul sewer drainage network and utilise soakaways to deal with surface water.

Trees/ Ecology/ BNG

- 4.42 No harm has been identified to the existing trees on site. Additional planting is proposed to enhance the boundaries where necessary.

- 4.43 The application is exempt from BNG as the proposed development would affect less than 25sqm of priority habitat.

Sustainable Design

- 4.44 The proposed development involves the extension of a recently refurbished property, which has achieved an EPC rating of B, which is very good. This is the best rating the building is capable of achieving and significantly more efficient than the majority of properties (of similar age and type etc.) in the local area. This is a material consideration in support of the application.

- 4.45 The proposed extension minimises the use of natural resources by infilling a gap between two existing extensions. This also reduces the potential for heat loss and contributes to efficient space

heating. In addition, the proposal assists in reducing exposure to the wind and does not increase surface water run-off.

- 4.46 The building materials will be sourced locally and will consider the embodied carbon emissions of the materials that will be proposed.
- 4.47 The proposed minor application meets the requirements of policies CC2 and CC3.

Refuse and Waste

- 4.48 The proposed extension and conversion of the property to two flats will minimise waste in accordance with the waste hierarchy.
- 4.49 The only suitable location for storing recycling and refuse bins is in the front garden, as per the existing situation (which applies to the vast majority of properties on the road). There is ample space in the front garden to accommodate these bins. The requirement of Policy CC5 has therefore been met in this regard.

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 The application is for the "*Conversion of existing dwellinghouse to two flats, first floor rear extension, associated external alterations and landscaping (part retrospective).*"
- 5.2 This is a residential, previously developed site, within the built-up area of Reading. The plot has the capacity to deliver an additional dwelling without altering the character and appearance of the area. Therefore this scheme seeks to make the best use of the site within a highly sustainable location.
- 5.3 The principle of residential development is acceptable subject to consideration of other policies within the NPPF, Development Plan and technical considerations.
- 5.4 The proposal delivers one additional residential dwelling, in a highly accessible location and where there is a pressing need for additional housing, including a significant need for smaller units.
- 5.5 The planning history demonstrates that schemes of this nature have been found acceptable in the area in the recent past, with a higher density development having occurred in the local area. There is nothing unusual about the current submission in the applicant's view in terms of scale, density and design which should lead to an alternative conclusion other than this development should be acceptable.
- 5.6 The principle of development is considered acceptable and the design, layout and scale of the proposal respects the character of the area. It provides much needed accommodation, including a family home, in a suitable and sustainable location. As a result, the proposal complies with all relevant policies including Policy H8.
- 5.7 No harm to the character or amenity of the street scene or surrounding dwellings has been identified. The design does not change the previously accepted back to back distances. Consequently, there are no issues in relation to overshadowing or overlooking created and the proposed accommodation is both appropriate and reflective of other nearby properties.
- 5.8 The proposed extension would not impact the 45 degree view from the windows of either neighbouring property.
- 5.9 Both dwellings also benefit from direct access to a private rear garden providing acceptable levels of amenity space.
- 5.10 There are no technical issues that are raised as a result of the design. The dwellings meet the required internal space standards and high environmental standards can be met.
- 5.11 Overall, therefore, the applicant considers that this application is in accordance with the adopted Development Plan and national guidance within the NPPF. It provides two units (one family home),

for which there is a pressing need, within a sustainable location and achieves a high standard of design.

- 5.12 We conclude that the material considerations in support of the proposal are significant and outweigh any that may weigh against. As a result, the planning balance weighs in favour of granting planning permission in this case.

Appendix 1: Accommodation schedule

Dwelling	Floorspace	Complies with NDSS?
Flat 1 (ground floor)	56.5sqm	Yes (the minimum floorspace for a 1 bed 2 person single storey dwelling is 50sqm)
Flat 2 (first and second floors)	81sqm	Yes (the minimum floorspace for a 2 bed 4 person two storey dwelling is 79sqm)

Property	Total floorspace	Complies with Local Plan Policy H8 floorspace requirement?
8 Blenheim Road (overall total as existing)	123.5sqm	Yes (the Policy requires a minimum floorspace of 120sqm)
8 Blenheim Road (overall total as proposed)	137.5sqm	Yes (the Policy requires a minimum floorspace of 120sqm)