

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Abbey

App Ref: PL/25/1003 Prior approval Part 3 Class MA: Commercial, business and service uses to dwellinghouses

Address: FLAT, 33 BEDFORD ROAD, READING, RG1 7EX

Proposal: Change of use from Class E (offices) to C3 (dwelling houses) to comprise 2 flats. Prior Notification under Class MA, Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015.

Applicant: Arrow Planning Ltd

Received date: 20 June 2025

Target Decision date: 9 December 2025 (agreed extension of time)

Case Officer: Anthony Scholes

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The site is situated on the western side of Bedford Road, on a prominent corner with Battle Street. The site has been used as a stone masonry for the past 160 years, during which the use of the site has evolved with the production and cutting of stone moved to the other AJ Jones site in rural Ipsden in Oxfordshire, to reduce any impact on the neighbouring residential properties. The overall use of the site had historically, originally been classed as B2. The application site was given a certificate to confirm the lawful use as Class E in 2023 (PL/23/1019 (CLE)).

The site incorporates an ancillary office (first floor) and retail/show room (ground floor) in the main building, with associated storage and distribution taking place at the side and rear of the building. ET Sheppard Monumental Masons and AF Jones Stone Interiors are sister companies advertised at the site which are associated with the main business. ET Sheppard Monumental Masons delivers headstones and arranges for them to be engraved in a workshop in Henley. AF Jones Stone Interiors provides a range of marble and granite products. No stonework is carried out in connection with business at 33 Bedford Road.

The site is within an Air Quality Management Area.

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The proposal seeks prior approval for the conversion of the existing office over 4 floors

The following plans and documents were provided in support of this prior approval application:

Application Form

CIL form

Drawing No: 2443-P001-P1-Block Plan

Drawing No: 2443-P002-P1-Site Location Plan

Drawing No: 2443-P200-P1-Existing and Proposed Elevations

Drawing No: 2443-P003-P2-Proposed Site Layout

As received by the Local Planning Authority on 14 July 2025

Drawing No: 2443-P100-P3-Proposed Layout Plans

As received by the Local Planning Authority on 15 July 2025

Drawing No: 2443-P100-P3-Proposed Layout Plans

As received by the Local Planning Authority on 10 October 2025

3. CONSULTATIONS

The following were consulted:

- RBC Transport Development Control – No objection.
- RBC Environmental Protection Officers – No objection, subject to conditions relating to contamination.

The following addresses were consulted by letter:

- 35 Bedford Road
- 6 Battle Street (all flats)

A site notice was placed at the site on 22 July 2025, with a date for comments to be received by 12 August 2025.



No letters of representation have been received.

4. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

The application has been submitted to determine whether prior approval is required in accordance with Schedule 2, Part 3, Class MA of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended). Class MA involves development consisting of a change of use of a building and any land within its curtilage from a use falling within Class E (commercial, business and service) of Schedule 2 to the Use Classes Order to a use falling within Class C3 (dwellinghouses) of Schedule 1 to that Order.

Before development can be carried out under Class MA, the developer must submit a Prior Notification to determine if 'Prior Approval' of the Local Planning Authority is required in respect of the following matters:

- (a) transport impacts of the development, particularly to ensure safe site access;
- (b) contamination risks in relation to the building;

- (c) flooding risks in relation to the building;
- (d) impacts of noise from commercial premises on the intended occupiers of the development;
- (e) where—
 - (i) the building is located in a conservation area, and
 - (ii) the development involves a change of use of the whole or part of the ground floor, the impact of that change of use on the character or sustainability of the conservation area;
- (f) the provision of adequate natural light in all habitable rooms of the dwellinghouses;
- (g) the impact on intended occupiers of the development of the introduction of residential use in an area the authority considers to be important for general or heavy industry, waste management, storage and distribution, or a mix of such uses; and
- (h) where the development involves the loss of services provided by—
 - (i) a registered nursery, or
 - (ii) a health centre maintained under section 2 or 3 of the National Health Service Act the impact on the local provision of the type of services lost.
- (i) where the development meets the fire risk condition, the fire safety impacts on the intended occupants of the building.

Class MA requires development to be completed within a period of 3 years starting with the prior approval date. Any building permitted to be used as a dwellinghouse by virtue of Class MA is to remain in use as a dwellinghouse within the meaning of Class C3 of Schedule 1 to the Use Classes Order and for no other purpose, except to the extent that the other purpose is ancillary to the use as a dwellinghouse.

If the Local Planning Authority determine that Prior Approval is required, Paragraph W of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) states that the Local Planning Authority should, when determining an application, have regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 'so far as relevant to the subject matter of the prior approval, as if the application were a planning application' (Paragraph W, para 10b).

5. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

PL/25/1453 (FUL) - The reinstatement of two blocked-up windows to the front at the lower ground floor level and the replacement of an existing door with a window on the rear elevation and unblocking and replacement of a rear facing window, blocking up of side facing ground floor door, and the removal of external open sided canopy and associated works. Permitted 5/12/2025

PL/23/1019 (CLE) - Certificate of Lawfulness for existing use of the site as an office with ancillary parking and outbuildings, falling within Use class E. Certificate given 18 October 2023

PL/22/0992 Erection of rear facing dormer and installation of 1no. roof light. Permitted 12/12/2022

PL/18/1816 Demolition of all stonemasons buildings and structures (Class B1c) barring No.33 Bedford Road and residential redevelopment to provide: a basement and two-storey building and single storey bin/cycle store fronting Battle Street, a three-storey building on the corner of Battle Street and Bedford Road, and the change of use and alterations to No.33 Bedford Road, providing in total 9 (6x1, 2x2 and 1x3 bed) residential flats (Class C3). Withdrawn 29/09/2020

PL/93/0518 (930518) - Alterations to frontage inclusive of new display area and erection of new workshop and storage areas to rear of site. Approved 18/4/94.

6. EQUALITY ACT

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.

7. APPRAISAL

The proposal comprises the change of use of the building from Class E(a) office floorspace to 2x Class C3 (dwellinghouse) units. The proposal is to be considered against the criteria and conditions contained within Part 3, of Class MA.1. (1) (a)-(g), of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended).

In addition, in order to qualify for assessment under Class MA, all applications submitted under this class from 6th April 2021 must comply with Department for Communities and Local Government's Technical Housing Standards – Nationally Described Space Standards, minimum space standards. As the application was received after the 6th April 2021 there is a requirement to comply with these minimum space standards. It can be confirmed that the proposed unit complies with these minimum space standards as illustrated in the accompanying plan.

Criteria MA.1.—(1)

(b) Previous use qualification – “unless the use of the building fell within one or more of the classes specified in sub-paragraph (2) for a continuous period of at least 2 years prior to the date of the application for prior approval;”

It can be confirmed that the building for which this application relate fell within one or more of the classes specified in subparagraph (2) (b), being Class E use.

(d) Land designation criteria – “If land covered by, or within the curtilage of, the building —

- (i) is or forms part of a site of special scientific interest;
- (ii) is or forms part of a listed building or land within its curtilage;
- (iii) is or forms part of a scheduled monument or land within its curtilage;
- (iv) is or forms part of a safety hazard area; or
- (v) is or forms part of a military explosives storage area;”

The site does not form part of a site of special scientific interest, listed building nor land within its curtilage, a Scheduled monument or land within its curtilage, safety hazard area, nor military explosive storage area.

(e) Landscape designation criteria – “if the building is within—

- (i) an area of outstanding natural beauty;
- (ii) an area specified by the Secretary of State for the purposes of section 41(3) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981;
- (iii) the Broads;
- (iv) a National Park; or
- (v) a World Heritage Site;”

The building is not within any such area.

(f) Agricultural tenancy criteria – “If the site is occupied under an agricultural tenancy, unless the express consent of both the landlord and the tenant has been obtained;”

It can be confirmed the site is not occupied under an agricultural tenancy.

(g) Previous use criteria - “before 1 August 2022, if—

(i) the proposed development is of a description falling within Class O of this Part as that Class had effect immediately before 1st August 2021; and

(ii) the development would not have been permitted under Class O immediately before 1st August 2021 by virtue of the operation of a direction under article 4(1) of this Order which has not since been cancelled in accordance with the provisions of Schedule 3.

It can be confirmed that the site has not been subject to development of a description falling within a Class of this part immediately before 1st August 2021, nor would such development be prevented under Class O immediately before 1st August 2021 by virtue of the operation of a direction under article 4(1) of this Order which has not since been cancelled in accordance with the provisions of Schedule 3.

Conditions

MA.2.—(1) Development under Class MA is permitted subject to the following conditions.

(2) Before beginning development under Class MA, the developer must apply to the local planning authority for a determination as to whether the prior approval of the authority will be required as to—

(a) Transport impacts of the development, particularly to ensure safe site access

The Council’s Transport Team raises no objection to prior approval being given the amended plans show parking for 2 vehicles. No overspill of parking will occur, and parking permits will be restricted for future residents.

(b) Contamination risks in relation to the building

The proposal has the potential to result in ground gas risk to the proposed development. It has not been demonstrated that the proposal will not be at risk. It is considered necessary to secure a land gas risk assessment and monitoring prior to commencement of development, and mitigation as necessary prior to occupation.

(c) Flooding risks in relation to the building

The site is not located within Flood Zones 2 or 3 and as such the proposals are acceptable in flood risk terms.

(d) Impacts of noise from commercial premises on the intended occupiers of the development

There are no concerns with regards to the impact of noise from commercial premises on the intended occupiers of the development.

(e) where— (i) the building is located in a conservation area, and (ii) the development involves a change of use of the whole or part of the ground floor, the impact of that change of use on the character or sustainability of the conservation area;

Not applicable as the proposal site is not within a Conservation Area.

(f) the provision of adequate natural light in all habitable rooms of the dwellinghouses

It is considered to be adequate levels of natural light to the proposed dwellings subject to implementation of permission PL/25/1453 prior to occupation of the development.

(g) the impact on intended occupiers of the development of the introduction of residential use in an area the authority considers to be important for general or heavy industry, waste management, storage and distribution, or a mix of such uses

The site is not within a designated core employment area or located in an area the authority considers to be important for general or heavy industry, waste management, storage and distribution, or a mix of such uses.

(h) where the development involves the loss of services provided by— (i) a registered nursery, or (ii) a health centre maintained under section 2 or 3 of the National Health Service Act 2006, the impact on the local provision of the type of services lost.

The development does not result in the loss of services provided by a registered nursery, or health centre maintained under the relevant sections.

(i) where the development meets the fire risk condition, the fire safety impacts on the intended occupants of the building.

The development is not considered to meet the fire risk condition by virtue of the height of the building.

8. CONCLUSION

The development subject of this prior notification is considered to meet the relevant criteria of Class MA of the GPDO. In considering the relevant conditions pursuant to the Prior Approval of this application, the proposal will not give rise to any transport impacts, flooding risk, nor would it experience adverse noise impacts from adjacent business premises. It is considered that adequate natural light would be provided in the habitable rooms once works approved under a separate application are completed. Details with respect to land gas risk matters will also be secured by condition. The development will not introduce a residential use in an area the authority considers to be important for general or heavy industry, waste management, storage and distribution, and does not result in the loss of a designated service.

9. RECOMMENDATION

Prior approval given, subject to conditions.