

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Thames Ward

App Ref: PL/25/1572 – application for full planning permission

Address: Beta Building, 121 Kings Road, Reading, RG1 3ES

Proposal: Installation of two windows at first floor level on the south elevation, provision of a single door following removal of a canopy and associated revolving door at ground floor level on the north elevation and installation of one projecting smokeshaft and two automatic opening vents at roof level.

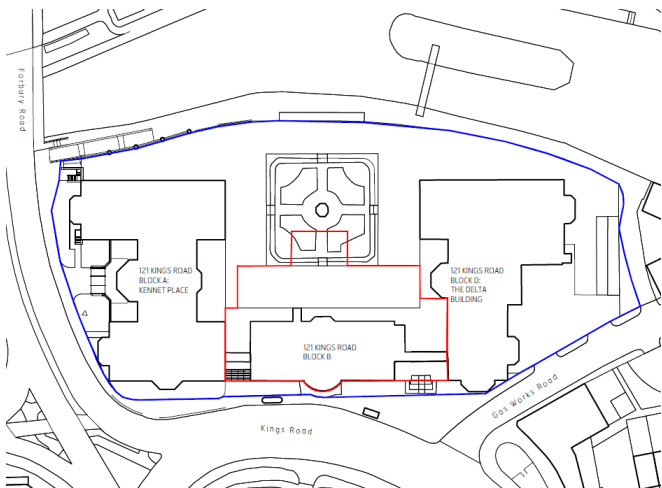
Applicant: Beta Reading Ltd

Received date: 03/11/2025 Valid date: 12/11/2025 Target Decision date: 07/01/2026

Case Officer: Jonathan Markwell

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site comprises a basement (car park) and five storey (and rooftop plant) building, known as the Beta Building, on the north side of Kings Road, between the junctions of Forbury Road (to the west) and Gas Works Road (to the east). The red line boundary also includes some external space to the north of the building, with a blue line on the location plan (see below) indicating that the applicant has an interest in linked blocks Kennet Place to the west and The Delta Building to the east. All three buildings were originally constructed following planning permission in 1989 (see relevant history below & later occupied by Prudential), but this proposal solely relates to the Beta Building. Based on the officer site visit on 24/11/2025, the application site building is presently unoccupied and is anticipated to be converted from office to residential use, pending the outcome of a current prior approval application under separate consideration by the Local Planning Authority (see relevant history below).



Above left: Site Location Plan



Above right and below: views of the application site





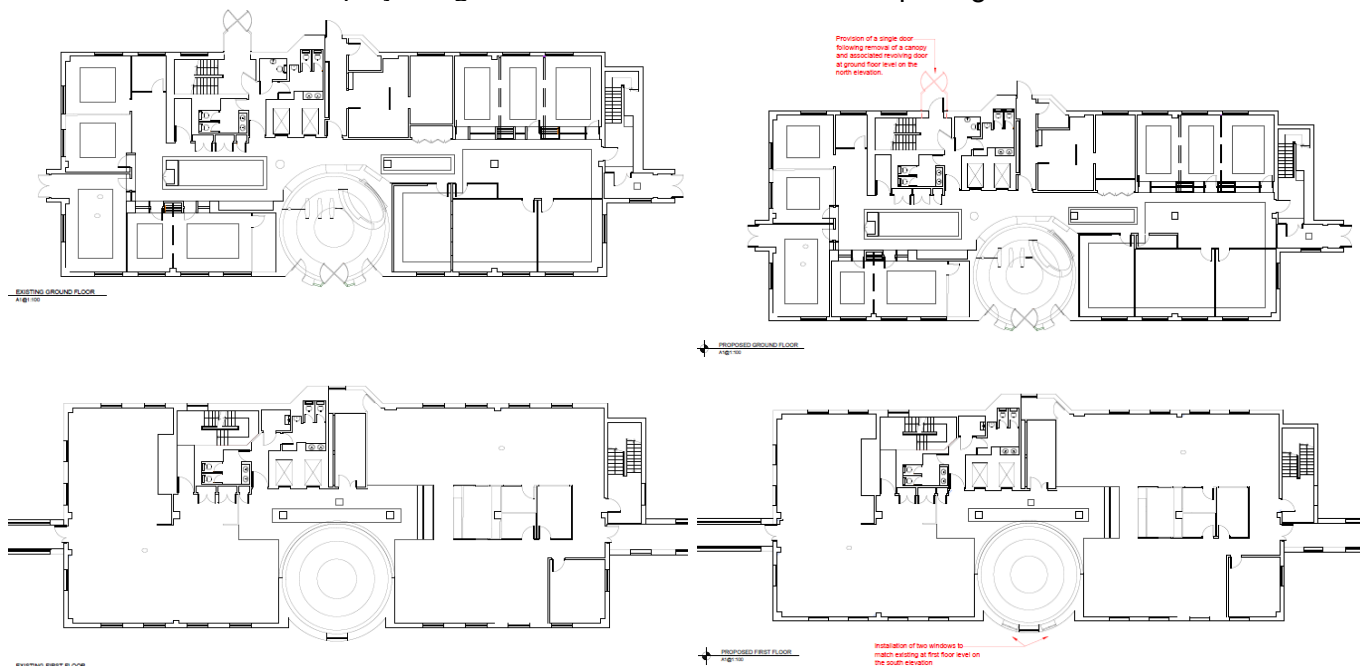
Above: aerial views of the application site from the south (left) and north (right), from Google Maps.

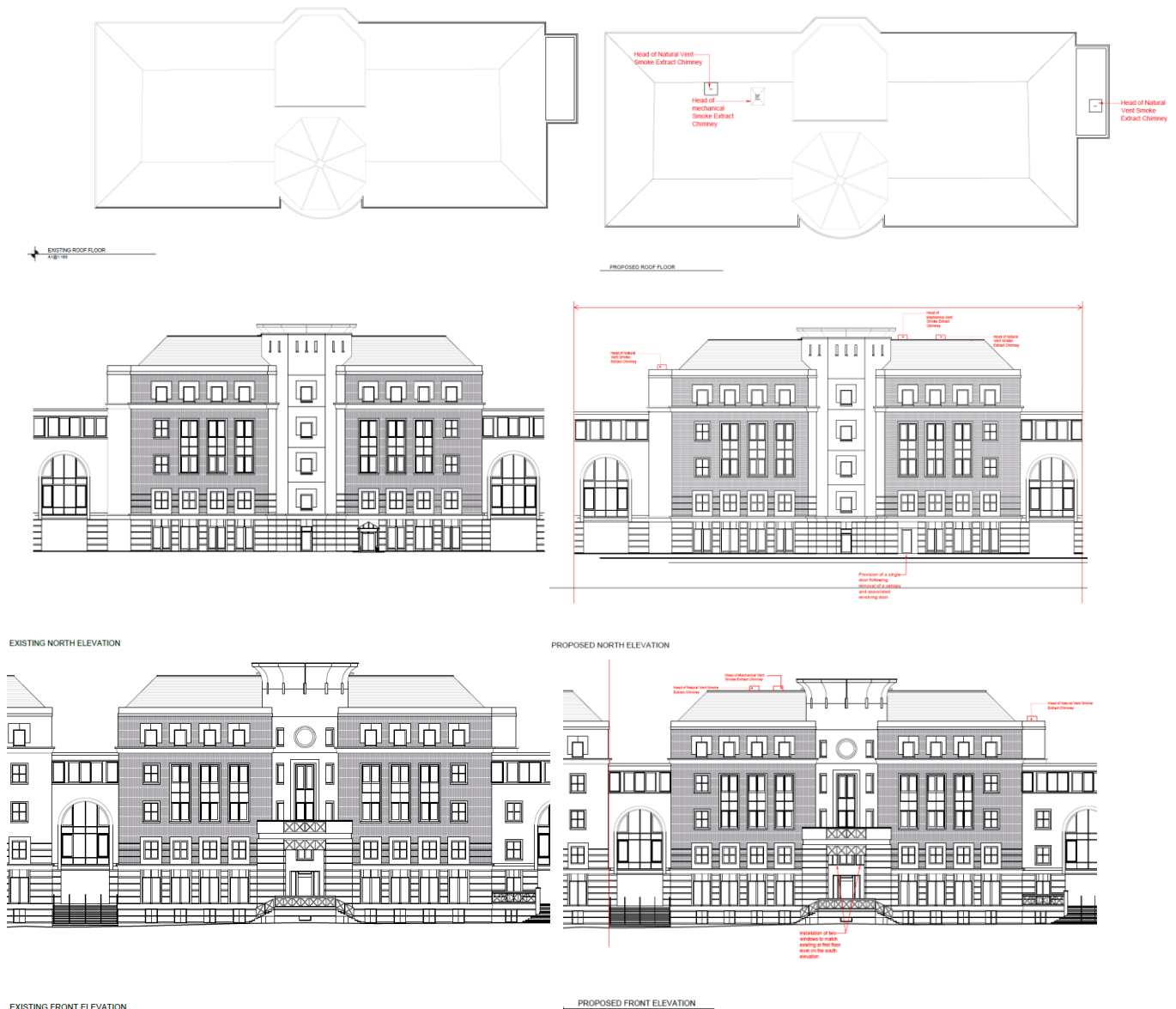
The broad area surrounding the site is characterised by a variety of building uses. The buildings along this part of Kings Road are mainly commercial, with the Huntley Wharf residential-led development to the north of the River Kennet / Chocolate Island and Blakes Bridge. To the south, beyond Kings Road is Kings Road Gardens and Kennet and Avon Canal, with the Verto residential building to the south-west. Whilst located within flood zone 1, it is in close proximity to land to the north in flood zones 2 and 3, where the River Kennet is located. The site is also located within an air quality management area and has potential to include contaminated land, owing to the former Biscuit Factory use in and around the site. The application site building is not a listed building, nor is it located within a conservation area.

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Full planning permission is sought for a series of works to the building, in anticipation of the possible conversion of the building from office to residential use, pending the outcome of a current prior approval application (see relevant history below). More specifically, the proposals comprise:

- Installation of two windows at first floor level on the south elevation,
- Provision of a single door following removal of a canopy and associated revolving door at ground floor level on the north elevation
- Installation of one projecting smokeshaft and two automatic opening vents at roof level.





Plans submitted:

- 1364.6-001 Rev A – Site Location Plan
 - 1364.6-002 - Existing Block Plan
 - 1364.6-010 Rev A – Existing Basement Floor Plan
 - 1364.6-050 - Proposed Block Plan
 - 1364.6-100 - Proposed Basement Floor Plan
 - Flood Risk Assessment Report for Beta Building, 121 Kings Road, Reading, RG1 3ES Ref C-3644-R1-REV-A by Nimbus Engineering Consultants
- As all received on 03/11/2025

- 1364.6-011 - Existing Ground & First Floor Plan
- 1364.6-012 - Existing Second and Third Floor
- 1364.6-013 – Existing Fourth & Roof Floor Plan
- 1364.6-020 - Existing South Elevation
- 1364.6-021 - Existing West Elevation
- 1364.6-022 – Existing East Elevation
- 1364.6-023 - Existing North Elevation

- 1364.6-101 - Proposed Ground & First Floor Plan
 - 1364.6-102 - Proposed Second & Third Floor Plan
 - 1364.6-103 - Proposed Fourth & Roof Floor Plan
 - 1364.6-200 – Proposed Front Elevation (South)
 - 1364.6-203 - Proposed North Elevation
 - Beta Building Reading, RG1 3ES Design Statement by Brooks Murray, dated October 2025
- As all received on 12/11/2025

- 1364.6 - 201 - Proposed West Elevation
 - 1364.6 - 202 - Proposed East Elevation
- As both received on 13/11/2025

CIL

It is confirmed that these specific proposals will not be liable for the Reading Community Infrastructure Levy.

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

The application site

PL/25/1573 - Change of use of ground to fourth floors from Class E (offices) to Class C3 (dwelling houses) to form 44 self-contained residential units. Prior Notification under Class MA, Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended). Current application under consideration.

The Wider Site

89/1390 - Office development of 180,000sq ft gross: car parking for 250 cars and riverside walk. Granted 14/12/1989.

The neighbouring site - Kennet Place, 121 Kings Road

PL/24/0997 Change the use of the building at ground to fourth floors from office (E Class) to residential (C3), to accommodate 93 self-contained flats. Prior Notification Granted 02/10/2024.

PL/24/0973 – Application for new window openings to the east elevation to match the existing windows in opening sizes and appearance and addition of rooftop smoke shafts and AOVs. Granted 25/09/2024.

PL/25/0067 - Discharge of conditions 3 (contaminated land assessment), 4 (remediation scheme), 5 (validation report), 8 (foul water network details) & 9 (surface water network details) for prior approval application PL/24/0997, as given on 27/09/2024. Granted 07/03/2025.

PL/25/1023 - Replacement of windows/doors on all elevations at ground floor level; installation of balconies on east, south and west elevations at ground floor, north elevation at 1st to 3rd floors and west elevation at 2nd floor level; installation of projecting smokeshafts and automatic opening vents at roof level; and, various associated alterations. Granted 02/09/2025.

The neighbouring site - The Delta Building, 121 Kings Road

PL/25/0466 - Application for external works including new windows to match the existing; new AOV and smoke shaft roof openings; demolition of existing canopy; changes to the existing atrium; and new and replacement metal railings and balconies. Granted 20/05/2025.

PL/25/0470 - Change of use of Ground to 4th Floors from Class E (offices) to C3 (dwelling houses) to comprise 77 self-contained flats. Prior Notification under Class MA, Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015. Prior Notification Granted 20/05/2025.

4. CONSULTATIONS

No internal / external consultees were considered to be necessary for this application. Planning officers are satisfied that the site is within Flood Zone 1, meaning the Environment Agency is not required to be consulted.

Two site notices (on Kings Road and to the north of the site) were displayed at the site on 14/11/2025, expiring on 05/12/2025, in the public interest. No letters of representation have been received.

5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. The following local and national planning policy and guidance is relevant to this application:

National Policy and Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (as amended Feb 2025)

- 2. Achieving sustainable development
- 4. Decision-making
- 8. Promoting healthy and safe communities
- 11. Making effective use of land
- 12. Achieving well-designed places

National Planning Practice Guidance 2014 onwards

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

- CC1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- CC2 Sustainable Design and Construction
- CC3 Adaption to Climate Change
- CC7 Design and the Public Realm
- CC8 Safeguarding Amenity
- EN11 Waterspaces
- EN12 Biodiversity and the Green Network
- TR1 Achieving the Transport Strategy
- CR1 Definition of Central Reading
- CR2 Design in Central Reading
- CR3 Public Realm in Central Reading

Local Plan Update

The current version of the Local Plan (adopted in November 2019) turned five years old on Tuesday 5th November 2024. The Local Plan was reviewed in March 2023 and around half of the policies in the plan are considered still up to date. However, the rest need to be considered for updating to reflect changing circumstances and national policy. A consultation version of the draft updated version of the Local Plan was published on 6th November 2024. Subsequent to this consultation a submission draft was sent to the Secretary of State on 9th May 2025. At the time of writing, the examination-in-public of the partial update

to the local plan is in the process of taking place. Stage 1 hearings were held virtually on 11th and 12th November 2025. Stage 2 hearings will take place in February 2026.

Although there is a five-year period for carrying out a review of a plan after it is adopted, nothing in the NPPF or elsewhere says that policies automatically become “out of date” when they are five years old. It is a matter of planning judgement rather than legal fact whether a plan or policies within it are out-of-date. This will depend on whether they have been overtaken by things that have happened since the plan was adopted, either on the ground or through changes in national policy, for example.

Officer advice in respect of the Local Plan policies pertinent to this application is that they remain in accordance with national policy and that the objectives of those policies remains very similar in the submission draft updated Local Plan. Therefore, they can continue to be afforded weight in the determination of this planning application and are not considered to be ‘out of date’.

6. APPRAISAL

Context of the application in conjunction with other approvals at the site

The application is considered on its own merits, albeit it is acknowledged that there is a separate prior approval application at the site under consideration (see relevant history above). In practice, this proposal constitutes the external works to facilitate the prior approval. Nevertheless, the existing and proposed plans submitted with this application show the existing office building and hence the proposals are considered on this basis.

Design

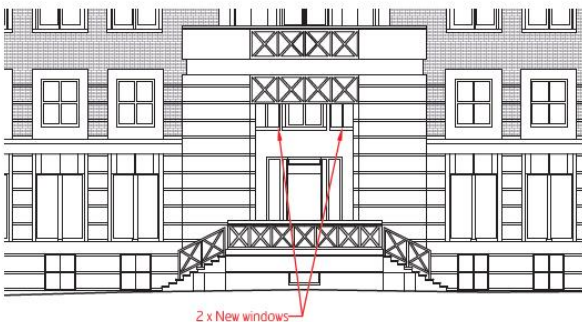
Each of the proposed changes are considered in turn below, but in summary it is concluded that the proposals are acceptable in design terms, adhering to Policies CC7 and CR2. None of the proposed works are considered to adversely impact the nearby River Kennet, thereby ensuring that the proposals also comply with the requirements of Policy EN11.

More specifically, the omission of an entrance canopy and associated revolving door, with this being replaced with a single door on the north elevation at ground floor level, raises no design-based concerns. The provision of a lightweight glazed door represents a minor change which has no impact on the design idiom of the building as a whole. The provision of a more accessibility-friendly conventional door is also an improvement in assisting access into the building for all.



Turning to consider the two new windows proposed at first floor level on the front (south – Kings Road) elevation, these are proposed to be located either side of an existing window above the ground floor entrance to the building. The applicant has indicated that these windows will match those which already

exist in terms of the opening sizes and appearance. This is recommended to be secured via a compliance worded condition. As they are set back slightly from the frontage, within a recessed entrance, they will not be particularly prominent. Internally, it is noted that they are part of the existing double height office entrance. Were the building to remain in office use, they would increase the amount of natural light within the space. For all of these reasons these additional windows raise no design-based concerns.



At roof level, the two vents and smokeshaft proposed would slightly project from the roofscape. Whilst such additions would have a material visual impact, this impact is not considered harmful in the context of the building as a whole or the wider character of the area. These additions are relatively modest, will not be highly discernible in the street or river scenes and serve an important function in terms of any future residential use complying with separate Building Regulations. Similar additions have recently been approved on the neighbouring Kennet Place building too (see relevant history).



Amenity

The proposals would not result in an increase in scale or footprint of the building, with the removal of the existing entrance canopy actually reducing the overall floorspace. The provision of additional windows would add more natural light to the building at this point, while the single door would be more accessible than the current revolving door arrangement. The vents and smokeshaft would improve the fire safety credentials of the building. Hence, there would actually be a number of amenity benefits of the proposals and no adverse impacts are envisaged. For example, the level of works are not considered to be of a level/nature which would cause disturbance to existing nearby occupiers during the demolition/construction stages of the proposals.

Other matters

Whilst the applicant has submitted a flood risk assessment as part of this application, the document submitted is actually associated with the separate current application for the conversion of the building to residential. As indicated above, the whole of the site is within Flood Zone 1 and hence no flood risk impacts are envisaged as a result of these proposed works.

In terms of biodiversity net gain, it is accepted that these proposals would be subject to the de minimis exemption.

7. CONCLUSION

The proposals are considered to be acceptable and not result detrimental impacts. Instead, they are considered to comply with the relevant policies of the Development Plan outlined above.

8. RECOMMENDATION

GRANT full planning permission subject to the following recommended conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall begin no later than three years from the date of this planning permission.

REASON: In pursuance of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004) in order to prevent an accumulation of unimplemented planning permissions.

2. The development hereby permitted shall ONLY be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:
 - 1364.6-050 - Proposed Block Plan
As received on 03/11/2025
 - 1364.6-101 - Proposed Ground & First Floor Plan
 - 1364.6-103 - Proposed Fourth & Roof Floor Plan
 - 1364.6-200 – Proposed Front Elevation (South)
 - 1364.6-203 - Proposed North Elevation
As all received on 12/11/2025
 - 1364.6 - 201 - Proposed West Elevation
 - 1364.6 - 202 - Proposed East Elevation
As both received on 13/11/2025

REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is carried out and adhered to in accordance with the application form and associated details hereby approved.

3. The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of this development shall be as specified on the plans and application form.

REASON: In the interests of visual amenity and ensuring the new development responds positively to the local context and character in accordance with Policies CC7 and CR2 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

Informatives

1. Your attention is drawn to the terms and conditions of this permission. Any development which is carried out but which differs materially from the approved plans and details, or does not comply with any condition(s) or planning obligation(s) attached to the permission may result in the Council taking action to remedy the breach of planning control. If you are in any doubt please contact the Council.
2. A Building Regulations application may be required for the proposed development. Please go to our website for more advice. <https://www.reading.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/building-control/apply-for-building-control/> You can also find advice and submit an application using the Planning Portal.
3. i) The attention of the applicant is drawn to Section 59 of the Highways Act 1980, which enables the Highway Authority to recover expenses due to damage caused by extraordinary traffic. ii) Any works affecting the Highway shall be in accordance with Reading Borough's Council's document "Guidance Notes for Activities on the Public Highway within the Borough of Reading". The applicant should note that compliance with this document is mandatory and licences to work on the Highway will only be issued if the requirements contained within it are met. A copy can be obtained from the Council's website.

4. Complaints are commonly received about noise and dust caused by construction and demolition works, particularly working outside reasonable hours and smoke from bonfires associated with the burning of waste on site. The developer is reminded that construction and demolition associated with the approved development will be subject to environmental health law.
5. The Local Planning Authority has worked positively and proactively with the applicant to resolve relevant matters to allow permission to be granted within the prescribed target timescale for the decision to be issued.