



Planning Statement

Client:

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59-61 Southampton Street

**59-61 Southampton Street, Reading RG1
2QN, UK**

Conversion and alteration of the existing building at 59-61 Southampton Street to provide eight apartments (Use Class C3), 2.5 storey rear extension, formation of a mansard roof with rear dormer and insertion of basement lightwells.

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement is produced to support a planning application for the conversion and alteration of the existing building at 59–61 Southampton Street to provide eight apartments (Use Class C3), 2.5 storey rear extension, formation of a mansard roof with rear dormer and insertion of basement lightwells.
- 1.2 This planning statement will cover the background to the application and provide the necessary information to enable its determination by officers at the Council. It will consider the proposal in light of relevant planning policies and other material considerations. The conclusion reached is that key material considerations and the wider objectives of National and Local planning policy support the grant of permission.
- 1.3 In addition to this planning statement, the application is accompanied by the appropriate planning application forms and ownership certificate, duly signed and completed, and the following documents prepared by Aedra Architecture and Pegasus:
- 1:1250 Site Location Plan
 - 1:100 Floor Plans
 - 1:100 Elevation Plans
 - Daylight Report
 - Heritage Statement
- 1.4 The relevant application fee will be submitted by the applicant separately.

2. Site Location and Description

- 2.1 The site comprises a pair of vacant buildings at the eastern side of Southampton Street. The site falls within a predominantly residential and mixed-use urban environment characterised by traditional Victorian and early 20th-century terraces.
- 2.2 The buildings are three storeys with a basement. Whilst the use of the site for 7 no. C1 units and 2 no. C3 apartments was approved under application ref: 191049, this permission has since lapsed and the building currently comprises a vacant retail unit to the ground floor, with 2 residential apartments above together with ancillary storage space at the basement and loft levels. The site directly adjoins the Grade II Listed Red Cow Public House to the south and is situated opposite a row of early 19th-century three-storey townhouses, two of which are Grade II Listed and one Grade II*. The property itself is not a Listed Building, nor does it lie in a Conservation Area; the site does lie in close proximity to the boundary of the Market Place / London Street Conservation Area.
- 2.3 The rear of the site is accessed from St Giles Close, with the wider context being residential properties. The site benefits from nearby public transport links and Reading town centre is easily accessible by foot, forming a key route into central Reading.

3. Planning History

- 3.1 Application Ref: 241137 - Discharge of Condition 9 (BREEAM), 16 (construction method statement), 19 (noise assessment) and 22 (archaeological work) of planning permission reference 191049 (Decision pending).
- 3.2 Application Ref: 191049 - Change of use from A1 and 2 x C3 apartments to 7 x C1 units and 2 x C3 apartments (2 x 2 bed) with 2.5 storey rear extensions, rear dormers and basement light wells (amended) (Application Permitted 8th October 2021).
- 3.3 Application Ref: 190335 - Change of use of part of ground floor from retail (A1) to 2 residential studio apartments (C3). Prior Notification under Class M, Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) (Prior Approval Not Required 30th April 2019).
- 3.4 Application Ref: 930307 - Minor shop front alteration. (27/10/1993)
- 3.5 Application Ref: 900250 - New shop front with aluminium roller shutters. (10/04/1990).

4. Development Proposals

- 4.1 The National Design Guide (2019) identifies that “well-designed homes and buildings are functional, accessible and sustainable. They provide internal environments and associated external spaces that support the health and well-being of their users and all who experience them. They meet the needs of a diverse range of users, taking into account factors such as the ageing population and cultural differences. They are adequate in size, fit for purpose and are adaptable to the changing needs of their occupants over time” (para 120-121).
- 4.2 Regarding the requirements of NPPG Paragraph: 029 Reference ID: 14-029-20140306 in respect of Design and Access Statements, the proposal is described as follows:
- 4.3 **Use and Amount:** The proposed development seeks permission for the residential use of the site (Use Class C3) through the conversion of the existing building to provide 8 self-contained dwellings. The scheme proposes residential accommodation only, representing an appropriate use within the highly accessible town centre location.
- 4.4 The development makes efficient use of the existing building footprint and established residential floorspace. The amount of development proposed is proportionate to the site, its context, and the surrounding built form.
- 4.5 **Layout and Scale:** The proposed layout has been carefully designed to respond to the constraints of the existing building and its town centre context. Residential units are arranged efficiently across the basement, ground, first, second and roof levels.
- 4.6 Rooms are arranged to maximise natural daylight, with internal layouts informed by the submitted daylight and sunlight assessment.

The design ensures that all dwellings benefit from acceptable living conditions in accordance with relevant guidance.

- 4.7 The scale of the proposed development remains consistent with the established built form along Southampton Street. The proposal seeks to retain the height of the building as approved by application ref: 191049, whilst alterations to the roof form allow for a more efficient use of space whilst not appearing visually dominant.
- 4.8 **Landscaping:** The proposed development includes modest landscaping works focused primarily to the rear of the site, accessed from St Giles Close. This is intended to enhance the appearance of the site and seeks to provide a hard standing patio area with a mixed plants/hedge buffer.
- 4.9 The proposed landscaping will not result in any harm to neighbouring amenity and will contribute positively to the character and appearance of the site. Full details of hard and soft landscaping can be secured by condition if required by the Local Planning Authority.
- 4.10 **Appearance:** The proposed development has been designed to respect the architectural character of the existing building and the wider streetscape along Southampton Street.
- 4.11 The existing front façade will be refurbished, however, the existing uPVC sash-style windows to the first and second floor front elevations will be retained.
- 4.12 Elements of the site's historic character will be retained and enhanced, reinforcing the buildings' architectural features.
- 4.13 The proposal will ensure the building will continue to reflect the character of the area, providing a built environment that is sympathetic to the surrounding area.

- 4.14 **Access & Parking:** The site benefits from an established access taken from St Giles Close to the rear, with good pedestrian access to the residential units taken directly from Southampton Street.
- 4.15 The proposal includes one on-site parking space.
- 4.16 Servicing, refuse storage, and cycle parking are located to the rear of the site and accessed from St Giles Close. Reading town centre and the Oracle Shopping Centre are within easy walking distance, and frequent bus and rail services are readily available.
- 4.17 The site's location is proportionate to the local planning policy supporting reduced car dependency in central locations. This is reflected in the development's parking provision for 1 car, as it is considered appropriate as a low-car or predominantly car-free scheme.

5. Policy Assessment

- 5.1 **National Guidance:** The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a relevant material consideration to the application.
- 5.2 The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 39 of the NPPF states that “Local planning authorities should approach decision on proposed development in a positive and creative way” and “at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible”. Paragraph 124 of the NPPF comments that planning should “promote an effective use of land” in “meeting the need for homes and other uses, whilst safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions”.
- 5.3 Paragraph 61 confirms the Government’s objective to boost the supply of housing, and paragraph 8 identifies the three objectives of sustainable development, as economic, environmental and social.
- 5.4 Paragraph 131 identifies that “Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities”, whilst paragraph 139 states that significant weight should be given to “outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.”
- 5.5 The National Design Guide builds on the above and clarifies that “well-designed neighbourhoods need to include an integrated mix of tenures and housing types that reflect local housing need and market

demand. They are designed to be inclusive and to meet the changing needs of people of different ages and abilities. New development reinforces existing places by enhancing local transport, facilities and community services, and maximising their potential use” (para 109).

5.6 **Principle of Development:** Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this instance, the Development Plan comprises the following documents:

- Reading Borough Local Plan (adopted November 2019)

5.7 The site falls within the ‘Central Area’ boundary as defined by the Reading Borough Local Plan Proposals Map. Policy CR1 states that the Central Area boundary as shown in the Proposals Map will mark the edge of the town centre other than where specified.

5.8 Policy CR2 requires development in the Central Area to deliver high-quality, well-integrated design that reinforces the existing grid layout, provides active and engaging street frontages, and enhances movement through the area. Proposals should create attractive and functional public realm, incorporate green infrastructure such as green roofs or walls where possible, and use high-quality, contextually appropriate materials. Development should be adaptable, contribute to community safety, and be designed so that it does not prejudice the future development potential of adjoining sites.

5.9 Policy CR6: Living in Central Reading states that proposals for residential development within the central area will be assessed against the following criteria (inter alia):

- i) *All proposals for residential development within the central area will be required to contribute towards a mix of different sized units within the development. This will be measured by the number of bedrooms provided within individual units. Ideally, a mixture of one, two and three bedroom units should be provided.*
- ii) *Proposals for new residential development within the central area will be required to demonstrate how the issue of potential noise disturbance from neighbouring land uses and other sources, and air quality implications of residential development, have been considered and if necessary, mitigated. New residential development should not be located next to existing town centre uses where those uses would give rise to unacceptable levels of noise and disturbance to the occupiers of the new scheme, unless this can be mitigated.*
- iii) *In meeting the requirement to provide affordable housing, in the central area an overconcentration of social renting for single persons will be avoided.*

5.10 The proposal comprises a mixture of 1 and 2 bedroom apartments in line with Policy CR6 i) and is not considered to give rise to additional noise over and above the previously approved scheme. Furthermore, owing to the existing use of part of the building in residential use, due consideration has been given to ensure that the proposal will not result in adverse amenity impacts upon neighbouring uses.

5.11 Policy CC6: Accessibility and the intensity of development states that the scale and density of development will be related to its level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport to a range of services and facilities, with the densest and largest scale development taking place in the most accessible locations. The policy

subtext goes on to outline that development should be accessible by a choice of modes of transport, whereby primary locations for development will be those accessible by walking and cycling to a wide range of employment, services and facilities, leisure, education and health facilities.

5.12 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.

5.13 *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.*

5.14 The policy subtext goes on further to state that residential conversions have an important role to play in housing land supply in Reading, with the conversion to flats adding a valuable supply of reasonably low cost private rented accommodation, meeting a need in the market.

5.15 It is therefore considered that the loss of a redundant retail unit in this location would be acceptable in principle, resulting in a more sustainable form of development at the site that would lead to replacement employment opportunities with regards to employees required to maintain the apartments.

5.16 Furthermore, the principle of development has been previously established through application ref: 191049.

5.17 **Character and Appearance of the Area:** The application site is located within a mixed-use town centre area characterised by historic terraced buildings predominantly of brick construction. Southampton Street forms a key route of such, exhibiting a strong urban character with consistent building lines and varied architectural detailing.

5.18 Externally, the proposal comprises a 2.5 storey rear extension and dormers. The proposal would largely replace an existing piecemeal extension which exists presently at the rear and provides an enhanced standard of living accommodation for future residents moving forwards. To ensure assimilation with the existing built form across the site, the extension is proposed to be staggered, with the

second floor being recessed from the first floor element. The height of the eaves of the rear extension would also match that of the existing rear projections, ensuring a more efficient use of the site. Furthermore, the proposed dormers are of a sympathetic design, utilising slate to match that of the existing roof.

- 5.19 Policy CC7 states that all development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. The proposed development has been designed to respond positively to this context, ensuring that the character and appearance of the surrounding area are preserved and enhanced in accordance with Policy CC7.
- 5.20 The scheme retains the established building line and facade of the existing frontage, reinforcing the continuity of the streetscape, with the majority of the development focussed to the rear of the building, away from Southampton Street. It is therefore considered that the proposal will result on a negligible impact upon the character of the adjacent Conservation Area and setting of the adjoining Listed Building. This scale and form of the development are appropriate to its surrounding setting, reflecting the prevailing pattern of development along Southampton street, in accordance with Policy CC6.
- 5.21 **Listed Buildings/Heritage:** A detailed Heritage Statement has been prepared by Pegasus and submitted in support of the application. The assessment considers the significance of the site and its surroundings and evaluates the potential impact of the proposed development on nearby heritage assets, in accordance with the NPPF and relevant Historic England guidance.
- 5.22 The Heritage Statement identifies that the site makes a limited contribution to the setting of nearby heritage assets, with the rear of

the site and existing yard area making a neutral contribution to heritage significance. The proposed development has been designed to preserve this, using the retention of positive historic features to enhance the visual street scene.

- 5.23 **Residential Amenity** – The proposed development has been carefully designed to ensure acceptable living conditions for both future occupants and neighbouring residents, in accordance with Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) of the Reading Borough Local Plan.
- 5.24 The layout and scale of the development ensures that there will be no impacts to neighbouring properties in terms of overlooking, loss of privacy, or overbearing effects by virtue of the rear extension replacing an existing two storey rear extension, the proposal seeks for a moderate increase in height. Existing separation distances are maintained, with principle elevations aligning with the established built form along Southampton Street.
- 5.25 The internal layouts of the residential units have been designed to provide functional and comfortable living environments, with appropriate room sizes and access to natural light. The scheme makes effective use of the existing building while ensuring good residential standards.
- 5.26 With regards to the amenity of future residents, outdoor amenity space is provided to the rear of the apartments which would result in a betterment with respect to the existing two apartments that are currently not afforded any usable outdoor amenity space.
- 5.27 The duplex apartments at basement level would benefit from lightwells, with the submitted Daylight Report, prepared by Aedra Architectural Services, confirming that all habitable rooms across the

development would exceed the daylight target by a significant margin.

- 5.28 **Air Quality:** The application site is located within an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) designated by Reading Borough Council, due to the high levels of traffic along Southampton Street, causing the release of local pollutants.
- 5.29 In accordance with Policy EN15 (Air Quality) of the Reading Borough Local Plan, the proposal has been designed to minimise exposure to poor air quality. As the development involves the conversion of an existing building, the layout has been arranged to reduce the impact of traffic-related emissions where possible. Due to the location of the site being in close proximity to the town centre, where there is no anticipated increase in traffic generation, the development is not expected to give rise to unacceptable air quality impacts.
- 5.30 **Access and Parking:** The application site is located within Zone 2 as indicated in the Parking Standards and Design SPD which describes the area as follows: This zone directly surrounds the Central Core Area and extends to walking distances of 2 kilometres from the centre of Reading. Typically, this zone is well served by public transport, with buses continuing either into or out of the Central Core Area via this zone. Much of this area is within acceptable walking distance (400m) of either the main railway station or Reading West railway station. Walking and cycling in this area tends to be encouraged through the provision of wide and safe footways, with some dedicated or shared cycle ways. The areas within Zone 2 also typically have smaller local centres, providing day-to-day access to retail and some commercial facilities. Future growth in these areas is likely to be more mixed than in the core area, with larger amounts of residential than commercial space.

- 5.31 Against the Council's SPD standards, the existing site generates a need for 8 parking spaces. It is acknowledged that the SPD does allow for a reduced level of parking provision in relation to the required standards provided there would be no detriment to highway safety as a result.
- 5.32 The site in question is within a highly sustainable location, within walking distance to Reading's town centre/retail core that is well served by public transport. In particular, the site is located only a 4-minute walk to the nearest bus stop, and a 14-minute walk from the main train station which provides regular services to a variety of destinations including Central London, Oxford, the West Country and South Wales. In addition, the site is located only a 5-minute walk from the parking facilities at the Oracle Centre. The proposal includes one on-site car parking space. It should be further noted that 2 residential apartments already exist within the building, and a further 2 have been granted consent at ground floor level via the Prior Approval application currently being considered at the site. Cumulatively, this would necessitate a total of 4 parking spaces required at the site.
- 5.33 Whilst it is recognised that parking provision for approximately 2 spaces exists at the rear of the building, such provision is being proposed for removal in order to make way for an attractive and useable outdoor private amenity space for future occupants, together with dedicated cycle parking. It is considered that the proposals more successfully promote the use of sustainable transport modes, whilst providing an attractive recreational environment for future occupants that serves a more meaningful purpose than the existing hard-surfaced area. There will, however, be one on-site parking space.
- 5.34 Given the highly sustainable nature of the site as referenced above, it is considered that such development would not pose a materially

harmful impact upon the safety and convenience of the local highway network. Notwithstanding this, public car parking facilities can be found in the nearby vicinity, as demonstrated by the Google Maps screenshot below.

- 5.35 It is therefore considered that the car parking provision on site is justified and should not prejudice the grant of planning permission in this instance.

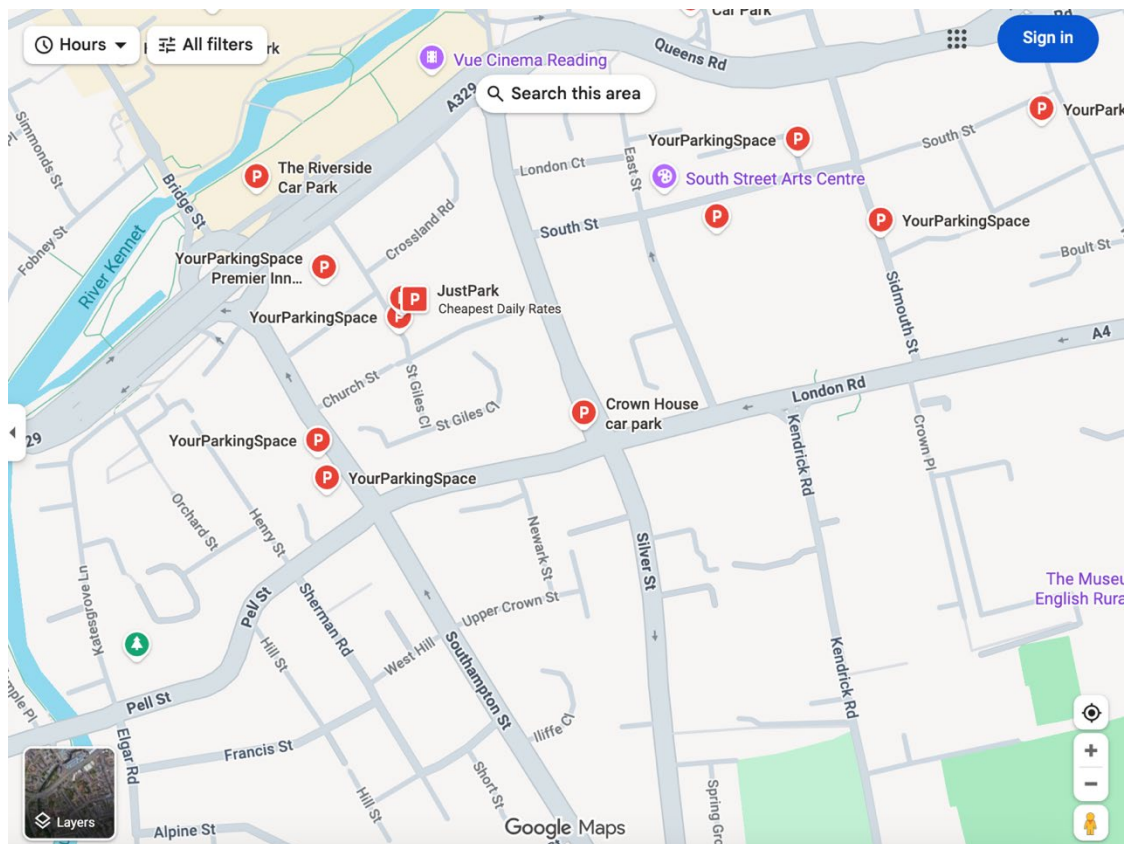


Figure 1 – Google Maps screenshot showing car parking facilities within walking distance from the site

- 5.36 **Drainage and SuDS:** The site falls within Flood Zone 1, which carries the lowest risk of flooding.
- 5.37 **Affordable Housing:** Policy H3 states that residential development will make appropriate contribution towards affordable housing to meet the needs of Reading, on sites of 5-9 dwellings, a financial

contribution will be made that will enable the equivalent of 20% of the housing to be provided as affordable housing elsewhere in the Borough. It is proposed that this can be secured via financial contribution.

- 5.38 **Community Infrastructure Levy:** The relevant CIL forms have been submitted alongside the application.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 This statement has demonstrated that the proposed development is acceptable in principle and makes an efficient use of land.
- 6.2 Material planning considerations have been carefully considered and analysed, as evidenced in section 5 of this statement and the supporting plans and documents. It is considered the proposed development would contribute an appropriate windfall site to the Borough's housing supply, without adverse effect on the character of the area or the amenity of neighbouring residents.
- 6.3 It is considered that the proposed scheme complies with relevant Development Plan Policies and is further supported by National Guidance. Therefore, it is respectfully requested that planning permission is granted.

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