

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Thames Ward

App Ref: PL/25/1315 Prior approval Part 3 Class MA: Commercial, business and service uses to dwellinghouses

Address: 97 YORK ROAD, READING, RG1 8DU

Proposal: Change of use from Class E (offices) to C3 (dwelling houses) to comprise 2 x 1-bed dwellings. Prior Notification under Class MA, Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015.

Applicant: Trustees of Blue Infinity SSAS Pension

Received date: 17/09/2025

Target Decision date (agreed extension): 30/01/2026

Case Officer: Sian Hickey

Introduction

The application site consists of a two-storey vacant workshop building with a pitched roof and a single-storey, flat-roofed enclosed garage/store area which connects the building to the adjacent two storey commercial building. The site is located on York Road between Newport Road and Caversham Road. The surrounding area is predominantly residential with some commercial units and a primary school on the east side of York Road. The site is not a listed building, and not within a conservation area. The proposal site falls within Flood Zone 2, which is land defined in the planning practice guidance as being at risk of flooding.



Figure 1: Site Location Plan



Figure 2: Application Building

Proposal

Prior approval is sought under Class MA Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended) for the change of use of the ground and first floor of the building to create 2 x 1-bed self-contained dwellings.

The submitted planning statement states this is to be a car free development. The plans illustrate an internal storage area within each unit for 1 cycle.



Figure 3: Proposed Ground Floor Plan



Figure 4: Proposed First Floor Plan

Information Submitted

The completed application form, including a written summary of the proposed development and the developer's details.

Drawings and Documents:

- Planning Statement received 17 September 2025
- Contamination Report received 17 September 2025
- CIL form received 17 September 2025
- Design Report received 17 September 2025
- Asbestos Report received 17 September 2025
- Drawing No. YR_P_060 P02 – Existing Ground Floor Plan received on 17 September 2025
- Drawing No. YR_P_070 P02 – Existing First Floor Plan received on 17 September 2025
- Drawing No. YR_P_300 P04 – Proposed Elevations received 17 September 2025
- Drawing No. EYR_P_050 P01 – Location Plan received 17 September 2025
- Drawing No. YR_P_200 P03 – Existing Elevations received on 17 September 2025
- Drawing No. YR_P_080 P02 – Existing Roof Plan received on 17 September 2025
- Drawing No. YR_P_110 P06 – Proposed First Floor Plan received 6 October 2025
- Drawing No. YR_P_120 P06 – Proposed Roof Plan received 6 October 2025
- Drawing No. YR_P_100 P07 – Proposed Ground Floor Plan received 6 October 2025
- Daylight and Sunlight Assessment V2 received 20 October 2025
- Flood Risk Assessment and SUDS Strategy for Planning V4 received 22 January 2026

Policy Context

Legal 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).

Planning History

PL/25/1274 - Elevation and fenestration alterations, including rooflights and solar panels plus ground and first floor side extension for residential use (amended description). APPROVED

Consultations

Transport (RBC):

The site is within Zone 2, the primary core area but on the periphery of the central core area which lies at the heart of Reading Borough, consisting primarily of retail and commercial office developments with good transport hubs. Extensive parking restrictions are in place around the site. This application seeks the change of use from Class E into 2 x 1 bedroom C3 dwellings. There has been a recent application on this site, PL/25/1274 that related to the external works and an extension to the existing building for which Transport comments have already been provided.

In accordance with the adopted Parking SPD, the development would require each dwelling to be provided with 1 off street parking space. The submitted planning statement states this is to be a car free development. The site is on the border of Zone 1 and close to the town centre Reading main station and access to all main bus routes. It is located with walking distance to Reading and Caversham centres and bus stops and access to Reading Main train station, there are cycle routes which link to the town centre, and wider Caversham area. Given the site's highly sustainable location a car free development can be accepted on this instance.

The Council's Residential Permit Parking Scheme operates in this area, therefore, under the Borough's current parking standards, this proposal would generate additional pressure for parking in the area, if this application is approved there should be an assumption that any future occupants of the proposed dwellings will not be issued with resident or visitor parking permits, this will ensure that the development does not harm the existing amenities of the neighbouring residential properties by adding to the already high level of on street car parking in the area.

In line with the Council's adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD, each of the 1 and 2 bedroom unit should be provided with 0.5 secure cycle parking, however under GPD we would not comment on this although it is noted that plans illustrate an internal storage area within each unit for 1 cycle.

Bin storage should comply with Manual for Streets and British Standard 5906: 2005 for Waste Management in Buildings and should be located no further than 10m from the access point of the site to avoid the stationing of service vehicles on the carriageway for excessive periods. It is recommended that the Council's Waste Management team be contacted to ensure the correct capacity of bins is provided.

As advised for application PL/25/1274 the introduction of Juliette balconies is noted and as illustrated in the proposed front elevations below:

In order to accommodate the two residential dwellings proposed, the building requires some external alterations and an extension. The applicant made a separate planning application, ref. PL/25/1274, which was approved on 28th January 2026. The works proposed as part of that application would ensure that the proposed units would comply with the minimum space standards, and a condition is proposed to ensure that the works under ref. PL/25/1274 are completed prior to occupation of the units.

Criteria MA.1.—(1)

Parts (a) (three month vacancy) and (c) (Floorspace qualification) were removed from the legislation on 5th March 2024 and so are no longer assessed.

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

The Planning Statement and the Application Form specify that the existing use of the site is Class E vacant workshop / light industrial unit. The council hold no record of any planning history for this site. The details provided from RBC Business Rates team are consistent with the information in Appendix 1 of the planning statement.

(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;”***

It can be confirmed the site is not within a landscape designation criteria.

(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.***

Not applicable to the proposal.

Conditions

MA.2.—(1) Confirms that development under Class MA is permitted subject to the condition that before beginning the development, 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;
- (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 2006,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 and the provisions of paragraph W (prior approval) apply in relation to that application.

Assessment of MA.2.—(1)

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

The Council's Transport Team raise no objection to the prior approval but have recommended that an informative is applied to advise that no future residents of the dwellings would be given a resident or visitor parking permit.

Given the site's highly sustainable location, the proposed car free development can be accepted on this instance. As such, the proposal is not considered to have any adverse transportation impacts.

(b) Contamination risks in relation to the building

The application site is not situated on land known to be at risk of contamination and this application is for a change of use only. The Council's Environmental Protection Team have confirmed they have no objections to the proposal. Therefore, the development is not considered to amount to any unacceptable risks in relation to contamination.

(c) Flooding risks in relation to the building

The site is located within Flood Zone 2 and with the proposal being for a change of use of existing workshop/light industrial unit (Class E) to two residential units (C3 – dwellinghouses), the Environment Agency have been advised of the proposal but have declined to respond to the consultation and have referred the LPA to its Standing Advice.

Under Annex 3 (Flood risk vulnerability classification) of the NPPF it sets out flood risk vulnerability classification. Offices come under the 'Less Vulnerable' category whereas dwellinghouses come under the 'More Vulnerable' category. Therefore, the proposed change of use would increase the flood risk vulnerability.

A Flood Risk Assessment has been submitted in support of the application.

Environment Agency Standing Advice

The Environment Agency's Standing Advice is applicable to this application, being a change of use proposal development within Flood Zone 2 that has a vulnerability classification of 'more vulnerable'. The Standing Advice produced by the Environment Agency covers several factors, including what to include in a Flood Risk Assessment, flood resistance and resilience measures and access and escape.

The proposed flood-resistance and resilience measures (including retrofitted waterproofing, flood-resistant doors, raised electrical installations, non-return valves, resilient materials and construction methods) as listed in section 4.4 of the FRA accord with national planning policy, which requires development in areas at risk of flooding to be made safe without increasing flood risk elsewhere and specifically promotes the use of resistance and resilience techniques as part of managing residual flood risk.

The Flood Risk Assessment is considered to be appropriate, subject to a compliance condition for the development to be carried out in accordance with the mitigation measures referenced within the approved FRA. This condition will, therefore, be secured.

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

Paragraph MA.2(d) of Class MA of the GPDO requires the LPA's assessment relating to impacts of noise from any commercial premises on the intended occupants of the new dwellinghouse, which follows the similar requirement in Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

The Council's Environmental Protection Team has reviewed the proposal and confirmed that a noise impact assessment is not required in this instance. All concerns have been addressed in the submitted planning statement. The information provided suggests that the noise from the existing commercial uses in the area should not have an adverse impact on the amenity or health of future occupiers of the dwellinghouses.

The surrounding area is predominantly residential and does not include noise-generating uses. The adjoining non-residential property is a quiet commercial storage unit operated by a funeral director. This use results in minimal activity and negligible noise levels. The adjoining building has no windows or doors on its western elevation facing the application site, and only a small, non-opening window to the south fronting York Road.

The proposed residential units would incorporate enhanced acoustic insulation to all party walls. In addition, all windows serving the new dwellings would be orientated away from the adjoining commercial use.

A construction hours informative is recommended to protect neighbouring residents from unreasonable disturbance.

(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;

The site is not located within a conservation area.

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

Statutory Instrument 2020:632 introduces the requirement that consideration is given in respect to the provision of adequate natural light in all habitable rooms. This requires examination of the detailed floor plans and a judgement to be exercised as to whether appropriate levels of light can be achieved to rooms used for sleeping or living. This excludes bathrooms, service rooms, corridor, laundry rooms and hallways.

In order to accommodate the two residential dwellings proposed, the building requires some external alterations and an extension. The applicant made a separate planning application, ref. PL/25/1274, which was approved on 28th January 2026. The works proposed as part of that application would ensure that all habitable rooms would receive appropriate levels of daylight, and a condition is proposed to ensure that the works under ref. PL/25/1274 are completed prior to occupation of the units.

A Daylight and Sunlight Assessment has been submitted for the proposed scheme. The results show that all habitable rooms would meet the BRE daylight targets. Officers are satisfied that the proposal will provide adequate natural light to all habitable rooms of the dwellinghouses. Therefore, the proposal complies with Paragraph MA.2(f) of Class MA of the GPDO and Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

(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 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 would 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

A Fire Statement would be required if the development involved the development of an existing 'relevant building'. This criteria applies to a building which satisfies the height condition in paragraph (3) of the Procedure Order and contains— (a) two or more dwellings; or (b) educational accommodation. Paragraph (3) states the height condition is that— (a) the building is 18 metres or more in height; or (b) the building contains 7 or more storeys.

The building does not meet these criteria and, therefore, a Fire Statement is not required.

The prior approval application has been assessed against the criteria set out in the GPDO and is considered acceptable. However, the building, in its current form, cannot satisfactorily accommodate the proposed residential units. The operational development required to make the units appropriate, namely the extension and external alterations, falls outside the scope of prior approval and must be secured via the accompanying full planning application (Ref: PL/25/1274). The prior approval is therefore acceptable when read in conjunction with that full application, which provides the necessary physical works to support the implementation of the change of use.

Recommendation:

Prior Approval is GIVEN, subject to the following conditions:

1. This development under Class MA is permitted subject to it being completed within a period of 3 years starting with the prior approval date on this decision notice.

REASON: To comply with the requirement of paragraph MA.2.—(5) of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended)

2. The development hereby permitted shall ONLY be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans and documents:

Drawing No. YR_P_060 P02 – Existing Ground Floor Plan received on 17 September 2025
Drawing No. YR_P_070 P02 – Existing First Floor Plan received on 17 September 2025
Drawing No. YR_P_300 P04 – Proposed Elevations received 17 September 2025
Drawing No. EYR_P_050 P01 – Location Plan received 17 September 2025
Drawing No. YR_P_200 P03 – Existing Elevations received on 17 September 2025
Drawing No. YR_P_080 P02 – Existing Roof Plan received on 17 September 2025
Drawing No. YR_P_110 P06 – Proposed First Floor Plan received 6 October 2025
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Drawing No. YR_P_100 P07 – Proposed Ground Floor Plan received 6 October 2025
Daylight and Sunlight Assessment V2 received 20 October 2025
Flood Risk Assessment and SUDS Strategy for Planning V4 received 22 January 2026

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. No dwelling hereby approved shall be occupied until the works approved under planning permission ref. PL/25/1274, namely: 'Elevation and fenestration alterations, including rooflights and solar panels plus ground and first floor side extension for residential use', have been completed in accordance with the approved plans.

REASON: To ensure that the proposed residential units have both natural light and also that they comply with the space standard. In accordance with Local Plan Policy H5 and part (f) of Schedule 2, Part 3, Class MA of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended).