

Alterations to development approved by planning permission PL/22/0780 to provide for additional extension, external basement access, and other minor alterations.

640 Oxford Road, Reading, RG30 1EH

Planning Statement

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Prepared for: VX KVA DEV Limited



Document Information

About

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Planning Statement has been prepared by Squires Planning in support of an application by VX KVA DEV Limited for the:

“Alterations to development approved by planning permission PL/22/0780 to provide for additional extension, external basement access, and other minor alterations.”
- 1.2. A full planning application has been pursued, rather than a s73 variation of condition, as it is considered that some of the alterations (namely the larger extension and basement access) could be considered beyond the scope of a material amendment. However, this application is in essence an amendment to planning permission PL/22/0780.
- 1.3. Planning permission PL/22/0780 granted consent for the *“Provision of a mixed-use development comprising 3 x separate commercial units (one at basement level and two at ground floor level) and 2 additional self-contained dwellings (two at first floor and two at second floor) with associated extensions and alterations.”*
- 1.4. The permission is extant and also currently subject of a Non-material amendment (PL/26/0145) and a Discharge of Conditions application (PL/26/0172).
- 1.5. The principle and main issues previously considered by PL/22/0780 are unchanged and the extant nature if the permission provides a significant fallback position. This Statement therefore focuses on the difference between the new proposals and those approved, rather than other matters that have already be assessed as appropriate.
- 1.6. This Statement provides an overview of the site, its context and the proposed development before considering the material considerations relevant in the determination of this application.

Site & Situation

- 1.7. The application site comprises a three-storey building which is located at a corner-plot location on the junction of Oxford Road and Alma Street in Reading. The existing building comprises a dual-pitched slate tile roof and the elevations are finished in white render. There is a courtyard and parking area to the rear; beyond which is a two-storey office building within the applicant's ownership.
- 1.8. The building is currently within a mixed use; the basement is let out for storage (Use Class E); the ground floor is a hair and beauty salon (Use Class Sui Generis); and the first and second floors are two separate, self-contained flats (Use Class C3) currently occupied by vulnerable people as identified and housed by Reading Council.
- 1.9. Access is gained via a pedestrian door on Alma Street which enters onto a staircase which leads both to the basement and upper floors. Access to the ground floor is gained to the frontage which comprises an open, glazed appearance resemblant of a shopfront.
- 1.10. The character of the area is urban; the southeast comprises a series of terraced dwellings which are arranged in a grid-style form along the road network. The north and west are occupied by commercial buildings such as hotels, warehouses and supermarkets, with the area benefiting from a Core

Employment Area strategic allocation. Immediately to the western border is the Royal Albion pub which is currently closed to business, beyond which is a block of flats and “Ibis” hotel.

- 1.11. The local buildings are generally modern which are of little historic or architectural merit. There is no strict vernacular although the character is resemblant of an outer city residential area. Many of the buildings in the area have been extended or altered; and of particular note, many of the buildings along Oxford Road have had lightwells installed to the front to enable light into the basement areas to transform them into useable spaces.
- 1.12. Vehicular access to the site is currently obtained via Alma Street which leads to a private walled and gated courtyard and parking area.
- 1.13. There is permit parking along Alma Street, and Oxford Road is identified within the Local Plan as a Classified Highway Network. The site is well served by public transport; the closest bus stops are 120m west and 104m east which provide various services connecting Reading with surrounding centres. In addition to this, Reading West train station is some 1.1km east; and Tilehurst train station is 2.1km north-west.
- 1.14. The site is not affected by any restrictive constraints or landscape designations and equally is located within Flood Zone 1 which indicates the lowest probability of surface water flooding according to the Environment Agency.

Planning History

- 1.15. The main permission for consideration is PL/22/0780. This permission is extant and has clearly established that the commercial units and additional dwellings are acceptable. It has also established a degree of extension work and the level of on-site parking provision required, namely 3 car parking spaces and 6 cycle spaces.
- 1.16. Permission PL/22/0780 is a significant material consideration to the determination of this application and it establishes a very real fallback position. With that being the case, it is intended to only focus on the differences with the proposals rather than justify all other planning matters that have clearly already been found acceptable.

2. The Proposed Development

- 2.1. This application seeks the *“Alterations to development approved by planning permission PL/22/0780 to provide for additional extension, external basement access, and other minor alterations.”*
- 2.2. As previously described, there is no change to the amount of commercial space (3 units) or residential dwellings (4 flats). The general layout of these uses remains unchanged the commercial space in the basement, and ground floor, with two flats on the first floor and two on the second floor. Vehicle access is still via Alma Street with 3 car parking spaces provided, together with cycle and bin storage. The residential units are also still all accessed via Alma Street.
- 2.3. The differences between the approved scheme and the current proposal are as follows:
- A new basement level access is to be created at the front of the site. This will include a new stair well, additional glazing, retaining walls and planter. This will act as the primary (and only) access to the basement level;
 - A larger rear extension which now is essentially flush with the western boundary. This also necessitates a slightly higher overall ridge height and eaves level. However, it creates a simpler roof form and significantly improved internal area;
 - Internal layout alterations to the commercial units on the ground floor due to the changes to access to the basement and the extension, also creating a slightly larger commercial unit to the rear;
 - Internal layout changes to the flats, principally around stair access and larger floor area for the rear most units on the first and second floor.
- 2.4. The changes now proposed will provide for an improved development to that already approved. It will function better from an access point of view, will be appropriate in design terms and provide for greater space for two of the residential units.

3. Planning Policy

- 3.1. Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning decisions should be made in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The Development Plan

- 3.2. The Development Plan policy context for the site and the surrounding area is provided by Reading Borough Local Plan Adopted 2019 (Local Plan).
- 3.3. The policies that are of relevance to this application are set out below:
- Policy CC1 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
 - Policy CC2 – Sustainable Design and Construction
 - Policy CC6 – Accessibility and the Intensity of Development
 - Policy CC7 – Design and the Public Realm
 - Policy CC8 – Safeguarding Amenity
 - Policy H1 – Housing provision
 - Policy H2 – Density and Mix
 - Policy H3 – Affordable Housing
 - Policy H5 – Standards for New Housing
 - Policy H6 – Accommodation for Vulnerable People
 - Policy H10 – Private and Communal Outdoor Space
 - Policy TR1 – Achieving the Transport Strategy
 - Policy TR3 – Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
 - Policy TR5 – Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging
- 3.4. Policy CC1 says: *“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 (NPPF). Where appropriate, the Council will work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible.”*
- 3.5. Policy CC2 says: *“Proposals for new development, including the construction of new buildings and the redevelopment and refurbishment of existing building stock, will be acceptable where the design of buildings and site layouts use energy, water, minerals, materials and other natural resources appropriately, efficiently and with care and take account of the effects of climate change.”*

- 3.6. Policy CC6 says 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. Unless it can be demonstrated that the accessibility of a site is to be significantly upgraded, for example, by providing high quality pedestrian routes or providing access to good public transport services, any new development must be at a scale, density and intensity appropriate to that level of accessibility.”*
- 3.7. Policy relating to design is provided by CC7. This policy seeks high quality design from all forms of development.
- 3.8. Policy CC8 says that: *“Development will not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties, in terms of: Privacy and overlooking; Access to sunlight and daylight; Visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development; Harm to outlook; Noise and disturbance; Artificial lighting; Vibration; Dust and fumes; Smell; Crime and safety; or Wind, where the proposals involve new development of more than 8 storeys. The position of habitable rooms, windows and outdoor living spaces will be particularly important. A back-to-back distance of 20 metres between dwellings is usually appropriate, although the circumstances on individual sites may enable dwellings to be closer without a detrimental effect on privacy.”*
- 3.9. Policy H1 confirms that provision will be made for 15,847 new homes (averaging 689 homes per annum) in Reading Borough for the period 2013 to 2036.
- 3.10. Policy H2 says that: *“The appropriate density of residential development will be informed by: the character and mix of uses of the area in which it is located, including the housing mix, and including consideration of any nearby heritage assets or important landscape or townscape areas; its current and future level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport; the need to achieve high quality design; the need to maximise the efficiency of land use; and the need to minimise environmental impacts, including detrimental impacts on the amenities of adjoining occupiers.”*
- 3.11. The provision of affordable housing is covered by Policy H3. On sites of 1 – 4 dwellings, a financial contribution will be made that will enable the equivalent of 10% of the housing to be provided as affordable housing elsewhere in the Borough.
- 3.12. Policy H5 sets out standards for new build dwellings. As part of this, dwellings outside of the central area will be required to meet the National Space Standards, be built to the higher water efficiency standard under Regulation 36(3) of the Building Regulations, achieve at a minimum a 19% improvement in the dwelling emission rate over the target emission rate, as defined in the 2013 Building Regulations, and be accessible and adaptable in line with M4(2) of the Building Regulations, unless it is built in line with M4(3).
- 3.13. Policy H6 says that: *“Development for specialist accommodation for vulnerable people will, where possible, locate accommodation close to, or incorporate, relevant community facilities, such as healthcare services. Affordable specialist housing for vulnerable people that meets the needs of the most up to date Housing Strategy may count towards affordable housing provision in line with policy H3.”*

- 3.14. Policy H10 requires flats to be provided with communal space, including green space wherever possible, that allows for suitable sitting-out areas, children's play areas, home food production, green waste composting, refuse storage, general outdoor storage and drying space.
- 3.15. Policy TR1 says that: *"All development proposals should make appropriate provision for works and contributions to ensure an adequate level of accessibility and safety by all modes of transport from all parts of a development, particularly by public transport, walking and cycling, in accordance with any agreed transport assessment submitted as part of the application."*
- 3.16. Policy TR3 says that: *"In determining proposals involving a new or altered access onto the transport network, improvement works to the transport network, the creation of new transport infrastructure or the generation of additional trips on the transport network, consideration will be given to the effect on safety, congestion and the environment. Development will only be permitted where:- i) Accesses and works to the highway comply with the adopted standards of the Transport Authority; ii) The development would not have a material detrimental impact on the functioning of the transport network; iii) The proposals would not be detrimental to the safety of users of the transport network, including pedestrians and cyclists; iv) The proposal would not generate regular movement of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) on unsuitable roads, or on roads without easy access to the Classified Highway Network; and v) For non-residential uses, or new dwellings on classified roads, off-street servicing would be provided."*
- 3.17. Policy TR5 says that: *"Development should provide car parking and cycle parking that is appropriate to the accessibility of locations within the Borough to sustainable transport facilities, particularly public transport. Development should make the following provision for electric vehicle charging points: □ All new houses with dedicated off-street parking should provide charging points; □ Within communal car parks for residential or non-residential developments of at least 10 spaces, 10% of spaces should provide an active charging point."*

National Planning Policy Framework

- 3.18. The National Planning Policy Framework (Dec 2024) (NPPF) provides further clarity on how this should be done in the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out at paragraph 11 which states:

"For decision-taking this means:

c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or

d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or

ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination."

- 3.19. The NPPF is a material consideration in planning decisions.
- 3.20. A number of aims and objectives of the NPPF are of particular relevance to proposed development.
- 3.21. The NPPF (Paragraph 11) sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development and Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) are expected to approve development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay.
- 3.22. **Paragraph 39** of the NPPF says LPAs should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way; work proactively with applicants and seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.
- 3.23. **Paragraph 61** refers to the government's objective to significantly boost the supply of homes.
- 3.24. **Paragraph 109** promotes sustainable transport options and supports development at sustainable locations which offer sustainable transport choices.
- 3.25. **Paragraph 124** promotes the effective use of land in meeting the need for homes, balanced with safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions.
- 3.26. **Paragraph 120** says substantial weight should be given to the value of using suitable brownfield land for homes and proposals for such should be approved unless substantial harm would be caused.
- 3.27. **Paragraph 139** expects significant weight to be given to development which reflects local design policies taking into account local design guidance and supplementary planning documents.

Other Material Policy Consideration

- 3.28. Outside of the Development Plan and the NPPF, there are other material policy considerations that need to be discussed in relation to this development. In this case, the other material policy considerations are:
- Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document
 - Revised Parking Standards and Design Supplementary Planning Document

Appropriate Weight

- 3.29. Regarding the weight that is given, Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that, determination of applications must be made in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this instance, full weight is given to the Local Plan as it forms the Development Plan.
- 3.30. As it forms the basis of Government policy for planning applications, substantial weight should be given to the policies of the Framework.
- 3.31. Since they do not form part of the Development Plan, limited weight can be given to the aforementioned SPDs/SPGs.

4. Main Considerations

- 4.1. In this section we will consider the main issues relevant to the proposed development. As previously stated, these issue focus on the changes from the approved development to the now proposed. However, other matters that have previously been found acceptable are briefly discussed for completeness.
- 4.2. The main issues relevant to the changes are:
- Design and Appearance
 - Amenity
- 4.3. These are discussed below.

Design and Appearance

- 4.4. The proposed alterations provide for additional extensions and alterations. The most prominent changes relate to the basement access and the increased rear/side extension. The other alterations are modest and have limited design and appearance impacts.
- 4.5. Turning first the basement access, this will involve the excavating of the front yard area, new glazing, together with a new stair access, retaining structures, barrier fence and a planter. As the bulk of this work is below ground level it is not widely prominent with the building looking relatively unchanged from street view, wit the exception of the revised glazing, barrier and planter. However, the works will provide for a significant improvement to the usability of the basement level, and access arrangements for the ground floor commercial units. These alterations are therefore positive and mark an improvement over the previously approved scheme.
- 4.6. The additional extension to the rear/side of the premises now provides for a more “standard” gable end projection rather than the more convoluted roof structure previously approved. The new scheme does slightly increase the overall height of the extensions ridge and eaves. However, the ridge is still lower and subservient to the existing roof, and the eaves level is also complementary and commensurate with he host building. The massing of the extension is also increase but only to the side boundary and thus given that this is not widely visible within the street scene, it has no significant material affect over and above the previous approval. The previous officers report confirmed *“The proposed extension would extend into the current car park/ hardstanding. Whilst relatively large in depth, the extension would not be considered substantially overbearing when viewed from the street and gapping between the site and properties on Alma Road would remain. The extension has been set down from the roof of the main property and represents a suitable integrating roof form.”* This analysis remains unchanged.
- 4.7. The overall design of the extension is appropriate utilising an appropriate material pallet and suitable fenestration. The revised extension is therefore appropriate in design and appearance, and does not give rise to any demonstrable harmful affects.

- 4.8. The extension also helps to provide internal improvements including better internal access arrangements and greater floor space for 2 of the approved flats. These are significant improvements over the approved scheme.
- 4.9. The other alterations to are minor and relate to doors and windows. They represent very modest changes to the approved scheme and are essentially non-material amendments.
- 4.10. Overall, the proposed changes are of an appropriate design that are commensurate with the existing building and its location, and moreover do not cause any harm or differing impacts to the approved development. The proposal is therefore in accordance with the Local Plan and NPPF.

Amenity

- 4.11. The main amenity issue for consideration with this proposal is the potential impact from noise to the residential dwellings. Other matters, such as overlooking and loss of light have previously been considered acceptable and this proposal does not raise any addition scope for these matters. However, the proposed extension will be close to the boundary of the site with the neighbouring public house.
- 4.12. As previously set out, the public house is currently closed to business. We note that an application was made (PL/24/1521) to convert the pub to a commercial use (Use Class E) but that this was refused on 6 October 2025. Whilst it is entirely possible that the public house could reopen, this does seem to indicate that it is more likely not to, and that an alternative use is being pursued by the owners.
- 4.13. Nevertheless, the main impact from the pub, to the residential units is noise, odour and air quality. This is also the case from the proposed commercial units. Previously this was dealt with by way of condition with the previous officers report confirming *“However, Officers need to ensure future occupiers would not be subject to unreasonable noise (deliveries and hours of use), odour from the commercial units, and ensure they are not exposed to a harmful level of poor air quality given the site is located within an AQMA. As such, conditions to this effect will be attached, as advised by the Environmental Health Officer.”*
- 4.14. As outlined previously there is a discharge of condition application (PL/26/0172) which deals with the imposed conditions on permission PL/22/0780. Further, with this application those same documents are provided and these demonstrate that there will be no harmful amenity impacts on the potential occupiers.
- 4.15. Whilst the proposed extension will bring the building closer to the public house, this does not equate to greater amenity harm. The submitted reports have assessed this proposal and find no harm subject to the implementation of mitigation measures, as outlined in the reports.
- 4.16. Given the above the proposal will not lead to any greater or different amenity impacts.

Other matters

- 4.17. Whilst not revisiting all of the other planning matters previously considered, given they were all found acceptable, it is important to note that the proposal is still wholly acceptable in principle, and there is no change to transport considerations.
- 4.18. It is noted that the previous approval was subject to a s106 agreement for the provision of affordable housing contributions. This previous s106 has been signed and it is understood the contribution paid. Clearly, it is not appropriate to “double dip” and thus it is anticipated that either a refund of the previous contribution is provided or, more simply, any additional payment is made to off set against what has already been paid. Nevertheless, the applicant acknowledges the need to secure the contributions and will appoint an appropriate solicitor to deal with this matter.
- 4.19. Since the grant of permission PL/22/0780 Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) has become a stator requirement for development. However, this proposal falls within the *de minimis* exemption as it does not impact on any existing habitat given all areas affected are hardstanding. The proposal does provide for ecological enhancement through the inclusion of built in swift boxes on the rear gable projection.
- 4.20. It is also assumed that, If minded to approve, the permission would be subject to similar if not identical conditions as permission PL/22/0780. As described above a discharge of condition application and Non-material amendment, are currently being considered and those same details are provided with this application. With that being the case, it is the aim to avoid any pre-commencement conditions with this application.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1. This application seek to provide alterations and amendments to planning permission PL/22/0780. The previous permission is extant and thus a significant material consideration in favour of this proposal. Whilst there has been updates to the NPPF since its approval, the Development Plan remains unchanged. As such, the policy context for the proposal is materially the same.
- 5.2. The proposed changes to the approved scheme are wholly acceptable. They provide for meaningful improvements to the approved scheme, not least because they make the basement level more useable, and provide for increased floor areas for 2 of the flats.
- 5.3. The works do not introduce any greater impacts or different considerations to those assessed on permission PL/22/0780. There is no different or greater amenity harm and the overall design remains consistent and commensurate with the existing character and appearance of the building and local area.
- 5.4. Consequently, the proposal complies with the NPPF and Development Plan, and therefore, it is requested that planning permission be granted.



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