

Vacant Building Credit

Site: 2 Bedford Road, Reading, RG1 7HS

Existing Site and Lawful Use

The application site at 2 Bedford Road, Reading, RG1 7HS comprises previously developed land containing a former public house building with a gross internal floor area of approximately 258 sqm. The public house ceased trading in 2015 and the building has remained vacant since that time.

The building has not been abandoned and retains its lawful planning use as a public house. Since closure, the site has remained in private ownership and the building has been maintained in a secure condition. The site therefore constitutes previously developed land containing an existing lawful building capable of being brought forward for redevelopment.

The proposal seeks to redevelop the site to provide 6 residential units with a total gross internal floor area of approximately 521.8 sqm.

National Policy Context

Paragraph 64 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and associated Planning Practice Guidance confirm that Vacant Building Credit (VBC) should be applied where a vacant building is brought back into lawful use or is demolished and replaced by a new building.

The purpose of Vacant Building Credit is to:

incentivise brownfield development and support the reuse of previously developed land.

Planning Practice Guidance confirms that where Vacant Building Credit applies, the existing lawful floorspace should be deducted from the total proposed floorspace when calculating affordable housing contributions.

Applicability of Vacant Building Credit to the Site

The site at 2 Bedford Road meets the criteria for Vacant Building Credit for the following reasons:

- The site contains an existing lawful building.
- The building has been vacant for a prolonged period (approximately 10 years).
- The building has not been abandoned.
- The proposal represents redevelopment of previously developed land.
- The development will bring a long-term vacant site back into productive use.

Former public houses represent a building typology that has experienced significant structural decline nationally, and redevelopment of such sites is consistent with national planning objectives to promote regeneration and efficient use of land.

Floorspace Calculation

The Vacant Building Credit calculation is as follows:

Description	Floorspace
Existing lawful building	258 sqm
Proposed development	521.8 sqm
Net uplift	263.8 sqm

In accordance with national policy, affordable housing requirements should therefore apply only to the net increase in floorspace of 263.8 sqm, rather than the full development.

This represents approximately 50.5% of the total proposed floorspace.

Affordable Housing Implications

Reading Borough Council Local Plan Policy H3 seeks affordable housing contributions from residential developments. However, national policy requires Vacant Building Credit to be applied where applicable.

Applying Vacant Building Credit results in a proportionate reduction in any affordable housing requirement to reflect only the uplift in floorspace created by the development.

The proposal will deliver the regeneration of a long-term vacant brownfield site and provide additional housing supply in a sustainable location. The application of Vacant Building Credit is therefore fully justified and consistent with national policy objectives.

Conclusion

The proposal at 2 Bedford Road, Reading, RG1 7HS satisfies the criteria for Vacant Building Credit set out within the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance.

The existing lawful floorspace of 258 sqm should therefore be deducted from the proposed floorspace when calculating any affordable housing contribution. The affordable housing requirement should accordingly be applied only to the net additional floorspace created by the development.

The application of Vacant Building Credit will support the viable redevelopment of a long-term vacant site and is consistent with national planning policy objectives to promote the effective use of previously developed land.

