

*Proposed conversion of existing building with a change of use from Doctor's
Surgery (User Class E(e)) to 3No Apartments (User Class C3)*

“Whitley Villa”
1 Christchurch Road, Reading RG2 7AB

Design and Access Statement
Planning Statement

15th November 2025
(Revision-2: 15/12/2025)



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1 Location, Site description, Heritage status

1.1 Location and Introduction



Picture 1: Site location

- 1.1.1 The application site known as “Whitley Villa” lies within the Christchurch Conservation Area and is a key building as part of the existing zone. It appears to have built between 1820 – 1840.
- 1.1.2 Originally one grand residence, the Villa started being used as part residence and part doctor’s surgery on the ground floor some time prior to 1957. The first floor was added to the Surgery use in April 1980.
- 1.1.3 Following further planning approval in August 1988, the building was extended to the rear and was until recently operated by the University Medical Practice as a doctor’s surgery and clinic.

1.2 Heritage Status

- 1.2.1 The property is an existing detached building which has a Grade II listing as follows:

GRADE: II
DATE LISTED: 14 December 1978
ENGLISH HERITAGE BUILDING ID: 1113437
OS GRID REFERENCE: SU72086 72227

- 1.2.2 A detailed heritage statement has been prepared by “Heritage Revival” and this document makes a full assessment relating to the importance of the existing building and how the new proposals create little or no harm to the heritage significance of the building, and how the setting is enhanced by reverting the grounds to a residential property.

1.3 Site Description



Picture 2: Front View



Picture 3: Ornate Georgian porch and entrance

- 1.3.1 The original Villa was built in the late Georgian / early Victorian era and is the double fronted 2-storey building at the front of the property, accessed by steps and a pathway to the canopied front door. The semi-basement floor is accessed via an external staircase set below the external ground level at the rear of the property within the 1988 extension described below. It is reasonable to believe that the pathway at the front and the staircase serving the basement level at the rear were features of the original building, though they have been replaced more recently.
- 1.3.2 The 2-storey extension in 1988 saw the addition of the rear part of the property and included works to remove the original staircase and move it to the new part of the property. The works included paving the car parking area to the rear and providing an external staircase to access the ground floor from the car park area. At the front of the building an additional pathway was created to facilitate access for disabled visitors to the main entrance. The semi-basement floor was made usable by providing additional headroom.
- 1.3.3 This proposal is to change the use of the premises back to residential use with the creation of three apartments, one at each of the floor levels, with a two-bedroom unit at the basement, and three bedrooms each at the ground and first floors.
- 1.3.4 The existing stairs serving the basement are to be utilised, and a new stair added to allow additional light and access to a semi-private outdoor amenity / garden space, as suggested at the pre-application discussion.
- 1.3.5 The ground floor is to be accessed via the main front door to the building and this serves as an active frontage being retained, keeping the features of the existing building intact.
- 1.3.6 High-level windows are proposed to be added at basement level where the floor level is to be lowered to create increased headroom, which will add natural light and ventilation and make the spaces habitable.
- 1.3.7 The building is in a sustainable location close to Reading Town centre, lying to the east of the Whitley Pump Roundabout and at the junction between Christchurch Road and Highgrove Street, forming a corner plot that backs onto established private dwellings to the north and the east of the application site.

- 1.3.8 The property is well served by busy bus routes with bus stops all within 50m; opposite Glebe Road, opposite Millman Road and on Whitley Street.
- 1.3.9 Local amenities, banks, schools, parks and shopping centres are all within an easy walking distance.

2 Status of current use / loss of an existing facility

- 2.1.1 The building was until January 2025 in use as a doctor's surgery occupied by the University Medical Group, but which ceased to operate owing to being too remote and having inadequate facilities for its patients and has amalgamated its services elsewhere as a result.
- 2.1.2 A detailed report is contained in **Appendix 1** of this document, which includes a letter from the local estate agent that confirms that little or no interest was forthcoming for the use of the application property as a commercial use. Furthermore, the applicants' bid was the only one received for the property.
- 2.1.3 A detailed study has been made that confirms there is little or no impact with the loss of the medical /doctors facility from the application property. This document is provided as part of the application.

3 Pre-application advice

- 3.1.1 Pre-application advice was sought to convert the building to apartments, and various derivatives were presented so that a viable proposal could be considered.
- 3.1.2 It was felt and the advice received confirmed that there might be too much of an effect to the fabric of the building to create 5No apartments with a new external staircase.
- 3.1.3 An option to convert the building to a single-family dwelling of 5 bedrooms was submitted to the council. The basement floor was considered as an ancillary space as it could not be accessed from within the building as a new internal staircase would harm the heritage significance of the property.
- 3.1.4 Officer feedback prior to validation of this submitted scheme suggested that the basement would be envisaged as a future separate dwelling in any case. Hence the replacement of that application with this new scheme for three separate apartments, one at each floor level, which will be more financially viable.
- 3.1.5 The applicants have sought to convert the use of the building back to residential use and have taken the decision therefore to apply to convert the building to three apartments (instead of the single-family dwelling) and seek approval from the council's planning officers for this as the proposal now being put forward for consideration.

3.1.6 The conversion to 2- and 3- bedroom apartments will directly support the council's requirements, as stated in the Reading Borough Council Allocations Scheme (April 2024):

Section 20 "Size of Property Required" — confirms that family-sized accommodation is prioritised for qualifying households.

Section 21 "Smaller Accommodation than needed" — reinforces that demand for family-sized homes is high.

4 Planning History

Application Number: 80/TP/0203

Decision/Decision Date: CONDITIONAL CONSENT 01/04/1980

Development Description: - change of use of first floor from residential to surgery for general medical practice

Application Number: 88/TP/0347

Decision/Decision Date: CONDITIONAL CONSENT - 11/08/1988

Development Description: two storey brick/slate rear extension to existing doctor's surgery formation of parking spaces at rear.

Application Number: 88/TP/0346

Decision/Decision Date: CONDITIONAL CONSENT - 11/08/1988

Development Description: two storey rear extension to existing doctor's surgery formation of parking spaces at rear.

Application Number: 90/00126/LB

Decision/Decision Date: CONDITIONAL CONSENT - 21/03/1990

Development Description: alterations including replacement railings dwarf wall new landscaping and new pedestrian access to facilitate disabled visitors

Application Number: 900492

Decision/Decision Date: (PER) Application Permitted - 21/03/1990

Development Description: Alterations including replacement railings, dwarf wall, new landscaping, and new pedestrian access to facilitate disabled visitors

Application Number: 930264

Decision/Decision Date: (PER) Application Permitted - 03/06/1993

Development Description: To lay hardstanding for parking

Application Number: 93/00237/LB

Decision/Decision Date: CONDITIONAL CONSENT - 03/06/1993

Development Description: building works to form hardstanding within curtilage of listed building

Application Number: 93/00238/FD

Decision/Decision Date: CONDITIONAL CONSENT - 03/06/1993

Development Description: to lay hardstanding for parking

Application Number: 930254

Decision/Decision Date: (PER) Application Permitted - 03/06/1993

Development Description: Building works to form hardstanding within curtilage of listed building

Application Number: 970570

Decision/Decision Date: (PER) Application Permitted - 30/09/1997

Development Description: Reduce the lower ground floor slab(part) by 300mm to provide adequate headroom.

Application Number: 97/00309/LB

Development Address: 1 CHRISTCHURCH ROAD, READING

Decision/Decision Date: CONDITIONAL CONSENT - 30/09/1997

Development Description: reduce the lower ground floor slab (part) by 300mm to provide adequate headroom

Application Number: 030928

Development Address: 1 CHRISTCHURCH ROAD, READING, RG2 7AB

Decision/Decision Date: (PER) Application Permitted - 09/07/2003

Development Description: Remove existing metal casement windows from ground and first floor bay s. Replace outer two windows with fixed sapele hardwood sashes and centre with double spring loaded sashes.

There is an article 4 directive restricting the change of use of dwellings from C3 to C4 homes in multiple occupancy without first applying for planning permission which came into effect in May 2013.

There is a protected tree on at the front of the property

TREE PRESERVATION ORDER NO: 10/15 DATED: 19/08/2015

5 The Proposal, Elevations and Floorplans

5.1 The Proposal

- 5.1.1 The intention is to retain the status of the building, and to keep intact the features as far as possible, with as minimal internal alterations as possible to create the spaces required for the conversion of the building to three dwellings with an apartment at each of the levels.
- 5.1.2 There are inherent limitations regarding having to work within the realms of an existing shell, and for that matter more so with the challenge of working with a building that has the Grade II listed status.
- 5.1.3 The addition of high-level windows to provide light and ventilation would maximise the use of the semi-basement as this has part of the structure that is able to be utilised above the external ground levels.
- 5.1.4 As the property already benefits from the ramped disabled access at the front of the building leading to the ground floor apartment, the building therefore will have an accessible dwelling which would comply with Part M of the Building Regulations.

5.2 Structural Work

- 5.2.1 Works relating to the removal of partitions, formation of new window openings, lowering of floor levels within the basement floor are to be designed and calculated by a conservation engineer.
- 5.2.2 The Applicants will appoint the Engineer subject to gaining approval to the submitted scheme and would be happy to accept that a Planning Condition is included requiring the submission of details prior to commencing the relevant works.
- 5.2.3 It is intended to appoint David Evans of "Clive Hudson Associates Ltd" who is a Full member of the "Institute of Historic Building Consultants" and holds an MSc (Distinction) in Historic Conservation from Oxford Brookes University (in 2007).

David is well experienced having undertaken work on behalf of Reading Borough Council in relation to repairs for the Entrance Lodge at Cemetery Junction, and the Summer Pavilion at Caversham Court Gardens (both Grade II).

He has worked on various projects for the National Trust - Little Moreton Hall, Basildon Park, individual tenanted properties, and is currently working with Andrew Townsend Architects on the Lansdowne Monument.

In addition, various projects for the Churches Conservation Trust (CCT) - Chiselhampton Church, Sapperton Church, Woodland St. Mary Church, and has worked directly for South Oxfordshire and South and Vale District Councils, advising them on structural issues relating to historic/listed properties.

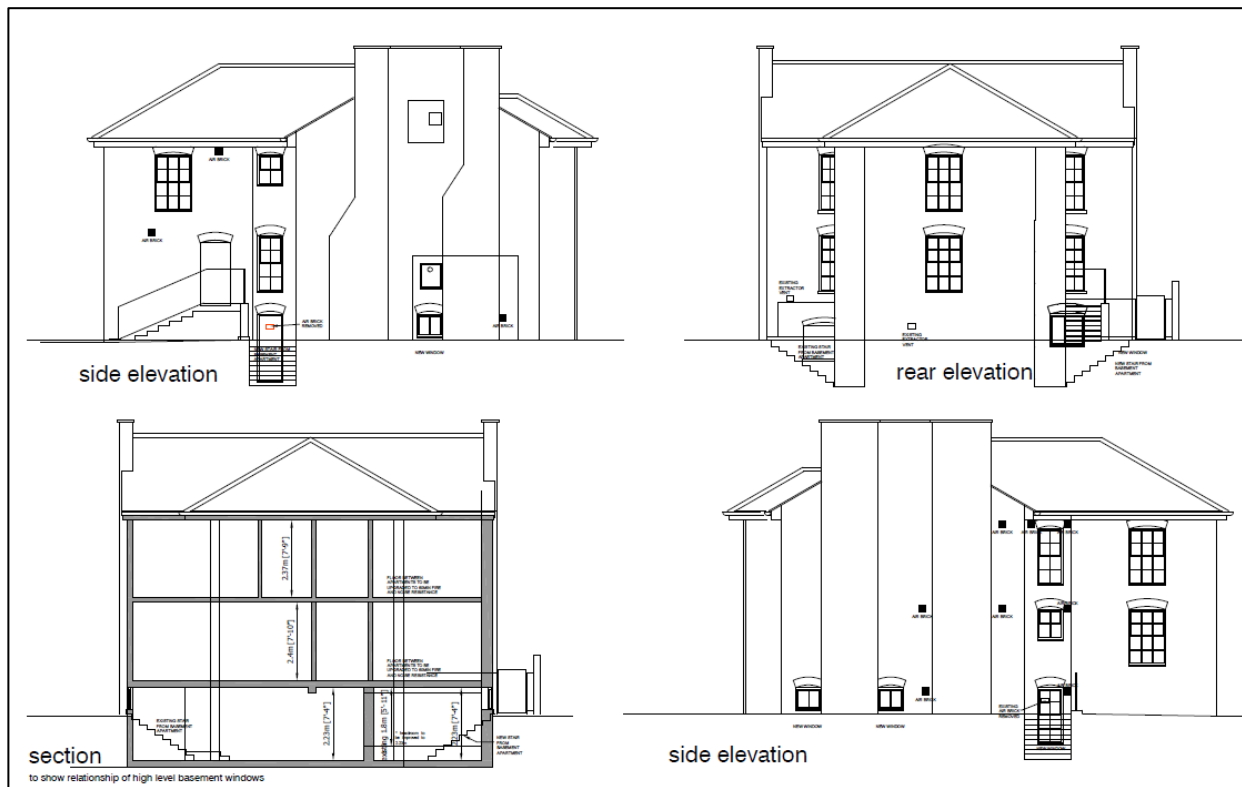
David has been highly recommended to assist us with this project.

5.3 Elevations and Floorplans

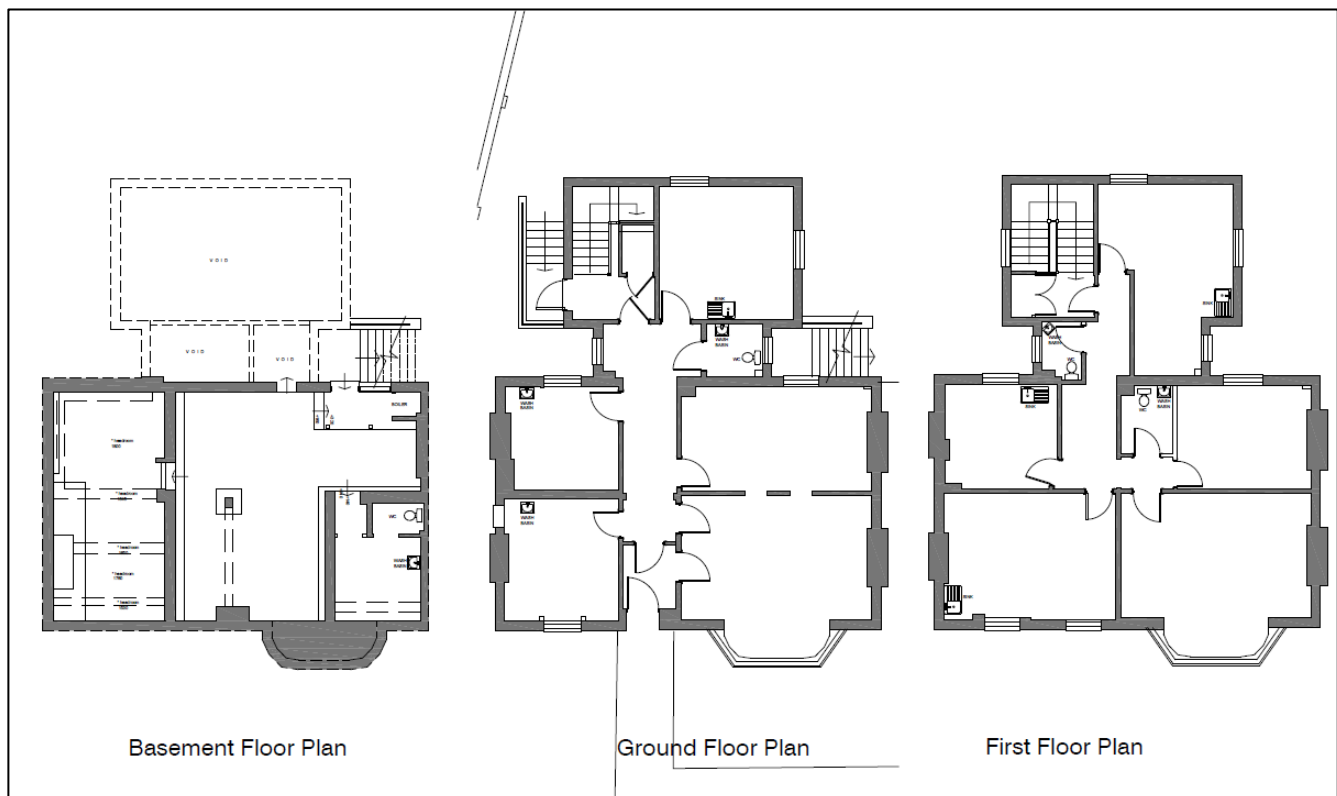
- 5.3.1 The plans show the conversion of the building to three apartments and includes only the area of the building as it presents itself without increasing the footprint of the building.
- 5.3.2 Parts of the existing levels in the basement are to be lowered where shown on the drawings to create a uniform floor level, improve headroom and useable space. High-level windows are to be added to provide natural light and ventilation to the basement areas.
- 5.3.3 The existing and proposed elevations and floorplans are provided here:



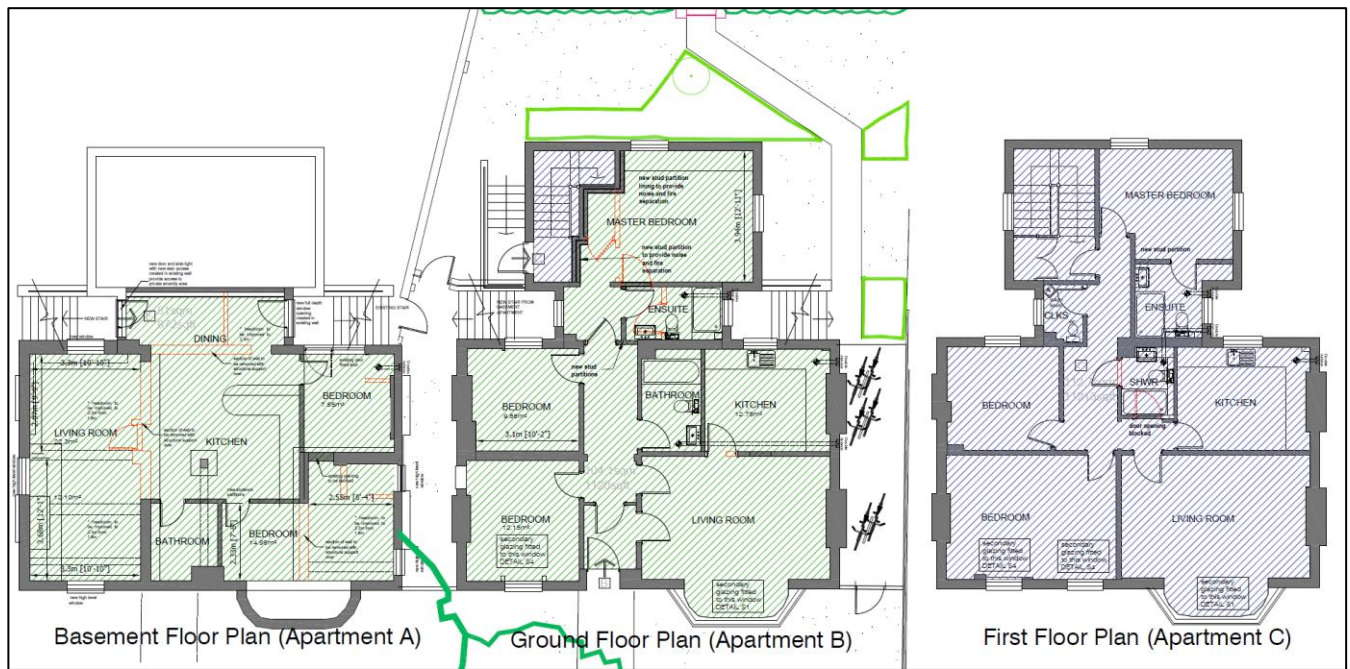
Picture 4: Existing elevations



Picture 5: Proposed elevations showing addition of basement windows



Picture 6: Existing floor plans



Picture 7: Proposed floor plans

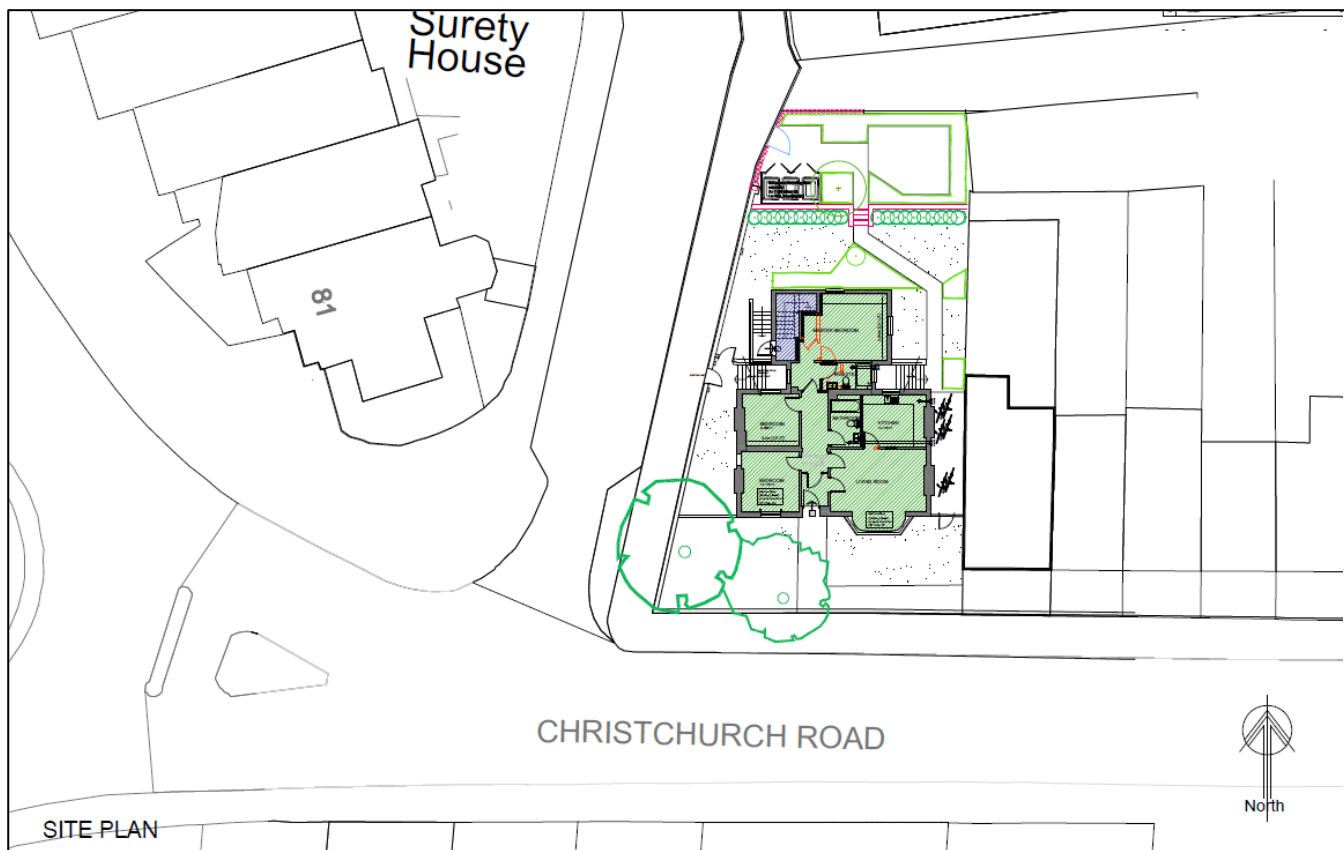
6 Parking, Cycles and Bin Storage

6.1 Parking

- 6.1.1 The existing rear yard is capable of comfortably accommodating 5No parking spaces as it exists.
- 6.1.2 Pre-application advice for the conversion of the building to several apartments suggested that a zero-parking scheme would be preferred so that the space could be allocated to soft surfaces and landscaping as amenity to the residential use.
- 6.1.3 Car parking has therefore been omitted from the proposals following this feedback.



Picture 8: Photos of existing car parking and hard surfaces



Picture 9: Proposed layout with the parking removed

6.2 Cycles

- 6.2.1 There is a side access to the right of the building that has historically been fenced off from the front and is gated at the rear.

This is an ideal location to provide secure cycle storage, and the floor plan allows for 3No bicycle stand to accommodate 6No cycles in a secure location with easy access when required from the front.

6.3 Bins storage

- 6.3.1 It is proposed to have storage provided for separate general waste and recycling waste by way of separate bins supplied to the private dwellings. The occupiers will be offered bins for general waste, and for recyclable plastic, card and paper and a further separation of kitchen food and waste.

7 Landscaping & Ecology/Biodiversity

- 7.1.1 Pre-application advice received from the council's planning department sought to revert the hardstanding as far as possible to soft areas with planting, and a detailed landscaping design is presented as part of the application set of information.
- 7.1.2 The scheme design by "Adams Habermahl" is included as part of the application proposals.
- 7.1.3 The works are all internal to the existing building, and no extensions are included as part of the proposals and no works are relevant to the roof spaces.
- 7.1.4 The scheme design therefore improves the current status relating to biodiversity and any negative affect is considered as de-minimus for these reasons.
- 7.1.5 There are two trees at the front of the building; a Lime, subject to TPO and a Box Elder, not subject to TPO but also requiring permission for pruning due to the location within the conversation area. An application PL/25/0622 and a tree works notice PL/25/0623 have been submitted by the applicants and permission granted by the council. The work is planned to be undertaken during the period of winter dormancy by Whiteknight Tree Care & Consultancy Limited. The approval notice is submitted with this application.

8 Noise assessment

8.1 External noise assessment

- 8.1.1 A noise survey and assessment of the area was undertaken by "Auricl Acoustic Consulting" and their report is provided as part of the application set of information.
- 8.1.2 The recommendations from the report require that secondary glazing is provided to the Christchurch Road fronting windows, and these recommendations are noted on the floor plans.
- 8.1.3 The secondary glazing would be secured internally using secure timber battens to affix the glazing system in place, with horizontal sliding sashes, which can be opened as required by the occupants, but would in the main provide a reduction of noise entering the building when kept closed.

8.2 Stacking and internal noise separation

- 8.2.1 The scheme design has evolved where, other than in one situation, all the rooms stack with bedrooms above bedrooms and living rooms above living rooms.
- 8.2.2 Where the living rooms and the bedrooms do not stack, from basement to ground floor, there will be enhanced noise insulation provided between those floors as part of the scheme being put forward.

9 Contamination

- 9.1.1 A desktop study has been undertaken by “Ashdown Site Investigations” and their findings and recommendations are provided as part of the application set of information.

10 Planning obligations and Section 106

- 10.1.1 The owners accept that a contribution is required calculated as 10% of the Gross Development Value of the project, payable at 50% of this figure due to 3No dwellings being created following conversion of the existing building.
- 10.1.2 Draft heads of terms for the S106 Agreement have been provided in anticipation of a positive outcome for this application, and details of valuations from local agents equate to a 5% contribution figure of £39,350, and where a formal appraisal is therefore not seen to be required.

11 Conclusion

- 11.1.1 The current internal building layout lends itself to having very minor modifications to allow the above proposals to be implemented.
- 11.1.2 A full set of plans and elevations showing the proposed conversion of the building to an apartment at each level consisting of one 2-bedroom dwelling and two 3-bedroom dwellings, with all being much needed family accommodation, are presented for consideration and the applicants are seeking acceptance, officer support and formal approval as set out above.

12 Appendixes

12.1 Appendix 1: Substantiation for the loss of the surgery

- 12.1.1 A full set of plans and elevations showing the proposed conversion of the building to an apartment at each level consisting of one 2-bedroom dwelling and two 3-bedroom dwellings, with all being much needed family accommodation, are presented for consideration and the applicants are seeking acceptance, officer support and formal approval as set out above.
- 12.1.2 The Reading Borough Council Local Plan which was adopted in November 2019 requires for us to 'clearly demonstrate that there is no longer a need to retain that facility'.
- 12.1.3 The current owners and applicants have explored a number of uses of the premises which are highlighted below:

Use as a Health Centre

The owners explored opportunities for creating a wellness centre with rooms for services such as podiatry, physiotherapy and '4D' ultrasound scan facilities.

The owners were unable to get significant interest from parties who cited the limitations of insufficient parking for both the staff and its users, inadequate facilities for access to upper floors, and the costs and potential harm to heritage significance for the installation of a lift in the Listed Building.

There were already facilities in close proximity located on Milman Road Health centre.

Use as a Nursing Care Home

The owners worked with a local provider (ANW Care group) to understand the feasibility of developing the site into a nursing home.

The feedback received stated that the facility was too small (insufficient rooms), required specialist design to create a commercial kitchen capable of serving the potential residents, had inadequate living facilities and inappropriate levels of access to the upper floors to make it a viable business proposition. (Further evidence available on request)

- 12.1.4 The provision of a lift to the first floor would cost £33,000 and the loss of a consulting room on each of the ground and first floor. This would further reduce the commercial viability of the property and would cause harm to the heritage significance of the property.
- 12.1.5 The advantages for the University Medical Practice and its patients as a result of closing the facility at Whitley Villa are as follows:
- It provides an extra receptionist to answer phones in the primary site on Northcourt Avenue.
 - Clinicians can change/extend their working hours as the primary site is open 8am-8pm Monday to Thursday and to 8am – 6.30pm on a Friday.
 - There will always be a GP present to provide supervision for clinicians.
 - It is more economically efficient for the practice to have all the services based at one site, and money saved on cleaning, utilities, and insurance can be used for the benefit of patient

care.

- It saves money for the local NHS body (BOB ICS) as it will no longer need to pay the rent and rates for the Whitley Villa Surgery site.
- There is no loss of services for patients. The University Medical Practice will continue to provide the full scope of services with no change in opening hours.

12.1.6 Few disadvantages were highlighted from the proposed closure:

- There would be no choice of site. The Whitley Villa branch surgery is 0.5 miles away from the main site.
- Some patients use a bus to Whitley Street, close to the Whitley Villa Surgery. They will now need to walk to Vicarage Road to pick up a second bus or walk the 15 minutes to the University Medical Practice from Whitley Street.

12.1.7 There was consultation held prior to the decision to close the facility and this can be viewed following the link below:

<https://www.healthwatchreading.co.uk/post/share-your-views-on-the-proposed-closure-of-whitley-villa-gp-surgery-the-university-medical-group>

12.1.8 The following are headline and material considerations as to why the property is now vacant and can be considered for a use other than a commercial or continued medical facility:

Extract from “Healthwatch Reading” and they reported:

“The University Medical Group is running a patient consultation exercise throughout August and September 2024 about the proposal to close its GP practice at Whitley Villa, 1 Christchurch Road, RG2 7AB from the start of January 2025.”

Stating also:

“We have received the following information from The University Medical Group:

The Whitley Villa surgery site is not Disability Discrimination Act Compliant as there is no lift to the first floor GP consulting rooms with no scope to change the layout.

At times it is not possible to have a GP available at the Whitley Villa site to provide clinical supervision for the nursing team and they need to move back to the main site at the University Medical Practice on 9 Northcourt Avenue.

It is inefficient to have staff travel back to the University Medical Practice to continue working after the Whitley Villa site has closed at 5pm.”

A similar article was posted by the BBC news covering the same discussion points.

An extract from the Reading Chronicle news article on 9th September 2024 reported:

“The likely closure of a doctor's surgery in Reading has been proposed due to the dwindling number of patients on the books, NHS bosses have said. A public consultation is being run on the closure of the Whitley Villa GP surgery at 1 Christchurch Road, Katesgrove, which is run by the University Medical Group. Councillor Kate Nikulina (Green, Katesgrove) has raised alarm about the change, raising fears patients will have to travel further and contend with longer waiting times. But the group has argued that it would be better to focus resources at its main site at 9 Northcourt Avenue.”

Further stating:

“A spokesperson for Whitley Villa Surgery said: “Patient care and the provision of a first-class service to our patients is a priority at the University Medical Group. The practice works hard to ensure that it meets the needs of its patients, and that those who need to see a healthcare professional, are able to do so as quickly and easily as possible. Currently, Whitley Villa is used by a very small number of patients, with the vast majority preferring to use the larger, modern Northcourt Avenue site with better facilities, longer opening hours, onsite parking and no barriers to accessibility.”

12.2 Appendix 2: Agent's Letter

12.2.1 Confirmation that there was no interest from anyone wanting to take on the building for a commercial use:



Dr Suki Dhanjal
61 Beech Lane
Earley
Reading
Berkshire
RG6 5QA

29th October 2025

Dear Dr Dhanjal,

Re: Whitley Villa, 1 Christchurch Road, Reading

Further to our telephone conversation regarding the purchase of the above property via our auction on 27th January 2025, I can confirm that the only bid received, was from yourself.

We did not receive any other formal enquiries pre-auction.

I hope this provides you with sufficient information but should you require anything further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Paul Hayhow MNAEA MNAVA
Head of New Business

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12.3 Appendix 3: Site photographs



Picture 10: View of front garden area



Picture 11: View of dedicated marked street parking zone



Picture 12: View from Highgrove Street



Picture 13 and 14: View of rear external steps to internal extension staircase entrance



Pictures 15, 16, 17: Steps down to semi-basement accommodation