

Design & Access Statement

2 Bedford Road, Reading. RG1 7HS

Demolition of the former public house and the erection of a part five-storey building comprising six self-contained residential flats (Use Class C3) with a commercial unit at ground floor (Use Class E)



1. Introduction

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared in support of a full planning application for the redevelopment of 2 Bedford Road, Reading, RG1 7HS, in accordance with Article 9 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

The application seeks planning permission for the same development previously approved at appeal, namely the demolition of the former public house and the erection of a part five-storey building comprising six self-contained residential flats (Use Class C3) with a commercial unit at ground floor (Use Class E). The previous planning permission has expired, and this application seeks a new grant of consent for an identical scheme.

The proposal is supported by the following technical documents submitted with the application:

- Noise Assessment prepared by 24 Acoustics Ltd (Technical Report R11502-1 Rev 0, dated 6 February 2026);
- Air Quality Assessment prepared by Aeolus Air Quality Consulting Ltd (Rev A Final, dated 27 January 2026);
- Transport Statement prepared by Motion (dated 30 January 2026);
- Energy Statement prepared by Monitor Energy Consultancy (February 2026);
- Bat Survey (report pending at time of submission). PEA & BNG.

This statement explains:

- The design principles underpinning the proposal;
- How the development responds to its context;
- The amount, layout, scale and appearance of the development;
- How inclusive and safe access is achieved for all users; and
- How the proposal complies with national and local planning policy.

The scheme replicates a development that was fully examined and allowed at appeal. There have been no material changes in site circumstances or planning policy that would alter that conclusion.

2. Site Context and Assessment

2.1 Site Location

The application site is located on a prominent corner plot at the junction of Bedford Road and Oxford Road, approximately 500 metres west of Reading town centre.

The site lies within:

- The Reading Air Quality Management Area (AQMA);
- Controlled Parking Zones;
- A highly sustainable urban location.

The accompanying Transport Statement confirms that the site benefits from excellent accessibility by sustainable modes, including frequent bus services, proximity to Reading West Station and Reading Mainline Station, and strong pedestrian and cycle connectivity.

2.2 Surrounding Townscape

The surrounding area is characterised by a diverse and eclectic townscape, comprising a mix of commercial, residential and community uses. Building heights vary significantly, ranging from two-storey historic buildings to larger, more modern multi-storey developments.

The site is currently occupied by a vacant former public house building which is in a poor state of repair and detracts from the visual quality of the street scene. Its redevelopment provides an opportunity to significantly enhance the appearance of this prominent corner location.

2.3 Heritage Context

While the site itself is not designated, it lies in proximity to a number of listed buildings and the Russell Street / Castle Hill Conservation Area.

The Planning Inspector previously concluded that the proposal would preserve the setting of nearby listed buildings and would not harm the character or appearance of the conservation area. As the scheme is unchanged, those conclusions remain valid.

3. Design Principles

3.1 Design Evolution

The proposed design evolved through pre-application discussions and was subject to detailed scrutiny during the previous appeal process. The siting, scale and appearance of the building were explicitly found to be acceptable by the Planning Inspector.

The design principles established through that process have been retained in full.

3.2 Design Objectives

The key design objectives are to:

- Deliver a high-quality building appropriate to a prominent corner site;
- Respond positively to the varied townscape character;
- Create a building that successfully turns the corner between Oxford Road and Bedford Road;
- Optimise the use of a constrained urban site;
- Preserve the setting of nearby heritage assets; and
- Provide good quality residential accommodation with acceptable environmental living conditions.

4. Amount and Use

The amount of development proposed reflects an efficient use of previously developed land within a sustainable town centre location.

The development comprises:

- Six residential flats (four 1-bedroom and two 2-bedroom units);
- One ground floor commercial unit (Use Class E);
- No on-site car parking, consistent with the sustainable location and appeal approval.

The modest scale of development is appropriate in its urban context and contributes to local housing supply.

5. Layout

5.1 Site Layout

The layout follows established building lines along Oxford Road and Bedford Road, reinforcing the urban grain and positively addressing the corner junction.

5.2 Internal Arrangement

The ground floor accommodates the commercial unit, providing active frontage and visual engagement with the street. Residential units are located on the upper floors and arranged to maximise outlook, daylight and internal amenity.

Refuse storage and servicing are integrated discreetly within the building envelope. Secure cycle storage is provided in accordance with local standards, as detailed within the Transport Statement.

6. Scale and Massing

The building is articulated into a series of elements to respond to its corner location and neighbouring context:

- A taller element addressing Oxford Road;
- A stepped-down form towards Bedford Road;
- Reduced massing to the rear.

The scale and massing were specifically assessed at appeal and found to be appropriate for this location.

7. Appearance and Materials

7.1 Architectural Approach

The architectural approach is contemporary yet contextual, drawing cues from the vertical rhythm and proportions of surrounding buildings while adopting a modern expression appropriate to a regenerated town centre site.

7.2 Materials

The palette of materials has been selected to complement surrounding development and nearby heritage assets. High-quality facing materials are proposed to ensure durability and a positive long-term contribution to the street scene.

Details will be secured by condition.

8. Impact on Heritage Assets

The proposal has been carefully designed to preserve the setting of nearby listed buildings and the conservation area. The previous appeal decision confirmed that no harm would arise. That position remains unchanged.

9. Access Strategy

9.1 Pedestrian Access

Pedestrian access to the commercial and residential elements is provided directly from the public footway. Entrances are clearly legible, well-lit and overlooked.

9.2 Inclusive Access

The development has been designed to provide inclusive access in accordance with relevant guidance and Building Regulations.

9.3 Cycle Access and Storage

Secure cycle storage is provided in accordance with Policy TR5 and as detailed within the submitted Transport Statement. We will provide x6 Sheffield stands to provide parking for x6 cycles as required by Reading Borough Council parking standards.

10. Vehicular Access and Servicing

The development is intentionally car-free, reflecting its highly sustainable location.

The submitted Transport Statement confirms that:

- The proposal will not have a material detrimental impact on the functioning of the transport network;

- Highway safety will not be compromised;
- Residual cumulative impacts would not be severe.

Servicing arrangements for the commercial unit and refuse collection are designed to operate safely from the surrounding highway network.

11. Compliance with Reading Borough Council Planning Policy

The proposed development has been assessed against the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) and the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024).

11.1 Policy CC1 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

The proposal makes efficient use of brownfield land in a highly accessible location, delivers new housing and commercial activity, and accords with the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

11.2 Policy CC7 – Design and the Public Realm

The proposal enhances a prominent corner site, reinforces existing building lines and improves a currently dilapidated property. It complies with Policy CC7 and national design policy.

11.3 Policy EN1 – Protection of the Historic Environment

The proposal preserves the setting of nearby listed buildings and the conservation area.

11.4 Policy H5 – Quality of New Residential Development

The Noise Assessment prepared by 24 Acoustics Ltd confirms that internal noise standards consistent with BS 8233:2014 can be achieved through appropriate glazing and façade design.

The Air Quality Assessment prepared by Aeolus Air Quality Consulting Ltd confirms that:

- Construction phase impacts can be mitigated through best practice measures;
- Operational impacts are negligible;
- The site is suitable for new residential receptors.

Accordingly, the proposal provides acceptable living conditions and complies with Policy H5.

11.5 Policy TR3 – Access, Traffic and Highway Safety

The submitted Transport Statement confirms compliance with Policy TR3.

11.6 Policy TR5 – Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging

Given the site's sustainable location and proximity to public transport, the absence of on-site car parking is appropriate. Secure cycle parking is provided.

11.7 Affordable Housing

The Development will attract affordable contributions in accordance with Policy H3, as this consists of 6 flats therefore a financial contribution equivalent to 20% affordable housing which amounts to a 10% contribution based on the GDV. Two valuations will be provided & the applicant agrees to sign the 106 legal agreement & pay the Council's reasonable fees in its preparation.

11.8 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

Reading Borough Council operates an adopted Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule.

The proposed development constitutes CIL-liable development under the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended). The final CIL charge will be calculated by the Council based on the net additional Gross Internal Area following grant of planning permission.

The applicant acknowledges and accepts this liability.

12. Sustainability and Accessibility Considerations

The Energy Statement prepared by Monitor Energy Consultancy confirms that the development achieves a significant reduction in regulated carbon emissions compared to Building Regulations requirements, thereby complying with Policy 3.3 (Carbon Reduction).

The proposal represents sustainable development by:

- Redeveloping brownfield land;
- Supporting active travel;
- Minimising car dependency;
- Delivering substantial carbon reductions.

13. Ecology

A bat survey has been undertaken at the site together with the BNG.

At the time of submission, the ecological report is being finalised. The completed bat survey report will be submitted to Reading Borough Council for consideration immediately upon receipt.

The applicant confirms that any recommended mitigation or enhancement measures identified within the ecological report will be implemented as required.

Green Roof

We propose to include green (sedum) roofs on all flat roof areas as part of the overall design. These will help reduce surface water runoff, support sustainable drainage, and improve the environmental performance of the development. The green roofs will also provide biodiversity benefits by creating habitats for wildlife, as well as enhancing the visual appearance of the scheme when viewed from surrounding properties. They will be installed and maintained to ensure their long-term effectiveness.

14. External Lighting

No new freestanding lighting included in the proposals.

No new operational, security or decorative lighting mounted on the building is included in the proposals.

It is expected that means of escape will achieve the level of illumination required from the existing street lighting and no new external emergency lighting is included in the proposals.

15. Conclusion

This Design and Access Statement demonstrates that the proposed development:

- Replicates a scheme previously approved at appeal;
- Is supported by robust technical evidence (noise, air quality, transport and energy);
- Preserves heritage setting;
- Provides acceptable residential living conditions;
- Complies with the Reading Borough Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework;
- Properly addresses CIL requirements.

We respectfully request that planning permission is granted.