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Our Ref: PL/26/0072
Your Ref:

Direct: ☎
19/02/2026

Your contact is: Catrin Davies, Planning

Dear Fraser Nash,

PRE PLANNING APPLICATION ENQUIRY RESPONSE

Pre Application Number: PL/26/0072

Location: 259 OXFORD ROAD, READING, RG1 7PY

Proposal: Pre application advice to convert guest house to HMO

Thank you for your enquiry.

Site Description

The application site relates to a terrace building located on the south side of Oxford Road.

It would appear from available Council information, including the House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) register that the property is in use as a 10-bedroom HMO.

Site constraints

- Air Quality Management Area
- Conservation Area (Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road)
- Oxford Road West District Centre

Proposal

The pre-application query as described is seeking advice regarding converting a Guest House into a HMO. The query is supported by a location plan only and no other information.

Planning History

PL/01/1157-Change of use from house of multiple occupation to bed and breakfast guest house. Approved 4th April 2001

Analysis

The information provided within this pre-application is limited and as such an in-depth response is not

possible. The information provided states that application PL/01/1157 was not implemented. If this is the case, and no change of use occurred, the lawful use would remain as it was. You would be unable to apply to convert the property from a Guest House into a house in multiple occupation (HMO) as indicated.

The pre-application states that the site has always been used as a HMO. If it was '**lawfully**' used as an HMO prior to the application (PL/01/1157) and the change of use not implemented, then it is considered that this may still be its lawful use.

What remains unclear is if the HMO is/was indeed '**lawful**' and what use the HMO has or does fall within. A HMO can fall within the following Class Uses:

- C3(b) covers up to six people living together as a single household and receiving care e.g. supported housing schemes such as those for people with learning disabilities or mental health problems
- C3(c) allows for groups of people (up to six) living together as a single household. This allows for those groupings that do not fall within the C4 HMO definition, but which fell within the previous C3 use class, to be provided for i.e. a small religious community may fall into this section as could a homeowner who is living with a lodger
- C4 Houses in multiple occupation - Small shared houses occupied by between three and six unrelated individuals, as their only or main residence, who share basic amenities such as a kitchen or bathroom.
- Sui generis – When there are more than six residents.

In terms of lawfulness a dwellinghouse can change its use to HMO of no more than 6 residents living together (Use Class C3b, C3c and C4) without needing planning permission provided there is not a condition restricting this or you are not in an Article 4 Direction Area that removes normal rights to convert a house (C3 use) into a small house in multiple occupation (C4). The site is not within an Article 4 Direction Area.

According to the HMO records the site is a large HMO of 10 occupants. **This would have** required planning permission. There is no record of the site gaining planning permission as such the site could be in breach of planning control. It is highly recommended you regularised the breach **immediately** if it has occurred to avoid any enforcement action.

Please note that even if the site was a small HMO of below 6 occupants initially, as soon as the property was occupied by more than 6 residents, then this would have required planning permission.

You have stated that the building has been used as an HMO throughout your ownership. If that is the case and provided that the property has been continuously used as an HMO for 10 or more years then you are advised to apply for a certificate of lawfulness (Existing Use). Within the certificate you can then demonstrate through evidence the HMO use. If the Certificate is granted, this will confirm the lawful use of the property. It provides legal certainty. Please note the onus would be on yourself to demonstrate beyond reasonable doubt that the property has been used for as a HMO continuously for 10 or more years. Any application should be supported by detailed documentation including statements from tenants/owners, affidavits, photos, invoices for work carried out, utility bills etc for the relevant time period. There is a fee for this, and the timescale is 8 weeks.

In summary, even if the property gained approval for a Guest House (Use Class C1), if the permission was not implemented then the property never changed its use and the lawful use would remain as that prior to any application. Based on the information provided we would consider the lawful use to be a C3(a) dwelling house, we have no planning records to state this was lawfully a HMO.

As stated above given that the HMO registered shows this is a HMO for 10 occupiers which would have required planning permission, you are encourage to submit a certificate of lawfulness (existing use) if you can demonstrate this has been a HMO continuously for 10 of more years or you are encourage to submit a planning application.

If you believe the site is a small HMO which wouldn't require planning permission and wish for this to be confirmed, then you are encouraged to submit a certificate of lawfulness for existing use.

It is noted that Reading Borough Council licensing operates a separate regime to planning. Therefore, a separate HMO licence may be required. The standards for HMOs in Reading are available online, and consideration for facilities required for a HMO licence should be considered.

Please note that the advice contained within this letter, or attached report, is that of an officer of the Borough Council and is provided without prejudice to the decision of the Borough Council in the event of a formal application for planning permission.

Yours sincerely

Catrin Davies
Senior Planning Officer

EH - PP