

PLANNING & DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

Retrospective Application for Change of Use from Class E to Class C3 (2no. 1-Bed Flats)

74 School Road, Tilehurst, Reading, RG31 5ST

Project Ref: 9329-24

1.0.0 INTRODUCTION

This statement has been prepared in support of a retrospective full planning application for the change of use of the first floor of 74 School Road, Tilehurst, from Class E (commercial) to Class C3 (residential), providing 2no. 1-bedroom flats.

The development has been implemented and is now complete. This application seeks to regularise the use and address the requirements of the Local Planning Authority, specifically in relation to the provision of an appropriate affordable housing contribution.

The building was formerly occupied by the National Westminster Bank and is now vacant at ground floor level, with the first floor converted to residential use.

1.1.0 PLANNING HISTORY

A previous full planning application (Ref: PL/24/0866) was submitted for the conversion of the first floor from Class E to 2no. residential flats.

This application was refused on 26 March 2026 solely due to the absence of a completed legal agreement to secure an appropriate financial contribution towards affordable housing, contrary to Policy H3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

Importantly, the Local Planning Authority did not raise any concerns in respect of:

- The principle of development
- Design or appearance
- Residential quality
- Impact on neighbouring amenity

The decision notice explicitly confirms that the reason for refusal could be overcome through the completion of a Section 106 Agreement or unilateral undertaking.

A prior approval application under Class MA had previously been explored; however, due to the site's inclusion within an Article 4 Direction area, this route is no longer available.

This application therefore seeks to address the sole previous reason for refusal by securing the required affordable housing contribution.

2.0.0 SITE & SURROUNDINGS

The site is located on the north side of School Road within Tilehurst District Centre, a well-established and sustainable location with a mix of commercial and residential uses.

The site benefits from:

- Proximity to Tilehurst Precinct
- Access via Dunstall Close to the rear
- A public car park immediately behind the site
- Good public transport links into Reading Town Centre
- Nearby open space at Victoria Recreation Ground

The surrounding area is characterised by mixed-use development, with commercial uses at ground floor level and residential accommodation above. The first floor of neighbouring properties, including No. 72 School Road, has already been converted to residential use, establishing a clear precedent for the proposal.

3.0.0 THE PROPOSAL

The proposal comprises the retrospective conversion of the first floor to provide:

- **2no. 1-bedroom flats**
- Floor areas of approximately **43sqm and 44sqm**

Access is provided via the existing rear entrance and internal staircase.

The development includes:

- Refuse storage within the rear service yard (Metrostor units)
- Cycle storage provision
- Car parking provision within the existing rear area

The scheme has been completed in accordance with the submitted plans.

4.0.0 DESIGN

4.1 Layout

The layout has been designed to maximise the efficient use of the existing floorspace, providing well-proportioned rooms with logical internal arrangements.

Kitchens and living areas are grouped efficiently, with bedrooms positioned to minimise noise and disturbance.

4.2 Scale

No external alterations have been made to the building. The scale of development is therefore entirely consistent with the existing built form and surrounding context.

4.3 Appearance

The external appearance of the building remains unchanged. The proposal therefore preserves the visual character of the building and wider street scene.

4.4 Landscaping

There is no scope for additional landscaping due to the nature of the site and its location within an established commercial frontage.

5.0.0 RESIDENTIAL QUALITY & AMENITY

The flats provide good quality residential accommodation with:

- Adequate internal space provision
- Good levels of natural light
- Acceptable outlook
- Suitable internal layouts

Whilst no private amenity space is provided, the site is located within a highly sustainable village centre location, with immediate access to local services and public open space, including Victoria Recreation Ground.

6.0.0 NOISE

The development provides acceptable living conditions in terms of noise:

- The rear flat benefits from a quiet position away from the main road

- The front flat is set back and located at first floor level
- Existing double-glazed windows provide adequate sound insulation
- Trickle ventilation is incorporated

School Road is not a primary route such as Oxford Road or Bath Road and experiences relatively low traffic volumes.

There are no nearby commercial uses that generate significant noise or mechanical disturbance.

7.0.0 HIGHWAYS, PARKING & CYCLING

The site is located in a highly accessible location with good public transport links.

Parking provision includes:

- **1no. space per flat**
- Retention of parking for the ground floor commercial unit

Cycle storage is provided within the rear service area, with additional internal storage available.

Given the sustainable location, the level of parking provision is considered appropriate and acceptable.

8.0.0 REFUSE STORAGE

Refuse storage is provided to the rear of the site via secure units, ensuring a tidy and practical solution consistent with the character of the service yard.

9.0.0 AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Policy H3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan requires developments of this scale (1–4 dwellings) to provide a financial contribution equivalent to 10% affordable housing provision elsewhere in the Borough.

The previous application was refused solely due to the absence of this contribution.

This application addresses that reason for refusal, and the applicant confirms their commitment to entering into a Section 106 Agreement or unilateral undertaking to secure the required contribution.

10.0.0 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL)

The development is CIL liable, and the appropriate forms have been submitted as part of the application.

11.0.0 CONCLUSION

This application seeks retrospective permission for a development that has already been implemented, and which is acceptable in all planning respects.

The key points are:

- The proposal has already been assessed by the Local Planning Authority
- The previous refusal related solely to the absence of a legal agreement for affordable housing
- No concerns were raised regarding design, amenity, or principle of development
- The proposal aligns with the established character and use of the area
- The development provides much-needed small residential units in a sustainable location

The current application directly addresses the sole previous reason for refusal through the provision of a planning obligation.

Accordingly, the proposal fully complies with the Development Plan and national policy.