

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Katesgrove ward

App Ref: PL/25/0813 Full planning permission

Address: 1 ELGAR ROAD, READING, RG2 0BH

Proposal: Proposed conversion and extension of 1 Elgar Road from mixed use convenience store (Class E) and flat above (Class C3) to 2x self-contained flats (Class C3) (amended description)

Applicant: Miss Ishaivane Vadivel

Received date: 03/06/2025

Target Decision date: 15/06/2026 (agreed extension of time)

Case Officer: Marcelina Rejwerska

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site comprises a retail convenience store at the ground floor with an existing flat above over three floors. The site is located on the corner of Elgar Road and Francis Street. The application site is located within the Air Quality Management Area and is located on contaminated land (historic brick kilns area).



Image taken from Elgar Road by the case officer on 30 July 2025

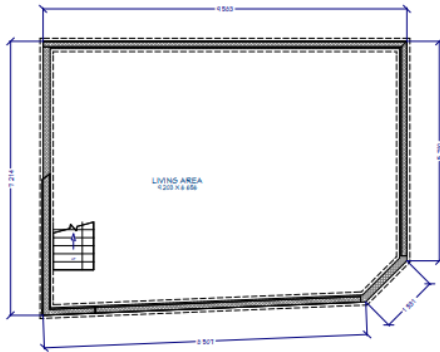
2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The original submission sought permission for the conversion of the property from the existing mixed-use ground floor retail unit and flat above to 4x flats. The amended plans seek permission for the proposed conversion of the ground floor retail shop to a residential flat (Class C3) and rear extensions to the property. The ground floor flat would have 2x bedrooms and the use of a large basement, while the upper floor flat would have its own independent access to a 3x bedroom flat.

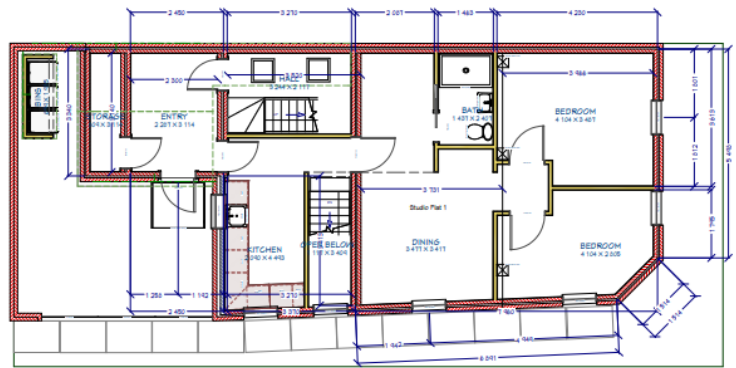
Measurements

Flat 1:
GIA = 125.65m²
Bedroom 1 = 13.29²
Bedroom 2 = 10.10²

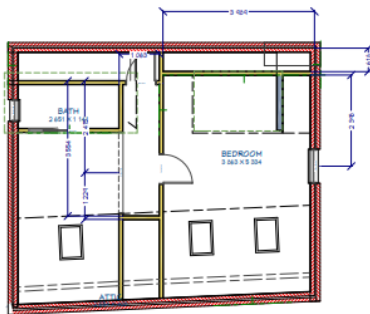
Flat 2:
GIA = 90.18²
Bedroom 1 = 9.24²
Bedroom 2 = 13.24²
Bedroom 3 = 13.43²



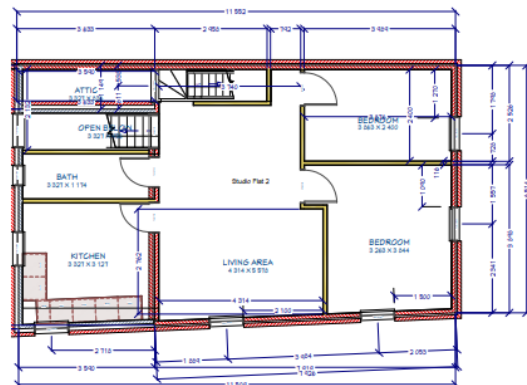
Proposed Basement Floor Plan @1:100



Proposed Ground Floor Plan @1:100



Proposed Loft Floor Plan @1:100



Proposed First Floor Plan @ 1:100

2.1. Information submitted:

Design and Access Statement
Location Plan
Received by the LPA on 3 June 2025

Air Quality Statement
Affordable Housing Statement
Received by the LPA on 28 June 2025

Contaminated Land Survey
Received by the LPA on 14 July 2025

Existing and Proposed Plans Sheet 1-8, Revision 5
Received by the LPA on 18 February 2026

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

PL/89/0950 - Erection of a new signage. Application permitted.

4. CONSULTATIONS

The following were consulted:

- RBC Waste Operations – Insufficient space shown for the number of refuse bins required.
- RBC Transport Development Control – Details requested for proposed cycle parking and refuse storage.
- RBC Environmental Protection – No objection subject to conditions.

A site notice was also displayed on site. No letters of representation were received.

A site visit was carried out by the case officer. The original description and proposed plans of the development were for 4x flats on the site, however, these failed to meet the national minimum space standards and the applicant was advised to amend the proposal to reduce the number of proposed flats.

5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. However, the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making (NPPF paragraph 12).

National Policy and Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework December 2024
National Planning Practice Guidance

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

Policy CC1 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
Policy CC5 – Waste Minimisation and Storage
Policy CC7 – Design and the Public Realm
Policy CC8 – Safeguarding Amenity
Policy EN16 – Pollution and Water Resources
Policy H1 – Provision of Housing
Policy H2 – Density and Mix
Policy H3 – Affordable Housing
Policy H10 – Private and Communal Outdoor Space
Policy TR5 – Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging

Other documents

Affordable Housing SPD 2021
Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD 2011
Planning Obligations under Section 106 SPD 2015

Local Plan Update

The current version of the Local Plan (adopted in November 2019) turned five years old on Tuesday 5th November 2024. The Local Plan was reviewed in March 2023 and around half of the policies in the plan

are considered still up to date. However, the rest need to be considered for updating to reflect changing circumstances and national policy. A draft version of the Local Plan Partial Update was submitted for examination on 9th May 2025.

Although there is a five-year period for carrying out a review of a plan after it is adopted, nothing in the NPPF or elsewhere says that policies automatically become “out of date” when they are five years old. It is a matter of planning judgement rather than legal fact whether a plan or policies within it are out-of-date. This will depend on whether they have been overtaken by things that have happened since the plan was adopted, either on the ground or through changes in national policy, for example.

Officer advice in respect of the Local Plan policies pertinent to this application listed above is that they remain in accordance with national policy and that the objectives of those policies remains very similar in the draft updated Local Plan. Therefore, they can continue to be afforded weight in the advice given below and are not considered to be ‘out of date’.

Equality Act 2010:

In determining this application, the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. However, there is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application. Therefore, in terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

6. APPRAISAL

6.1. Land use matters

The NPPF seeks to ‘boost significantly the supply of housing’ and deliver a wide range of homes, of different types and tenures. Achieving an efficient use of the land within the context of any central and sustainability located site is a key priority both at a national and local level. The NPPF states that LPAs should actively “*encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value*”. Policy H2 (Density and Mix) specifically considers density and mix and requires that an appropriate density of residential development is informed by the character and mix of uses of the area in which it is located and its current and future level of accessibility.

The NPPF definition of ‘previously developed land’ excludes private residential gardens in built up areas. Therefore, the priority for development should be on previously developed land, in particular vacant and derelict sites and buildings. The application site comprises a mixed-use property which has an off-licence shop on the ground floor (Class E) and an existing flat above (Class C3). The applicant proposes to convert the ground floor into an additional self-contained flat (Class C3) which will result in the loss of a Class E unit. The area is not identified as a local or district centre and is not on allocated employment land. There is also another off-licence shop directly behind the application site. As such, there is no concern to raise with regards to the loss of the Class E unit.

Policy H1 states “*Provision will be made for at least an additional 15,847 homes (averaging 689 homes per annum) in Reading Borough for the period 2013 to 2036.*” This policy is proposed to be updated with the latest housing data in the Local Plan Partial Update which was submitted for examination on 9th May 2025; however, this is not considered to have a significant impact in relation to this proposal.

Policy H2 states “*Wherever possible, residential development should contribute towards meeting the needs for the mix of housing... in particular for family homes of three or more bedrooms.*”

The application site is a windfall site – it is not allocated for residential development. Whilst windfall sites are considered an important aspect in the provision of housing within the Borough, the public benefit must be weighed against other material policy considerations, including high quality design. The proposed new ground floor flat would have two bedrooms which is considered acceptable for its location near the town centre.

6.2. Character and design

Paragraph 135 of the NPPF 2024 details that decisions should ensure that developments are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping and are sympathetic to local character including the surrounding built environment. Paragraph 139 of the NPPF 2024 states that development that is not well designed should be refused.

Policy CC7 requires all development to be of high-quality design and maintain and enhance the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

The proposal includes an extension to the side of the property to accommodate a new shared entrance and stairway to the upper floor flat, as the current flat is accessed from an internal staircase with no independent access for the residents of the upstairs flat. This extension has been considerably scaled down at the advice of the case officer, to prevent appearing dominant and overbearing, particularly to the neighbouring residents on Francis Street. While the extension leaves little room for any outdoor amenity space, the proposal is considered acceptable on balance. Amenity space is discussed further in the next section of the report.

There are also additions to the roof on the west elevation and although these appear unnecessary and excessive, the agent has confirmed that these are required to increase the head height on the staircase to meet building regulation standards. It is therefore considered acceptable in this case.



Existing Right Elevation @1:100

Proposed Right Elevation @1:100

Overall, the proposal is considered acceptable in relation to its design.

6.3. Residential amenity

Policy CC8 seeks to ensure that new development does not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties. Policy H10 requires *“Dwellings will be provided with functional private or communal open space, including green space wherever possible, that allows for suitable sitting-out areas, children’s play*

areas, home food production, green waste composting, refuse storage, general outdoor storage and drying space.”

There are no identified risks to the neighbouring residents nor the future occupants of the flats. The fenestration layout allows for adequate access to natural daylight/sunlight while preventing any overlooking or loss of privacy for the neighbouring residents. The basement for the ground floor flat would not have any windows, however, it is not proposed to be used as a bedroom and would likely provide storage space which is considered acceptable. A condition is recommended to ensure the basement is not used as a habitable space (ie. bedroom or living room). The proposed extension is not considered overbearing or dominant. The internal stacking of bedrooms and bathrooms is also considered appropriate.

Neither flat is provided with any outdoor amenity space, however, there is no space within the site to provide any (even if the proposal did not include any extensions). The small courtyard area provides some space for communal storage or laundry drying, but this space is not private (it is accessible from the road) and there is no space available for any landscaping nor home food production. The site is located within 250m of a community garden at Holy Brook Nook and this is considered a suitable alternative for future occupants.

6.4. Transport and refuse

Policy TR5 requires all new development to provide appropriate levels of car parking, cycle parking depending on the location within the borough. Policy CC5 is also relevant and requires demonstration of good design to waste storage, reuse, and recycling.

The site is located on the corner of Elgar Road and Berkley Avenue and is located within Zone 2, the primary core area but on the periphery of the central core area which lies at the heart of Reading Borough, consisting primarily of retail and commercial office developments with good transport hubs. No parking exists and none is proposed for the site, as no space is available for off-road parking within the application site. As the development site is in an area designated as a Residents Parking Permit Area; Zone 10R and therefore subject to the rules and regulations of the scheme, there should be an assumption that future inhabitants of the dwelling will not be eligible to apply for residents and visitor parking permits. This will be covered by the appropriate conditions and informatives.

Cycle storage should be provided in accordance with the Councils current Parking Standards and Design SPD. A condition is recommended to secure these details.

A refuse storage area has been demonstrated on the plans showing sufficient storage for 4x bins – this is considered sufficient for 2 flats, and it is assumed that bins will be presented for kerbside collection. This is an acceptable arrangement.

6.5. Affordable housing

The proposed new residential unit would be required to provide a policy compliant level of off-site affordable housing contribution. Policy H3 states *“on sites of 1 – 4 dwellings, a financial contribution will be made that will enable the equivalent of 10% of the housing to be provided as affordable housing elsewhere in the Borough”*. The Affordable Housing SPD further outlines that *“For sites of 1-4 dwellings, where the contribution required by policy H3 is 10%, this will equate to 5% of GDV of the development.”*

An up-to-date assessment of the need for Affordable Housing that exists in the Borough is within the supporting text for Policy H3 (para 4.4.21) of the Reading Borough Local Plan Submission Draft Partial Update May 2025 which states the following:

“The Reading Housing Needs Assessment (HNA, 2024) has once again emphasised the critical need for affordable housing within Reading as well as the remainder of Berkshire. The HNA identified a need for 406 additional affordable homes per year in Reading, which represents a substantial proportion of the overall housing required. The consequences of not providing much-needed affordable homes would be severe, and would include homelessness, households in temporary or unsuitable accommodation, overcrowding and younger people having to remain living with parents for increasing periods. Insufficient affordable housing will also act as an impediment to economic growth, as firms will face increasing problems with accommodation for their workforce. Meeting even a substantial proportion of the identified housing need presents significant challenges, and it is therefore critical that new residential development of all sizes makes whatever contribution it can”.

As such, it is considered that Policy H3 is still relevant and applicable.

The applicant has agreed the Heads of Terms for a Section 106 agreement to secure a policy compliant off-site contribution to affordable housing in the borough. The completed S106 agreement is available to view on the Council planning register.

6.6. Other matters

Biodiversity

Although no landscaping is possible within the site, Policy EN12 requires all development to create new opportunities for Green Links, and to improve where possible the biodiversity of sites. NPPF paragraph 93 also states that *“opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity”*. Mandatory BNG does not apply in this case because there are no existing habitats impacted as the site is comprised fully of hardstanding and existing extensions/ancillary structures.

A condition is recommended to secure a habitat enhancement scheme prior to commencement of works in the form of integrated bat or bird bricks within the new extension.

Contaminated land

Policy EN16 is also relevant to this application and states *“Development will only be permitted on land affected by contamination where it is demonstrated that the contamination and land gas can be satisfactorily managed or remediated so that it is suitable for the proposed end use and will not impact on the groundwater environment, human health, buildings and the wider environment, during demolition and construction phases as well as during the future use of the site.”*

The application site is identified as potentially contaminated land due to the nearby historic location of brick kilns. The applicant has submitted a Phase 1 Contaminated Land Assessment which finds that there is low probability of contaminants at the site with medium potential severity. A watching brief is recommended by the assessor, and this is proposed to be conditioned.

Sustainability

Policy CC2 states *“Proposals for new development, including the construction of new buildings and the redevelopment and refurbishment of existing building stock, will be acceptable where the design of buildings and site layouts use energy, water, minerals, materials and other natural resources appropriately, efficiently and with care and take account of the effects of climate change.”*

In line with the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2019) for creation of new residential units through conversion from other uses the required standard is BREEAM 'Very Good'. Conditions are recommended to secure BREEAM assessments at the Design and As Built stages.

7. CONCLUSION

The proposal has been assessed in line with national and locally adopted policies and is considered to accord with those policies. Where the proposal fails to meet the requirements of Policy H10 in providing adequate private or communal outdoor amenity space, this is outweighed by the access to nearby community gardens and parks, and the other identified benefits of the proposal in providing good quality family-sized housing.

8. RECOMMENDATION

GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION

Recommended Conditions:

1. Time Limit standard
2. Approved Plans
3. Materials to match
4. Internal layout as per approved plans, no change in units permitted and basement not to be used as habitable space (bedroom or living room)
5. Habitat Enhancement scheme to be submitted prior to commencement
6. Unidentified contamination – any contamination found to be immediately reported to the council and works ceased until site is made safe.
7. BREEAM Design
8. BREEAM As Built
9. Cycle parking to be submitted
10. Parking permits – notification to LPA (new flat only)
11. Parking permits – notification to occupants (new flat only)
12. Construction method statement to be submitted prior to commencement
13. Hours of construction
14. No bonfires

Informatives:

1. Terms
2. Pre commencement conditions
3. Building control
4. Complaints about construction
5. Encroachment
6. S106
7. CIL
8. Contaminated land
9. Bats and works to roof
10. Parking permits
11. Noise between residential properties – sound insulation
12. Positive and proactive