

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Redlands Ward

App Ref: PL/26/0547 Full planning permission

Address: 81 CHRISTCHURCH ROAD, READING, RG2 7BD

Proposal: Construction of a new entrance porch, new automatic entrance doors, to provide level equal access for disabled users; remodelling and recladding of front elevation to the Surgery.

Applicant: Dr Aman Bindra

Received date: 23/04/2026

Target Decision date: 18/06/2026

Case Officer: Marcelina Rejwerska

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

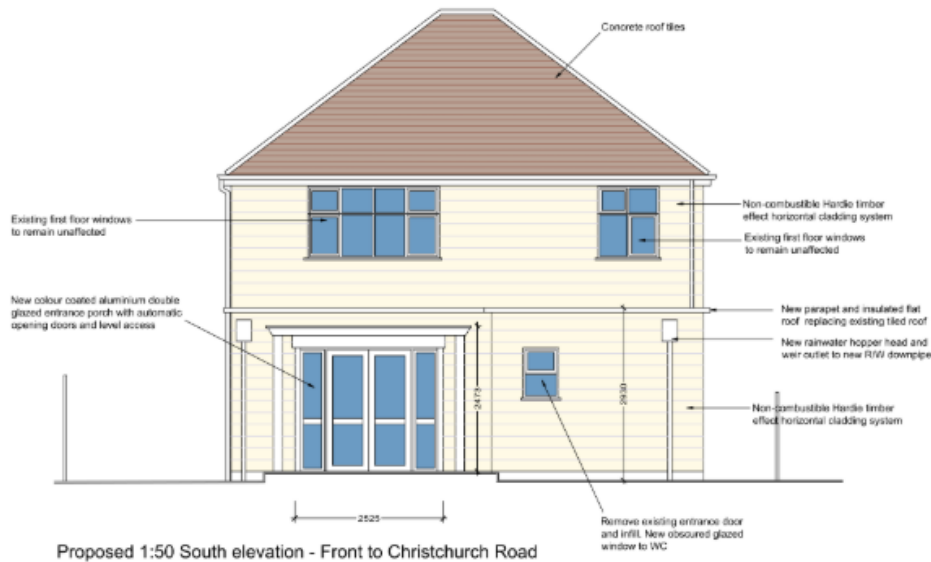
The application site is an existing but vacant doctor surgery on the north side of Christchurch Road. The property has existing single storey front and rear extensions and a narrow concrete ramp to the front entrance. The front and side of the property are tarmacked to provide informal parking spaces. There is a large mature tree at the front of the site. The surrounding area is a mix of residential properties and retail comprising the Christchurch Road Local Centre (Policy RL1 of the Reading Borough Local Plan). The application site is not part of the local centre.



Image taken by case officer on 30 April 2026

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Planning permission is sought for construction of a new entrance porch, new automatic entrance doors, to provide level equal access for disabled users; remodelling and recladding of front elevation to the Surgery. The initial proposal included changes to the parking layout resulting in a reduction of parking spaces, however, this has now been omitted and no changes to the existing parking are proposed.



Proposed front elevations

2.1. Information submitted:

FS 544-22b Proposed plans and elevations

FS 544-21c Proposed plans and elevations

FS 544-20b Existing plans and elevations

Received 16 June 2026

Design and Access Statement

Location Plan

FS 544-19 Block Plan

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal & Preliminary Roost Assessment, Arbtech, dated 23 March 2026

Received 23 April 2026

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

PL/97/0845 - First floor extension to rear of premises for use as part of doctors surgery. Application refused.

4. CONSULTATIONS

The following were consulted:

- RBC Ecology Consultations** - The submitted ecology report (Arbtech, March 2026) has been undertaken to the appropriate standard and concludes that the building has a small number of potential roosting features that may be used by roosting bats. However, the proposals do not include works that may affect these features and as such, it is considered unlikely that the works will have any adverse impacts on bats subject to the implementation of recommended measures set out in the report (pages 12 and 13 of the report). These measures should be secured by condition.
- RBC Transport Development Control** - Based on the existing arrangement (5 consulting rooms and based on 1 GP), the site would require a minimum of 9 parking spaces (rounded up from 8.5). There is currently no formalised parking layout on site; however, it is evident that the site already operates with a significant under-provision of parking, with a maximum of approximately 4 vehicles able to be accommodated. Given that the required parking is 9 spaces, the current proposal, which appears to provide space for only 2 vehicles, represents a significant shortfall against adopted

standards. The proposal is considered unacceptable in its current form due to the loss of existing on-site parking. A revised scheme would therefore be required which provides parking provision in line with the Council's Parking Standards, or at a minimum, retains the existing level of parking available on site. Without such amendments, the proposal would likely result in increased on-street parking in the surrounding streets and adverse impacts on highway safety and accessibility. It is noted that cycle parking for 6 is to be provided adjacent to the disabled parking bay; in accordance with current standards 1 space per 2 staff & 1 stand per consulting room should be provided, staff levels have not been provided therefore I am unable to determine required provision.

A site notice was erected at the front of the site in the public interest. No letters of representation were received.

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 (2014 as amended)

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

Policy CC1 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

Policy CC7 – Design and the Public Realm

Policy CC8 – Safeguarding Amenity

Policy EN14 – Trees, Hedges and Woodlands

Policy TR5 – Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging

Policy OU1 – New and Existing Community Facilities

Other documents

Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD 2011

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. The submission draft of the Local Plan Partial Update was submitted to the Secretary of State on 9th May 2025 and examined earlier this year. At the time of writing, the examination-in-public of the partial update to the local plan is in the process of taking place. Stage 1 hearings were held virtually on 11th and 12th November 2025. Stage 2 hearings took place in February 2026.

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 these applications listed above is that, other than Policy H1 (Provision of Housing) they remain in accordance with national policy and that the objectives of those policies remain very similar in the draft updated Local Plan. Therefore, they can

continue to be afforded weight in the determination of this planning application and are not considered to be 'out of date'.

6. APPRAISAL

6.1. Design and character

Policy CC7 requires all development to be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area in which it is located. Developments are also assessed to ensure that they address the needs of all in society and are accessible. Policy OU1 states that proposals for extended or improved community facilities will be acceptable, subject to all other policy requirements.

The proposal comprises creation of a new porch to replace the existing front entrance to make the entrance more accessible. This is because the existing front entrance has a narrow concrete ramp which is inadequate for use by wheelchair users. The new porch would have automatic opening doors and a step free access. The existing front entrance opening is proposed to be replaced with a small window, serving a WC. While the existing ground floor front extension has a hipped roof, this is proposed to be changed to a flat roof with a small parapet. The front elevation is proposed to be clad in timber effect fibre cement tiles. The new porch and proposed cladding will give the property a modern appearance, which is considered acceptable. It is also proposed to remove an internal partition wall to create a larger reception area.

The proposal is considered acceptable in design terms.

6.2. Residential amenity

Policy CC8 requires all development to have no detrimental impact on neighbouring residential properties.

The proposal would have minimal/no impact on neighbouring residents. There are no changes proposed to the level of parking, nor is the site proposed to be intensified. There are no concerns to raise.

6.3. Transport and parking

Policy TR5 requires all development to provide car parking and cycle parking that is appropriate to the accessibility of locations within the Borough to sustainable transport facilities, particularly public transport.

In line with the Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD, based on the existing arrangement (5 consulting rooms and based on 1 GP), the site would require a minimum of 9 parking spaces (rounded up from 8.5). There is currently no formalised parking layout on site; however, it is evident that the site already operates with a significant under-provision of parking, with a maximum of approximately 4 vehicles able to be accommodated.

Externally, there are existing tarmacked areas for parking at the front and side of the property. While the initial proposal included formalising one disabled parking bay at the front of the site, this would significantly reduce the parking provision on site. Following officer feedback, the applicant has revised the proposed plans to demonstrate no changes proposed to the external areas, to maintain the existing level of parking. This is considered acceptable in this case.

In accordance with current standards 1 cycle parking space per 2 staff & 1 stand per consulting room should be provided. This has been demonstrated on the plans and is considered acceptable.

6.4. Other matters

Policy EN14 requires individual trees to be protected from damage or removal where they are of importance. There is one existing large mature tree on the green verge in front of the site which is in the Council's ownership. No works are proposed to the tree, and the proposed works are limited and unlikely to have an adverse effect on the tree. The proposal is, therefore, acceptable in this respect.

The applicant has also submitted an ecology report which concludes that the building has a small number of potential roosting features that may be used by roosting bats. However, the proposals do not include works that may affect these features and as such, it is considered unlikely that the works will have any adverse impacts on bats subject to the implementation of recommended measures set out in the report which are recommended to be secured by condition.

7. CONCLUSION

The application has been assessed in line with national and locally adopted policies and is considered in accordance with those policies.

8. RECOMMENDATION

GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION

Recommended conditions:

1. Time limit (standard)
2. Approved plans
3. Materials as specified
4. Cycle parking as specified
5. Ecological measures as stated in ecological report