

Planning & Design Statement



**In support of a proposal for external alterations
only.**

**Site at Abbey Wharf,
57 Kings Road, Reading
RG1 3AB**

July 2026

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning & Design Statement has been prepared by Allen Planning Limited on behalf of our client to support a planning application for external alterations to the existing building this site.
- 1.2 The building has, in its entirety, received permitted development consent for its conversion from office to residential apartments.
- 1.3 The proposed application seeks to undertake the following external alterations to the elevations of the building:
 - Removing redundant historic plant and associated louvres
 - Upgrading climbable and non-compliant balustrading to prevent falling
 - Provide new privacy screens
 - Provide smoke ventilation to accord with new Fire Regulations
 - Introducing blanking panels (to match existing blanking panels) to the external façade in lieu of some glazing/ redundant louvres
 - Providing natural daylighting to the top storey via rooflights, and new glazing replacing louvres and including using glazing into the existing void in the centre of the building which currently contains redundant plant & associated structures
- 1.4 These proposed changes are clearly identified on both the proposed floor plans, roof plan and also the proposed elevation drawings and would assist in the new permitted use of the building as residential.
- 1.5 The purpose of this Statement is to describe the relevant site context and surrounding area together with the details of the proposed scheme development. It also outlines the planning policy context and provides an assessment of those policies that apply to the scheme development.

2.0 Site Location

- 2.1 The application site is located on Kings Road near the Crown Bridge. This office building has entrances in the south elevation (onto Kings Street) and the north elevation (facing the River Kennet). The site is bordered to the north and west by the River Kennet and includes a terrace area to north. The site falls within the Central Core and Area of Archaeological Potential as defined by the Reading Central Area Action Plan (2009).
- 2.2 The site has the benefit of an underground car park comprising circa 40 spaces.
- 2.3 The site is located within an Air Quality Management Area, area of potential contaminated land and is mostly within Flood Zone 2 however the north west corner of the site is within Flood Zone 3.
- 2.4 The Abbey Ruins (Scheduled Ancient Monument) are situated opposite the application site but the application building is not listed, nor is it located within a conservation area.
- 2.5 The location of the site is shown in Figure 1 below.

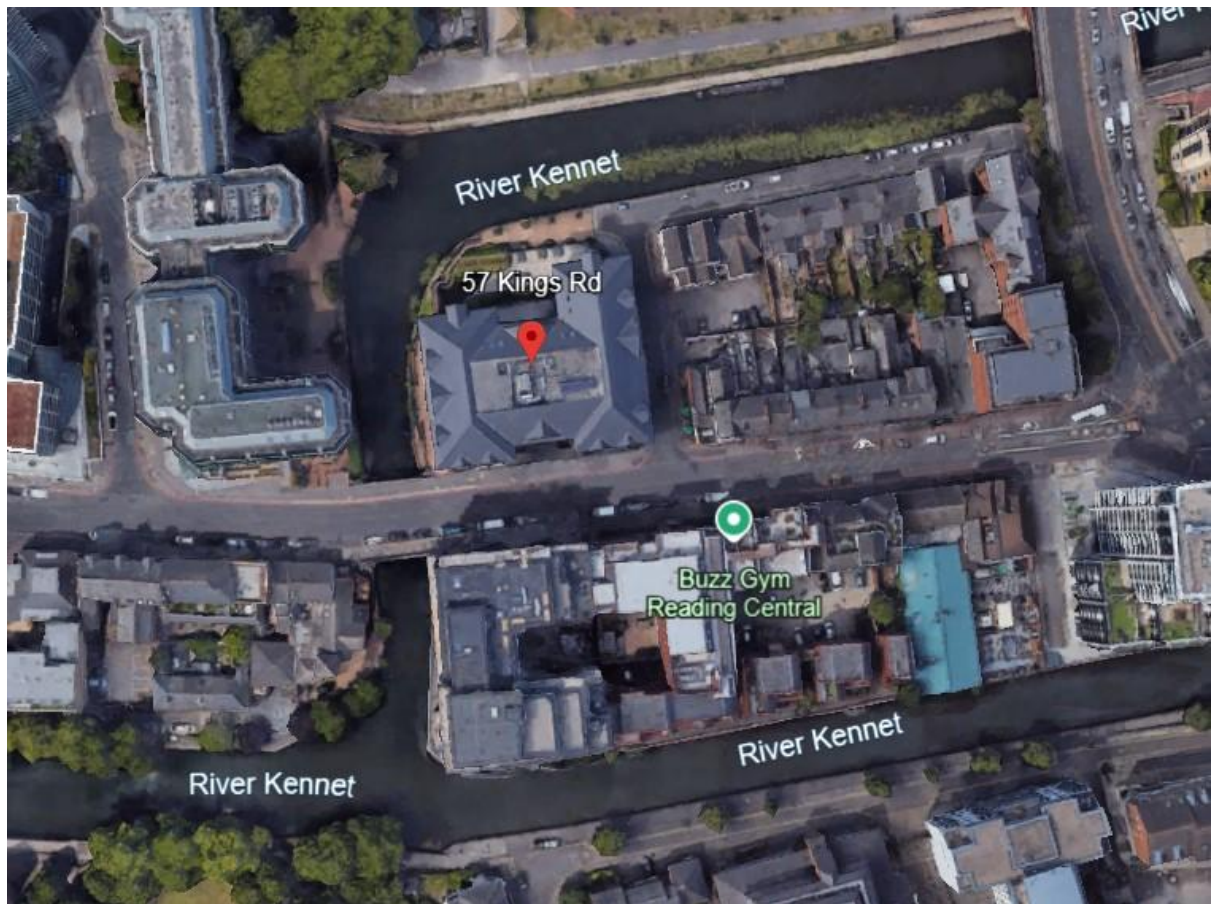


Figure 1 – Site Location

3.0 Planning History

- 3.1 Most recently Prior Notification permission was granted under LPA reference PL/25/1059 for the change of use of 5 floors from Class E (offices) to C3 (dwelling houses) to comprise 27x studio, 43x 1-bedroom and 8x 2-bedroom flats (78 units total). Prior Notification under Class MA, Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order

4.0 Planning Policy

- 4.1 For the purposes of Section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Development Plan is made up of the revised National Planning Policy Framework 2024 and the Reading Local Plan.

National Policy - Revised National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024 (Amended February 2025)

- 4.2 Turning first to national guidance **Paragraphs 7-10** of the NPPF advise:

7. The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, including the provision of homes, commercial development and supporting infrastructure in a sustainable manner. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs⁴. At a similarly high level, members of the United Nations – including the United Kingdom – have agreed to pursue the 17 Global Goals for Sustainable

Development in the period to 2030. These address social progress, economic well-being and environmental protection⁵

8. Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):

***an economic objective** – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;*

***a social objective** – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and*

***an environmental objective** – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.*

9. These objectives should be delivered through the preparation and implementation of plans and the application of the policies in this Framework; they are not criteria against which every decision can or should be judged. Planning policies and decisions should play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions, but in doing so should take local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area

*10. So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a **presumption in favour of sustainable development** (paragraph 11)*

4.3 **Paragraph 11** identifies a presumption in favour of sustainable development for applications set out below:

“c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or

d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date⁸, granting permission unless:

i the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance⁷ provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or

ii any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.”

Design

- 4.4 In terms of design paragraph 131 of the recently revised NPPF advises that:

“The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process.”

- 4.5 Paragraph 135 adds:

“Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;

are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;

are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);

establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;

optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and

create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience. “

- 4.6 In addition, p139 advises:

“Development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design⁵⁴, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes. Conversely, significant weight should be given to:

development which reflects local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes; and/or

outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.”

Reading Local Plan 2019

- 4.7 **Policy CC1** of the Reading Borough Local Plan requires a positive approach to development that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development, which lies at the heart of national policy.

- 4.8 In terms of design **Policy CC7** “Design and the Public Realm” advises:

All development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. The various components of development form, including: -

- ☐ *Layout: urban structure and urban grain;*
- ☐ *Landscape;*
- ☐ *Density and mix;*
- ☐ *Scale: height and massing; and*
- ☐ *Architectural detail and materials*

will be assessed to ensure that the development proposed makes a positive contribution to the following urban design objectives: -

- ☐ *Character - a place with its own identity and sense of place*
- ☐ *Continuity and enclosure*
- ☐ *Quality of the public realm and provision of green infrastructure and landscaping*
- ☐ *Ease of movement and permeability*
- ☐ *Legibility - clear image and easy to understand*
- ☐ *Adaptability – capable of adaptation over time*
- ☐ *Diversity – meets a wide range of needs.*

Developments will also be assessed to ensure that they: -

- ☐ *Respond positively to their local context and create or reinforce local character and distinctiveness, including protecting and enhancing the historic environment of the Borough and providing value to the public realm;*
- ☐ *Create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder or fear of crime does not undermine quality of life or community cohesion;*
- ☐ *Address the needs of all in society and are accessible, usable and easy to understand by them, including providing suitable access to, into and within, its facilities, for all potential users, including disabled people, so that they can use them safely and easily;*
- ☐ *Are visually attractive as a result of good high quality built forms and spaces, the inclusion of public art and appropriate materials and landscaping.*

Applications for major developments, or other relevant developments, should be accompanied by a design and access statement that deals with all the above matter

- 4.9 **Policy CC8** (Safeguarding Amenity) requires that development does not cause a detrimental impact on living condition of existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties.

5.0 Planning Issues

- 5.1 Given that the application proposes only external alterations to this building it is submitted that the only matters for consideration are those of design/townscape and impacts upon the amenities of any neighbouring properties.

Design

- 5.2 Development requiring a high standard of design forms part of the backbone of the NPPF and also various policies within the development plan have similar aspirations including Policy CC7 of the Local Plan.
- 5.3 The building is of a relatively modern design in a mixed use commercial/residential area made up of relatively tall modern built forms outside of any defined conservation area.
- 5.4 The application proposes the following changes to the building:
- Removing redundant historic plant and associated louvres
 - Upgrading climbable and non-compliant balustrading to prevent falling
 - Provide new privacy screens
 - Provide smoke ventilation to accord with new Fire Regulations
 - Introducing blanking panels (to match existing blanking panels) to the external façade in lieu of some glazing/ redundant louvres
 - Providing natural daylighting to the top storey via rooflights, and new glazing replacing louvres and including using glazing into the existing void in the centre of the building which currently contains redundant plant & associated structures
- 5.5 This relatively minor façade redesign represents a significant opportunity to realign the visual identity of the building with its now consented residential use.
- 5.6 The introduction of some blanking panels in lieu of existing fenestration will provide further interest to the building and the additional fenestration will also sit successfully with the overall design approach of the scheme.
- 5.7 Furthermore, the existing louvres are to be removed and replaced with glazing and insulated panels to match existing in frame style and format which would sit successfully within the overall design concept of the building.
- 5.8 The introduction of a small number of rooflights into this building would not harm the overall appearance of the building which has a number of existing incursions into its roofspace.
- 5.9 The materials proposed are set out on the plans and would respect those of the existing building.
- 5.10 Whilst the changes proposed are relatively minor, they would nonetheless constitute a high standard of design taking into account the form, and now the function, of the host building and the appearance of built form in the wider area.
- 5.11 The proposed front elevation is shown in Figure 2 on the following page.

- 6.2 Furthermore, the proposed development would avoid any adverse impacts upon the amenities of neighbouring residential properties or other land uses.
- 6.3 **On the basis of all of the above, it is concluded that the development proposed is in accord with the development plan.**