

Planning Statement

*Proposed Conversion of existing dwelling to HMO
at*

31 Sherman Road, Reading, RG1 2PP

Executive Summary

This Planning Statement supports a full planning application for the change of use of 31 Sherman Road, Reading, from a C3 dwellinghouse to a 4-bedroom House in Multiple Occupation (Use Class C4). The site lies within the Article 4 Direction area, so planning permission is required.

The application has been prepared with the benefit of formal pre-application advice from Reading Borough Council (Ref: PL/26/0689, response dated 22 July 2026, following a meeting on 27 July 2026). The Council's officer advised that the principle of a 4-bedroom C4 HMO at this location is acceptable, subject to matters including internal room facilities, the provision of external amenity space, bin storage, and minor enhancements to the site, all of which have been addressed in the revised scheme described in this Statement.

The Statement concludes that the proposal accords with the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024, as amended February 2025) and the adopted Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019), including Policy H8 (Residential Conversions), and is recommended for approval.

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1. Introduction

This statement relates to a proposed development at 31 Sherman Road, Reading, RG1 2PP for the conversion of the existing dwellinghouse into a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO). This is a full planning application, prepared following formal pre-application advice from Reading Borough Council, and demonstrates the applicant's approach to gaining approval for the following description of development:

"Change of use of an existing dwellinghouse (Use Class C3) to a 4-bedroom House in Multiple Occupation (Use Class C4)."

All references within this application to 'pre-application' relate solely to the advice obtained prior to submission, summarised at Section 2 below; this document itself is submitted in support of a full application for planning permission.

2. Pre-Application Advice

Pre-application advice (Ref: PL/26/0689) was sought from Reading Borough Council and a meeting was held with the case officer, Alison Amoah (Principal Planner), on 27 July 2026. The Council's written response, dated 22 July 2026, and the accompanying note of the meeting have directly informed this application. The key points of that advice, and how each has been addressed, are summarised below.

- **Principle of development:** the Council calculated, using available (non-verified) data, that HMOs represent approximately 20% of residential properties within a 50m radius of the site (15 out of 75 properties), below the SPD's 25% threshold, and confirmed that the principle of the conversion is considered acceptable, subject to the applicant undertaking its own current assessment for the formal submission. This updated assessment is set out at Section 5.3.5 below.
- **Room sizes and facilities:** the Council advised that the proposed ensembles were reducing bedroom sizes and that two of the non-ensuite bathrooms did not appear to include a shower; it recommended removing the ensembles to provide better-sized bedrooms and advised that the Council's Licensing Team be contacted to confirm compliance with HMO licensing regulations. This has been addressed by revising the internal layout, as described at Section 5.2 below.
- **Second floor/loft bathroom:** the Council suggested that a small bathroom to the second floor, enabled by a dormer set well within the roofscape, could be explored, and that such an extension may be capable of being carried out under permitted development rights (Schedule 2, Part 1, General Permitted Development Order 2015).
- **Amenity space and cycle/bin storage:** the Council advised that external amenity space would be of greater benefit to occupants than cycle storage on this very constrained site, that any structures should avoid filling up to the boundaries, and that bin storage should be practical, rat-proof and of sufficient capacity, without being an overly large enclosed structure. This is addressed at Sections 5.3.6 and 6.4 below.
- **Enhancements to appearance:** modest greening and repairs to the boundary dwarf wall were suggested and have been incorporated into the scheme.
- **Connection between inside and outside:** the Council suggested exploring an increase in head height to the existing single-storey side extension to enable a door, on the same elevation as the ground floor bathroom, providing access to external amenity space between the house and no. 33 Sherman Road.

As advised by the Council at pre-application stage, the previously submitted Design and Access Statement and Planning Statement referenced superseded Local Plan policies (the 2008 Core Strategy, the 2012 Sites and Detailed Policies Document, and the 2023 NPPF) and an incorrect SPD date. This Statement has been fully updated to reference the adopted Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019), the current National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024, as amended February 2025), and the Residential Conversions SPD (adopted March 2023), as set out below.

Please note that the pre-application advice was provided without prejudice to the decision of the Council on this formal application.

3. Background

This Planning Statement has been prepared to support a full planning application for the conversion of the existing dwelling into a 4-bedroom House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) at 31 Sherman Road, Reading, RG1 2PP.

The property is an end-terraced house located within the Katesgrove Ward, which is subject to an Article 4 Direction (made in May 2012) requiring full planning permission for the change of use from a dwellinghouse (Use Class C3) to an HMO (Use Class C4). The client seeks to convert the existing residential dwelling to meet the demand for affordable and flexible shared accommodation in Reading.

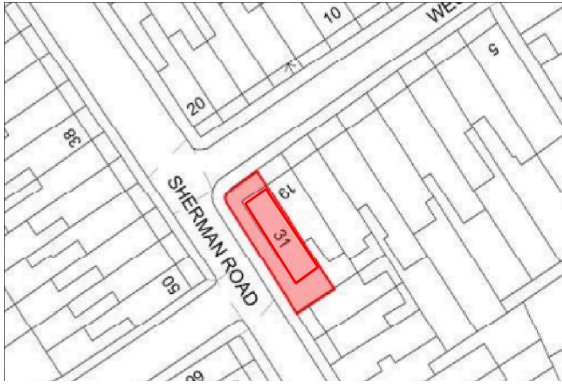
This proposal responds to demand for housing that caters to young professionals and students in Reading, a town that benefits from its proximity to the University of Reading and strong employment links to London and the Thames Valley technology corridor. The application has been prepared in compliance with relevant planning policies and reflects the Council's pre-application advice.

4. Site Description and Surrounding Area

The site at 31 Sherman Road, Reading, RG1 2PP is an end-terraced house comprising three storeys (ground, first and loft), with a total gross floor area of approximately 84 square metres. The property is located within the Katesgrove Ward of Reading Borough, within the Article 4 Direction area.

The surrounding area is characterised by a mix of terraced and semi-detached Victorian and Edwardian properties typical of Reading's inner residential neighbourhoods. The area is densely developed with a range of housing tenures, including owner-occupied homes, private rented properties, and a number of existing HMOs.

The site is level and located within an urban area. Confirmed against current Environment Agency flood mapping, the site lies within Flood Zone 1 (lowest probability of river and sea flooding) and is not identified as being at elevated risk of surface water flooding. The property benefits from good access to local amenities including shops, schools, healthcare facilities, and recreational spaces, and is well connected to Reading's public transport network, including local bus routes and walking distance to Reading Station.



Location Plan and Block Plan (drawing A101), showing the application site outlined in red at the junction of Sherman Road and West Hill

The existing drainage infrastructure serving the property is considered adequate to accommodate the proposed four-person HMO, given that the number of occupants and overall water demand is comparable to occupation as a large family dwelling and no additional impermeable area is proposed.

No trees are proposed for removal, and the proposal will not affect any existing trees or hedgerows on or adjacent to the site. No protected species or habitats have been identified as likely to be affected by this internal conversion, which is proportionate given the limited and wholly internal nature of the works. As the proposal does not involve development on land and does not meet the thresholds for on-site biodiversity net gain, it is not considered subject to the mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain requirement; this will be confirmed at validation.

The site is not located within a Conservation Area, the building is not listed, and there are no other heritage designations affecting the site or its setting.

The property currently carries an EPC Energy Rating of E (certificate number 6600-1216-0722-4426-3953, valid until 29 January 2035). Any works undertaken as part of the conversion will seek to improve the energy performance of the building in line with current Building Regulations.

5. Proposal

The proposed development comprises the change of use and internal reconfiguration of the existing residential dwelling into a 4-bedroom House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) (Use Class C4).

This application includes the following accompanying drawings, which should be read in conjunction with this statement (revision status to be confirmed against the final issued drawing register at submission):

- Location and Block Plan (A101)
- Existing and Proposed Site Plan (A102)
- Existing Floor Plans (A103)
- Proposed Floor Plans (A104)
- Existing Elevations (A105)
- Proposed Elevations (A106)
- Existing and Proposed Section (A107)



Drawing A102 - Existing Site Plan (left) and Proposed Site Plan (right), showing the garden/amenity area, cycle storage and bin storage provided within the side return

5.1 Planning History

The Council's online planning register has been checked and confirms that the property does not have a relevant planning history directly related to the proposed HMO conversion; previous entries relate only to minor works. No previous applications for HMO use or change of use have been identified in relation to this property.

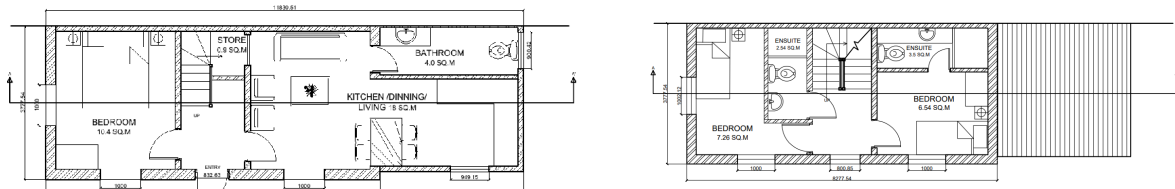
5.2 Proposed Development

The proposal involves the conversion of the existing residential property into a 4-bedroom House in Multiple Occupation (HMO). Following pre-application advice, the internal layout has been revised to reduce the number of ensembles and provide better-proportioned bedrooms, with shared bathroom facilities reviewed against the national minimum standards for HMO sleeping accommodation under the Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (Mandatory Conditions of Licences) (England) Regulations 2018 (6.51 sq.m for single occupancy aged 10 or over; 10.5 sq.m for two persons), noting that this is a distinct, separate regime from planning space standards. The final facilities layout, including provision of showers to non-ensuite bathrooms, will be confirmed with the Council's Licensing Team ahead of, or alongside, determination of this application.

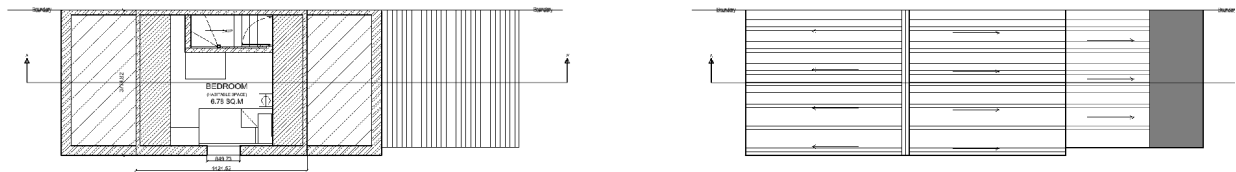
The key elements of the proposal are:

- Internal Layout:** the ground, first and loft floors will be reconfigured to provide four bedrooms, an open-plan kitchen/dining/living communal space, and shared bathroom facilities, as shown on the Proposed Floor Plans (drawing A104). Three bedrooms are approximately 6.5-7.0 sq.m and the ground floor bedroom is larger; final areas will be confirmed on the submitted drawings following the removal of ensembles recommended at pre-application stage.
- Communal Space:** a single open-plan kitchen/dining/living space of approximately 18 sq.m is provided on the ground floor, exceeding the SPD's minimum 7.0 sq.m requirement for a shared kitchen and satisfying the standard of one communal room for the number of bedrooms proposed.
- External Amenity and Storage:** as shown on the Proposed Site Plan (drawing A102), the side return between the existing extension and the boundary with no. 33 Sherman Road accommodates a small paved garden/amenity area with seating (a table and two chairs), a two-space cycle storage enclosure, and a dedicated bin storage enclosure of approximately 1.0m x 0.65m. This arrangement responds directly to the Council's pre-application advice by providing functional amenity space without removing cycle parking provision, and avoids structures filling up to the site boundaries. Access from the communal living space to the amenity area may be improved by a minor increase in head height to the existing side extension, subject to detailed design.

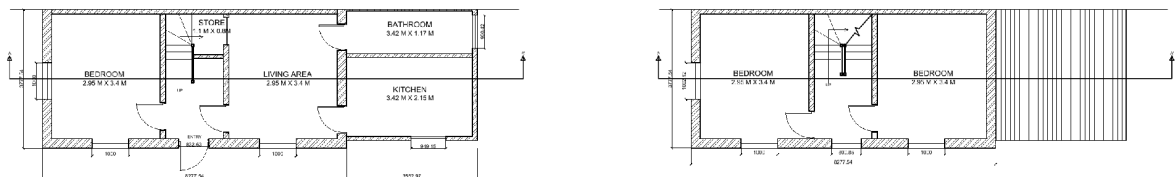
- **Site Enhancements:** modest greening of the remaining external area and repairs to the existing boundary dwarf wall, as suggested by the Council.
- **Sustainability:** the conversion will make efficient use of an existing building, reducing the need for new development. Energy efficiency improvements will be incorporated in line with current Building Regulations, with the aim of, but no guarantee of, an improved EPC rating.



Drawing A104 - Proposed Ground Floor and Proposed First Floor



Drawing A104 - Proposed Loft Floor and Proposed Roof Plan



Drawing A103 - Existing Ground Floor and Existing First Floor, for comparison

5.3 Planning Policy Context

5.3.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, December 2024, amended February 2025)

The NPPF promotes a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The proposal has particular regard to Section 2 (Achieving Sustainable Development) and Section 12 (Achieving Well-Designed Places).

Analysis: The proposal supports the delivery of shared accommodation in Reading, contributing to the social objective of sustainable development, while the conversion of an existing building rather than new build also aligns with the environmental objective of making effective use of land. The proposal involves no significant external alterations, preserving the character of the existing building and street scene, consistent with the design quality objectives of Section 12 of the Framework.

5.3.2 Adopted Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019)

The Reading Borough Local Plan, adopted in November 2019, replaced the previous 2008 Core Strategy and 2012 Sites and Detailed Policies Document, and forms the current statutory development plan against which this application must be assessed. The Local Plan turned five years

old in November 2024; a Partial Update is in preparation (consultation draft published November 2024; submission draft submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in May 2025), but the relevant policies below are considered by the Council to remain up to date and consistent with national policy, and are afforded full weight in the determination of this application.

The following policies of the adopted Local Plan are relevant:

- ***Policy CC1 - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development***
- ***Policy CC2 - Sustainable Design and Construction***
- ***Policy CC5 - Waste Minimisation and Storage***
- ***Policy CC7 - Design and the Public Realm***
- ***Policy CC8 - Safeguarding Amenity***
- ***Policy EN12 - Biodiversity and the Green Network***
- ***Policy EN14 - Trees, Hedges and Woodland***
- ***Policy H8 - Residential Conversions***
- ***Policy H10 - Private and Communal Outdoor Space***
- ***Policy TR5 - Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging***

Policy H8 (Residential Conversions) is the principal policy against which this application falls to be assessed. It states that proposals to convert buildings for multiple occupation will be assessed against the impact on the amenity and character of the surrounding area, particularly intensification of activity, loss of privacy, loss of external amenity space, on-site car parking, and the treatment of bin storage areas and servicing, and will only be acceptable where a series of criteria, summarised in the checklist at Section 5.3.4 below, are met.

Analysis: *The proposal retains the property in residential use and represents an efficient use of an existing dwelling to meet current housing demand. Together with Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) and Policy H10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space), the scheme - as revised following pre-application advice - is considered to accord with the relevant policies of the adopted Local Plan, subject to the matters addressed in Section 6 below.*

5.3.3 Supplementary Planning Documents and Other Guidance

The following guidance is relevant to the assessment of this application:

- Residential Conversions SPD (adopted March 2023) - provides detailed guidance on the implementation of Policy H8, including the 25% HMO concentration threshold and a checklist of assessment matters (items 1-27);
- Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011) - sets car and cycle parking standards for residential conversions, including 0.25 car parking spaces and 0.5 cycle parking spaces per room;
- Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2019); and
- Guide to Amenity Standards for Houses in Multiple Occupation, Reading Borough Council (updated 2024) - sets out national minimum standards for bedroom sizes and washing facilities referenced under HMO licensing.

5.3.4 Residential Conversions SPD Checklist

The proposal is assessed against the relevant items of the SPD checklist below:

Checklist item	Assessment
Checklist 3 (H8)	Any residential conversion must contribute to an appropriately mixed and sustainable community, ensuring single-family housing remains the dominant form of dwelling in the vicinity. The proposed 4-bedroom HMO does not alter the predominantly residential character of Sherman Road; single-family dwellings remain dominant in the surrounding street.
Checklist 5/6 (H8)	The property has 4 bedrooms across three storeys; the applicant confirms compliance against the current SPD checklist wording rather than superseded policy wording.
Checklist 8/9/10/11 (CC8, H8, H10)	Assessment of amenity, layout/stacking of rooms and provision of communal and private/communal outdoor space. Addressed in Sections 5.2, including the pre-application advice on room facilities and external amenity space.
Checklist 14/15 (TR5)	Car and cycle parking provision to be assessed against the Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011), including the standard of 0.25 car parking spaces and 0.5 cycle spaces per room. Addressed in Section 5.3 below.
Checklist 17/18 (H8, CC5)	Sufficient and suitable refuse and cycle storage to be provided within the curtilage, easily accessible and sympathetically located.

5.3.5 HMO Concentration (25% Threshold)

The SPD establishes a threshold of 25% as the maximum proportion of residential properties within a 50m radius that should be in HMO use; where this is at or exceeded there is a presumption against further HMOs.

Analysis: At pre-application stage the Council calculated, from available Environmental Health, Council Tax, extant permission and other data (not verified by site inspection), that 15 of the 75 residential properties within a 50m radius of the site (20%) are in HMO use, below the 25% threshold. The applicant has undertaken its own current assessment of HMO concentration within the same 50m radius using publicly available and Council-held data, which confirms the Council's finding that the threshold is not exceeded, and this evidence is submitted alongside this application. It is noted that from 1 March 2026 an additional licensing scheme applies to all 3-4 person HMOs across the borough, and that more complete data on HMO numbers is expected to become available as this scheme is implemented; the applicant will continue to monitor this position ahead of determination.

5.3.6 Internal Standards, Amenity and Refuse/Cycle Provision

The SPD and the national HMO licensing regulations set minimum standards for bedroom sizes, washing facilities and communal space. As distinct planning and licensing regimes, both are addressed separately below.

Analysis: For planning purposes, the revised layout (Section 5.2) provides bedrooms and a communal kitchen/dining/living space that meet or exceed the standards in the Residential Conversions SPD. For licensing purposes, the removal of en-suites recommended at pre-application stage, and confirmation of shower provision to the remaining shared bathrooms, will ensure compliance with the national minimum standards for HMO sleeping accommodation; this will be confirmed with the Council's Licensing Team. As shown on drawing A102, the site plan provides a dedicated bin storage enclosure (approximately 1.0m x 0.65m), a two-space cycle storage enclosure, and a small paved garden/amenity area with seating, all accommodated within

the side return without extending to the site boundaries, directly reflecting the pre-application advice. A management plan will be prepared for the HMO covering, amongst other matters, the management of waste and communal areas.

5.3.7 Impact on Amenity, Noise and Disturbance

Analysis: *The proposed use remains residential in nature. The level of noise and disturbance likely to arise from four occupants - including from comings and goings, use of communal areas and the garden, and refuse handling - is not considered materially different from occupation by a family in a similarly sized dwelling, and will be further managed through the HMO management plan referred to above. Any residual disturbance or nuisance would be subject to the Council's normal civil enforcement and statutory nuisance powers. As no extensions, new windows or doors (other than the minor amenity-space door referred to above) are proposed, there is no material change in privacy, overlooking or overshadowing neighbouring properties. On this basis, the proposal is not considered to result in a harmful change to the established residential character of Sherman Road.*

5.3.8 Highway Safety, Access and Parking

Policy TR5 requires parking provision for residential conversions to accord with the Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011), equivalent to 0.25 car parking spaces per room for this proposal (i.e. one space for a 4-bedroom HMO).

Analysis: *No on-site car parking is provided. The site is in an edge-of-centre, highly accessible location, with the town centre, Reading Station and a good bus network within walking distance, reducing reliance on private vehicles. Sherman Road and the surrounding streets are subject to a residents' permit parking scheme; occupants of the HMO would not be entitled to on-street permits, which can be secured by condition. On this basis, and given the modest scale of the proposal (4 bedrooms), it is considered that any additional demand for on-street parking would not result in a severe or unacceptable impact on highway safety, notwithstanding the departure from the SPD car parking standard, which is considered justified by the site's sustainable location. A two-space cycle storage enclosure is provided on site, as shown on drawing A102, meeting the SPD's cycle parking guidance.*

5.3.9 Accessibility

Analysis: *The existing pedestrian access from Sherman Road is level and will be retained without alteration, providing reasonable accessibility for future occupants. Internally, the ground floor bedroom, bathroom and communal kitchen/dining/living space are accessible without reliance on stairs, providing a reasonable degree of accessible accommodation within this existing three-storey terraced building.*

6. Planning Considerations

This section draws together, and expands upon, the policy analysis at Section 5.3 to consider each of the main planning issues arising from the proposal in turn, reflecting both the statutory development plan and the specific matters raised in the Council's pre-application advice (Ref: PL/26/0689). The key planning considerations for this proposal are:

- Principle of the development, including HMO concentration within the surrounding area;
- Impact on local character and neighbouring living conditions, including internal standards, room facilities and amenity;
- Highway safety and parking;
- Bin storage, cycle storage and external amenity space; and

- Suitability of the location and sustainability.

6.1 Principle of Development

The starting point for the assessment of this application is Policy H8 (Residential Conversions) of the adopted Reading Borough Local Plan, which permits the conversion of dwellings to HMOs subject to a series of criteria concerning amenity, character, community balance, parking and servicing. Because the site lies within the Article 4 Direction area, the change of use from a C3 dwellinghouse to a C4 HMO cannot benefit from permitted development rights, and full planning permission is required; this application has been prepared on that basis.

A threshold-based test is applied by the Residential Conversions SPD to guard against the over-concentration of HMOs within any one area: planning permission will not normally be granted where HMOs would represent 25% or more of residential properties within a 50m radius of the application site. At pre-application stage, the Council's own assessment - based on Environmental Health, Council Tax, extant permission and other held data, though not verified by site inspection - calculated the concentration at approximately 20% (15 of 75 properties), below this threshold. The applicant's own updated assessment, prepared for submission with this application and summarised at Section 5.3.5, corroborates this finding. On this basis, the introduction of a single further 4-bedroom HMO at 31 Sherman Road would not, in the applicant's or the Council's assessment, tip the surrounding area over the threshold at which an over-concentration of shared housing would begin to erode the mixed and sustainable character of the community that Policy H8 seeks to protect.

The proposal also retains the building in residential use; no housing is lost, and the change of use represents an efficient re-use of an existing three-storey dwelling to meet a documented need for shared accommodation in Reading, consistent with both Policy H8 and the social objective of sustainable development in the NPPF. For these reasons, the principle of the development is considered acceptable, subject to the detailed matters addressed below.

6.2 Local Character and Neighbouring Living Conditions

Two distinct issues arise under this heading: first, the effect of the proposal on the external character and appearance of the site and street scene; and second, the effect on the living conditions of both future occupants of the HMO and neighbouring residents.

On external character, the site is located within a predominantly residential street characterised by terraced and semi-detached Victorian and Edwardian dwellings of a consistent scale and form. As shown on the Proposed Elevations (drawing A106) and Proposed Site Plan (drawing A102), the proposal involves no extensions, no new principal windows or doors, and no change to materials, roof form or overall massing; the only external change under consideration is a minor increase in head height to the existing single-storey side extension to accommodate a door to the proposed amenity area, which is not visible from the street and would not alter the established building line or roofscape. On this basis, the character and appearance of Sherman Road would be preserved, and the proposal accords with Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm).

On living conditions, the Council's pre-application advice identified that the previously submitted layout - which included ensembles to the ground floor and one first-floor bedroom - was compressing bedroom sizes and, in respect of two non-ensuite bathrooms, appeared not to provide a shower. This has been addressed by revising the internal layout to remove the ensembles, in favour of larger bedrooms and shared bathroom facilities that meet the national minimum standards for HMO sleeping accommodation under the 2018 Licensing Regulations (6.51 sq.m for single occupancy; 10.5 sq.m for two persons), as well as the space standards in the Residential Conversions SPD. The Council's suggestion of a small second-floor bathroom enabled by a dormer, potentially falling within permitted development rights, remains an option to be explored further with the design team and, if pursued, would be the subject of a separate permitted development enquiry rather than this application.

Because the proposal does not introduce new windows, doors (other than the minor amenity-space door referred to above) or extensions, there is no material change in mutual overlooking, loss of privacy or overshadowing as between the application property and neighbouring dwellings. The layout of rooms - communal kitchen/living/dining at ground floor, bedrooms at first and loft floor - is unchanged from the existing dwelling and does not introduce any inappropriate stacking of bedrooms beneath or beside communal or noisier rooms. On this basis, the proposal is considered to accord with Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) and Policy H10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space), addressing the Council's principal concern at pre-application stage.

With regard to noise and disturbance, the level of activity generated by four occupants - including comings and goings, use of the communal kitchen/living space, use of the garden/amenity area, and refuse handling - is not considered materially different from occupation of the property by a family of a similar size. Any residual disturbance would be managed through the HMO management plan referred to at Section 5.3.6, and would in any event remain subject to the Council's normal civil enforcement and statutory nuisance powers, in the same way as it would for any residential occupier.

6.3 Highway Safety and Parking

Policy TR5 requires car and cycle parking for residential conversions to be provided in accordance with the Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011), equivalent for this proposal to 0.25 car parking spaces per room (broadly one space for a 4-bedroom HMO) and 0.5 cycle parking spaces per room (two spaces for four bedrooms).

No on-site car parking can be provided, given the constrained nature of the plot and the absence of any existing driveway or dropped kerb. This represents a departure from the adopted car parking standard. However, the site occupies a highly sustainable, edge-of-centre location within a comfortable walking distance of Reading town centre, Reading Station, and a range of local bus routes, all of which reduce the likely reliance of future occupants on private car ownership. Sherman Road and the surrounding streets operate a residents' permit parking scheme, and it is proposed that occupants of the HMO would not be entitled to apply for an on-street permit, a restriction that can be secured and enforced by planning conditions. Taking these factors together, and given the modest scale of the proposal (a net increase of, at most, a small number of additional occupants over the existing dwelling), it is not considered that the absence of on-site parking would result in a severe or unacceptable impact on highway safety or the availability of on-street parking for existing residents, such as would justify refusal of the application.

Cycle parking, by contrast, is provided in full accordance with the SPD standard: a two-space cycle storage enclosure is shown on the Proposed Site Plan (drawing A102), located within the side return and accessible without conflicting with the pedestrian access route to the front door. This supports sustainable travel choices for future occupants and is consistent with Policy TR5.

No alterations to the vehicular or pedestrian access arrangements, or to the boundary treatment fronting Sherman Road or West Hill, are proposed. The existing brick boundary wall and railings will be retained (and repaired where required, as discussed below), consistent with the guidance in the SPD checklist that removal of boundary treatment to accommodate parking will not be supported where it contributes positively to the character of the area.

6.4 Bin Storage, Cycle Storage and External Amenity Space

This matter was a particular focus of the Council's pre-application advice, which noted that the site offers very limited external space, that amenity space would be of greater benefit to occupants than a large cycle store alone, that bin storage needed to be practical and rat-proof without being oversized, and that no structure should extend to fill up the full width of either boundary.

As shown on the Proposed Site Plan (drawing A102), the side return between the existing single-storey side extension and the boundary with no. 33 Sherman Road has been organised to accommodate all three requirements without extending to the boundaries: a dedicated bin storage enclosure of approximately 1.0m x 0.65m, positioned close to the site access for ease of collection; an adjoining two-space cycle storage enclosure; and, nearest the boundary, a small paved garden/amenity area of approximately 2.5m x 3.0m, illustrated conceptually by the accompanying image, comprising paving, a table and two chairs, a timber planter and boundary shrub planting, and a gate providing access from the side return.

The bin storage enclosure's final capacity and specification - including the number and size of bins to be accommodated ahead of occupation, to ensure it is sufficient for a 4-bedroom HMO and avoids the overflowing-bin problems that can affect the visual amenity and character of the area where storage is inadequate. The cycle storage enclosure meets the SPD's cycle parking guidance of 0.5 spaces per bedroom. The garden/amenity area directly addresses the Council's advice that functional external amenity space should be prioritised on this constrained site, providing a usable outdoor space for the four occupants without displacing bin or cycle storage, and is considered to satisfy Policy H10. Modest greening of the site and repair of the existing boundary dwarf wall, as suggested by the Council, will also be carried out as part of the works, enhancing the appearance of the site in accordance with Policy CC7.

7. Other Material Considerations

Flood risk and drainage: the site lies within Flood Zone 1 and existing drainage infrastructure is considered adequate for the proposed level of occupation, as set out at Section 4 above.

Ecology, trees and biodiversity net gain: no trees are affected, no protected species or habitats are identified as being affected by this internal conversion, and the proposal is not considered subject to the mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain requirement, as set out at Section 4 above.

Heritage: the site is not within a Conservation Area, is not listed, and no other heritage designations apply.

Sustainability: energy efficiency improvements will be made in line with current Building Regulations; any improvement to the EPC rating will depend on the detailed works undertaken and cannot be guaranteed at this stage.

8. Planning Balance

This section draws together the considerations set out above to form an overall planning balance.

In favour of the proposal: the scheme makes efficient use of an existing building in a highly sustainable, accessible location; it responds to a well-evidenced need for shared affordable accommodation in Reading; the principle of development accords with Policy H8, with the HMO concentration threshold not being exceeded on either the Council's pre-application assessment or the applicant's own updated assessment; and the scheme has been revised, following pre-application advice, to improve internal room facilities and to provide, within the constrained side return, a functional garden/amenity area with seating alongside retained bin and cycle storage, together with modest enhancements to the appearance of the site.

Potential adverse impacts and how they are addressed: the absence of on-site car parking represents a departure from the adopted car parking standard, but is considered acceptable given the site's sustainable, edge-of-centre location and the modest scale of the development (4 bedrooms); the constrained nature of the site limits the scope for a larger amenity area, but the proposal nonetheless

secures a functional garden/seating space, in addition to full bin and cycle storage provision, all without any structure extending to the site boundaries.

Analysis: *On balance, the identified benefits of the proposal, and its accordance with Policy H8 and the wider policies of the adopted Local Plan, are considered to outweigh the limited and localised departure from the car parking standard, such that the proposal represents sustainable development consistent with the presumption in favour set out in Policy CC1 and the NPPF.*

9. Conclusion

This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of the proposed change of use of 31 Sherman Road, Reading, RG1 2PP, from a Class C3 dwellinghouse to a 4-bedroom House in Multiple Occupation (HMO), Class C4, following formal pre-application advice from Reading Borough Council (Ref: PL/26/0689).

The assessment demonstrates that the proposal is compliant with relevant planning policy, including:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, December 2024, amended February 2025);
- Adopted Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019), in particular Policies CC1, CC2, CC5, CC7, CC8, EN12, EN14, H8, H10 and TR5;
- Residential Conversions Supplementary Planning Document (adopted March 2023);
- Revised Parking Standards and Design Supplementary Planning Document (2011); and
- Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document (2019).

The development is acceptable in principle, retaining the residential use of the property while contributing positively to the borough's housing supply, and satisfies the relevant criteria of Policy H8 and the Residential Conversions SPD, having been revised to reflect the Council's pre-application advice on room facilities, amenity space, bin storage and site enhancements.

The proposal has been carefully designed to preserve the character of the surrounding area, with no significant external alterations, and there will be no unacceptable adverse impact on neighbouring amenity, highway safety, or parking provision. The 25% HMO concentration threshold set by the Article 4 Direction and the Residential Conversions SPD is not exceeded by this application, on the basis of both the Council's own pre-application assessment and the applicant's updated evidence submitted with this application.

Overall, the development represents an efficient and sustainable use of an existing residential property, delivering social and environmental benefits consistent with planning policy. It is therefore respectfully concluded that the application should be supported and planning permission granted.