

Design and Access Statement

Proposed Conversion of Dwellinghouse to HMO at

31 Sherman Road, Reading, RG1 2PP

Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	2
1. Introduction.....	3
2. Pre-Application Advice.....	3
3. Project Description.....	4
4. Site Location and Characteristics.....	4
5. Proposals and Justification.....	5
6. Design Considerations.....	6
7. Massing and Scale.....	7
8. Character and Appearance.....	7
9. Access and Parking.....	8
10. Sustainability and Design Standards.....	8
11. Local Distinctiveness and Character.....	8
12. Conclusion.....	9

1. Introduction

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared in support of a full planning application for the proposed development at 31 Sherman Road, Reading, RG1 2PP. The proposal seeks permission for the conversion of the existing dwellinghouse (Use Class C3) into a 4-bedroom House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) (Use Class C4).

The scheme has been carefully developed to provide high-quality shared accommodation within an established residential setting in the Katesgrove Ward of Reading Borough. The conversion improves the functionality and efficiency of the existing property while fully respecting the character of the surrounding area and safeguarding the amenity of neighbouring residents.

The property falls within the area covered by the Article 4 Direction (2012), which requires full planning permission for the change of use from a dwellinghouse (C3) to an HMO (C4). This statement has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Article 4 Direction and the associated Residential Conversions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD, adopted March 2023).

Prior to submission, formal pre-application advice was sought from Reading Borough Council (Ref: PL/26/0689). The advice received is summarised at Section 2 below and has directly informed the final design and content of this application.

2. Pre-Application Advice

Pre-application advice was sought from Reading Borough Council in respect of the proposed change of use, and a meeting was held with Council officers on 27 July 2026. The Council's formal written response (Ref: PL/26/0689, dated 22 July 2026) and the accompanying note of that meeting have been used to inform this application. A summary of the key points raised, and how they have been addressed within this application, is set out below.

- **Internal layout and room sizes:** The Council advised that the proposed ensembles were reducing the size of bedrooms and recommended their removal in favour of larger, better-proportioned rooms, with a shared bathroom arrangement reviewed against national HMO licensing standards.
- **Amenity space and external storage:** The Council advised that, given the very limited external space available, functional amenity space would be more beneficial to occupants than cycle storage, and that any external structures should avoid filling up to the site boundaries. Bin storage was identified as necessary but should be a practical, appropriately sized (rat-proof) solution rather than a very large enclosed structure.
- **Enhancements to appearance:** The Council suggested modest improvements to the appearance of the site, including greening and repairs to the boundary dwarf wall.
- **Connection between inside and outside:** Officers 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 amenity space between the house and the side boundary with no. 33 Sherman Road.

This application has been revised in direct response to this advice, as reflected throughout this Statement and in the accompanying Planning Statement and drawings.

3. Project Description

The proposed development comprises:

- The conversion of the existing residential dwelling into a 4-bedroom HMO (Use Class C4);

- Internal reconfiguration across the ground, first and loft floors, having regard to the Council's pre-application advice to reduce the number of en-suites and provide better-proportioned bedrooms, with communal bathroom facilities reviewed against national HMO standards.
- An open-plan kitchen/dining/living communal space on the ground floor;
- Retention of the existing access arrangements, together with, as shown on the Proposed Site Plan (drawing A102): a small paved garden/amenity area with seating (a table and two chairs) adjacent to the boundary with no. 33 Sherman Road; a two-space cycle storage enclosure; and a dedicated bin storage enclosure of approximately 1.0m x 0.65m, all accommodated within the side return without extending to fill the full width of the boundary, in line with pre-application advice;
- Modest enhancements to the appearance of the site, including greening and repairs to the boundary dwarf wall;
- No material external alterations to the principal building, preserving the established streetscene, aside from the minor adjustment to the existing single-storey side extension referred to above to improve the connection between the communal space and the external amenity area; and
- Incorporation of sustainable design principles through the reuse of an existing building.

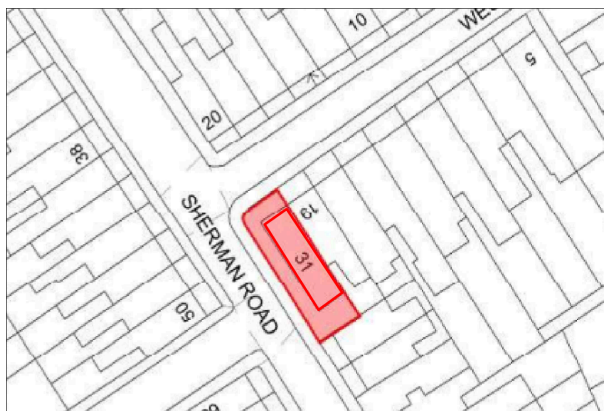
The development will deliver high-quality shared accommodation for young professionals, students, and those seeking affordable flexible housing in Reading, responding to demand for such accommodation across the borough.

4. Site Location and Characteristics

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

The surrounding area is characterised by:

- A mix of terraced and semi-detached Victorian and Edwardian properties, typical of Reading's inner residential neighbourhoods;
- A densely developed urban character with a range of housing tenures including owner-occupied homes, private rented properties, and a number of existing HMOs; and
- A predominantly residential street with a consistent scale and built form.



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

The site benefits from:

- Close proximity to local amenities, including shops, schools, and healthcare facilities;
- Strong public transport links, including local bus routes and walking distance to Reading Station;
- Proximity to the University of Reading and the Thames Valley technology corridor; and
- A level site, which is confirmed by the Environment Agency's flood mapping as being within Flood Zone 1 (lowest probability of flooding), presenting no significant physical constraints to development.

The property currently carries an EPC Energy Rating of E (certificate number 6600-1216-0722-4426-3953, valid until 29 January 2035). Works undertaken as part of the conversion will seek to improve the energy performance of the building in line with current Building Regulations, although no specific improved rating is guaranteed at this stage.

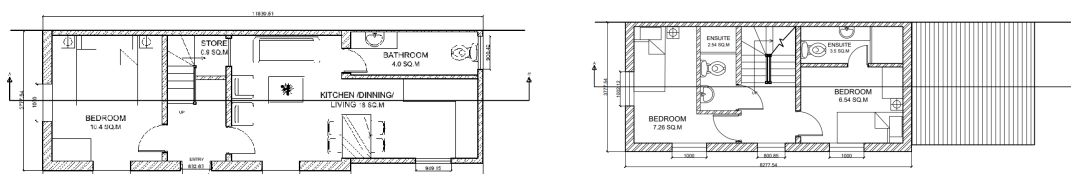
The site falls within the Article 4 Direction area, which removes the permitted development right to convert a dwellinghouse (C3) to a small HMO (C4). Full planning permission is therefore required and is the subject of this application. The site does not lie within a Conservation Area and the building is not listed; there are no other heritage designations affecting the site or its setting.

5. Proposals and Justification

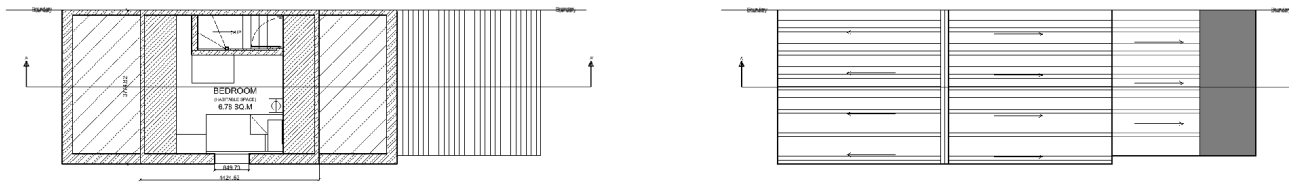
The proposal aims to convert the existing dwelling at 31 Sherman Road into a 4-bedroom HMO, responding to the demand for affordable shared accommodation in Reading. This approach optimises the use of a previously developed, existing building, retaining it in residential use and avoiding any net loss of housing.

The proposed internal layout, shown on the Proposed Floor Plans (drawing A104), has been revised following pre-application advice to provide well-proportioned bedrooms, with the number of ensembles reduced and communal bathroom facilities provided so as to meet the national minimum standards under the Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (Mandatory Conditions of Licences) (England) Regulations 2018 (6.51 sq.m for single occupancy; 10.5 sq.m for two persons), as well as the space standards set out in the Residential Conversions SPD (2023). It should be noted that planning space standards and HMO licensing standards are separate regimes, and the final facilities layout will also be reviewed with the Council's Licensing Team.

The design ensures that the development does not overdevelop the site, maintaining a balanced relationship with neighbouring properties and preserving the residential character of Sherman Road. The proposal aligns with the objectives of Policy H8 (Residential Conversions) of the adopted Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019) and the Residential Conversions SPD, representing a sustainable and justified form of development that meets the borough's housing needs while respecting the surrounding environment.



Drawing A104 - Proposed Ground Floor and Proposed First Floor

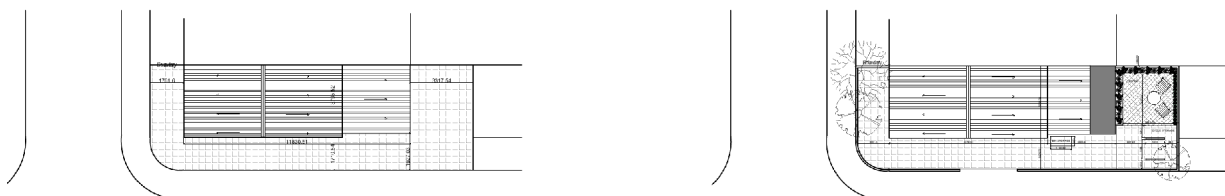


Drawing A104 - Proposed Loft Floor and Proposed Roof Plan

6. Design Considerations

The design of the proposed development is carefully aligned with the existing character of the property and its surroundings. The key design principles are as follows:

- Retention of the existing external appearance, with no material alterations to the building's principal elevations, materials, or architectural features, as demonstrated on the Proposed Elevations (drawing A106);
- An internal layout designed to provide adequate room sizes and sufficient communal space in accordance with the Residential Conversions SPD and national HMO standards, while maintaining privacy and usability for all occupants;
- Where minor alterations are required for fire safety compliance - such as modifications to doors or window egress - these will be executed discreetly and sympathetically so as not to detract from the character of the building or the street;
- As shown on drawing A102, a small paved garden/amenity area with seating (table and two chairs), positioned adjacent to the boundary with no. 33 Sherman Road, responding to the Council's pre-application advice that functional amenity space would be of benefit to occupants given the very constrained nature of the remaining external area;
- A two-space cycle storage enclosure and a dedicated bin storage enclosure (approximately 1.0m x 0.65m), both accommodated within the side return, sized and positioned so as to avoid filling up to the site boundaries, in accordance with pre-application advice, with the detailed bin storage arrangement to be confirmed with the Council's Waste Team; and
- Modest enhancements to the appearance of the site, including greening of the remaining external area and repairs to the existing boundary dwarf wall, as suggested by the Council at pre-application stage.



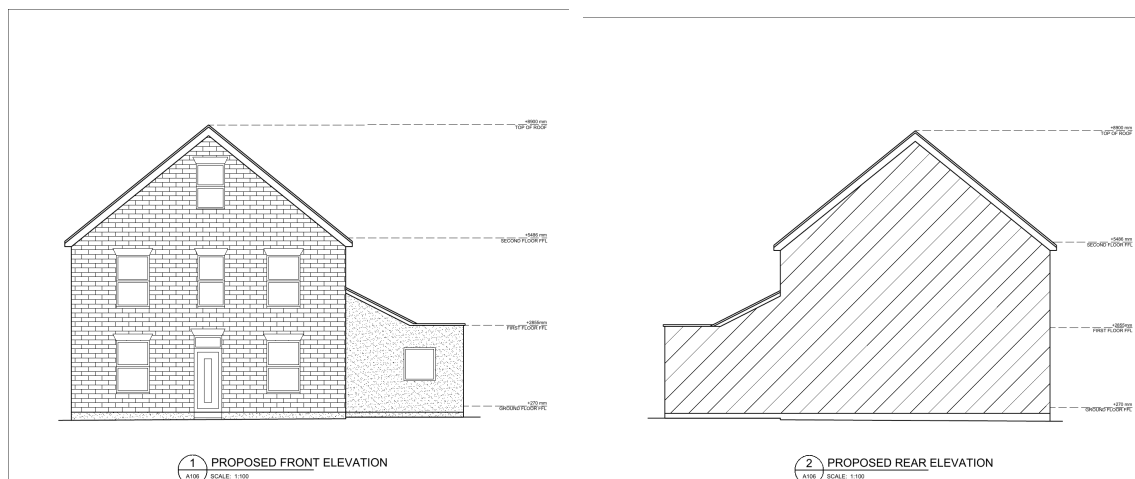
Drawing A102 - Existing Site Plan (left) and Proposed Site Plan (right), showing the garden/amenity area, cycle storage and bin storage within the side return

7. Massing and Scale

The proposal involves no extensions or changes to the principal building's footprint, height, or overall scale. The existing three-storey end-terraced form is retained in its entirety. The only physical change to the external envelope under consideration is a minor increase in head height to the existing single-storey side extension, to enable a door providing access to the proposed external amenity space, as suggested at pre-application stage; the extent of any such change will be confirmed on the submitted drawings. The development remains consistent with the massing and scale of the surrounding properties on Sherman Road and the wider Katesgrove neighbourhood, and there is no risk of overdevelopment.

8. Character and Appearance

The external appearance of the property will remain largely unchanged. The existing materials, built form, and architectural features - characteristic of the Victorian and Edwardian terraced housing prevalent in this part of Reading - are retained, as confirmed on the Proposed Front and Rear Elevations (drawing A106). Any minor alterations required for regulatory compliance, and the minor adjustment to the side extension referred to above, will be discreet and sympathetic to the existing fabric of the building.



Drawing A106 - Proposed Front Elevation

Drawing A106 - Proposed Rear Elevation

This approach ensures that the visual character of Sherman Road is preserved and that the development remains consistent with the scale, form, and appearance of neighbouring properties. The proposal accords with the design quality objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024, as amended February 2025) and Policy H8 and Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) of the adopted Reading Borough Local Plan.

9. Access and Parking

The site benefits from existing pedestrian access arrangements from Sherman Road, which will be fully retained. No changes to the existing access points, boundary treatment or forecourt are proposed, in compliance with Policy H8 and Policy TR5 (Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging).

No on-site car parking is proposed. Sherman Road and the surrounding streets operate a permit parking scheme, and it is acknowledged that occupants of the proposed HMO would not automatically be entitled to a parking permit; this restriction will be secured by planning conditions if required. The modest scale of the development (4 bedrooms) means that any additional demand on on-street

parking is unlikely to be significant or severely harmful to highway safety, but this matter, together with the applicable parking standard under the Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011), is addressed further in the accompanying Planning Statement.

A two-space cycle storage enclosure is retained within the side return, as shown on drawing A102, together with the garden/amenity area and bin storage enclosure described above, meeting the SPD's cycle parking guidance while still delivering the functional amenity space recommended at pre-application stage.

10. Sustainability and Design Standards

The proposal incorporates sustainable design principles by making efficient use of an existing building, reducing the demand for new development, and minimising construction waste and associated environmental impact. The conversion of an existing terraced dwelling, rather than the construction of a new building, represents an inherently sustainable approach to meeting housing needs, consistent with the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2019) and Policy CC2 of the adopted Local Plan.

The location further enhances the sustainability credentials of the proposal. Future residents will benefit from good access to public transport, local amenities, and walking and cycling infrastructure. Any refurbishment works will incorporate improvements to insulation, ventilation, and energy systems in line with current Building Regulations, with the aim of improving upon the property's current EPC rating of E, although no specific improved rating can be guaranteed prior to works being carried out and assessed.

All proposed bedrooms and communal spaces are designed to meet or exceed the minimum space standards set out in the Residential Conversions SPD (2023), the national HMO licensing standards, ensuring a high-quality living environment for future occupants.

11. Local Distinctiveness and Character

The design responds positively to the local context of Sherman Road and the wider Katesgrove Ward by maintaining the established residential character of the street. The proposal avoids any dominant or intrusive external alterations and reinforces the existing streetscape pattern through the retention of the building's original Victorian and Edwardian terraced form.

The surrounding area is characterised by a densely developed mix of family dwellings and shared residential accommodation. At pre-application stage, the Council's own assessment (based on available data, and not verified by site inspection) calculated the concentration of HMOs within a 50m radius of the site as approximately 20%, below the 25% threshold set out in the Residential Conversions SPD and applied under the Article 4 Direction. The applicant has updated this assessment for submission with the application, as set out in the accompanying Planning Statement, noting that data on HMOs in the area is expected to become more complete following the introduction of additional HMO licensing across the borough from 1 March 2026.

Through careful consideration of scale, materials, and internal layout, the development ensures that it integrates harmoniously within the existing streetscape and contributes positively to the overall quality and diversity of the housing stock in Reading.

12. Conclusion

The proposed conversion of 31 Sherman Road, Reading, RG1 2PP into a 4-bedroom House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) has been developed with the benefit of formal pre-application advice from

Reading Borough Council (Ref: PL/26/0689), and has been revised to reflect that advice, including in relation to bedroom sizes and facilities, the balance of external amenity and storage space, and minor enhancements to the site.

The development ensures that the property remains in residential use, preserving the external character and appearance of the building and making no material alterations to the established streetscape of Sherman Road, other than the minor change to the side extension described above. The internal layout provides high-quality living conditions with adequate room sizes, communal spaces, and shared facilities for all occupants, in accordance with the Residential Conversions SPD, national HMO licensing standards.

The proposal does not result in overdevelopment or harm to neighbouring amenity, and there are no significant adverse impacts on highway safety, access, or parking. The development supports sustainable living by making efficient use of an existing building and providing access to good public transport links. It has been assessed against Policy H8, Policy CC7, Policy CC8, Policy H10 and Policy TR5 of the adopted Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019), the Residential Conversions SPD (2023), and the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024, as amended February 2025).

Overall, this proposal represents a well-considered, sustainable, and policy-compliant development, informed directly by the Council's pre-application advice, and contributing positively to the local housing supply of Reading Borough. Planning permission is therefore respectfully sought for this project.