

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Abbey Ward

App Ref: PL/26/0754 Full planning permission

Address: 29 CASTLE STREET, READING

Proposal: Relocation of existing plant to upper roof level, creation of roof terrace for office use, installation of solar photovoltaic panels, erection of parapets and plant screening and associated works (amended)

Applicant: Mr J Mansford

Received date: 08/06/2026

Target Decision date (agreed extension): 27/08/2026

Case Officer: Sian Hickey

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site relates to No.29 Castle Street, located on the south side of Castle Street. The site is located within the St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area. The site is also within an Air Quality Management Area and an Area of Potential Archaeological Significance. The site is located within the Reading Central Core Area. This part of Castle Street primarily consists of businesses at ground floor level and residential/offices at the upper floors.

Site visit date: 01/07/2026



2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Planning permission is sought for the relocation of existing plant equipment from the lower roof to the upper roof including a louvred plant screen and the installation of solar panels.

The proposal also includes the creation of roof terrace on the lower roof where the existing plant equipment is currently located, including new parapets and metal balustrade, and removal of the existing fire escape. The roof terrace will be associated with the office use only.

The Design and Access Statement states that the proposals aim to improve the environmental performance and overall organisation of the building's roof areas.

Plans/documents considered:

Application form received 8th June 2026

Heritage Statement received 8th June 2026

Design and Access Statement received 8th June 2026

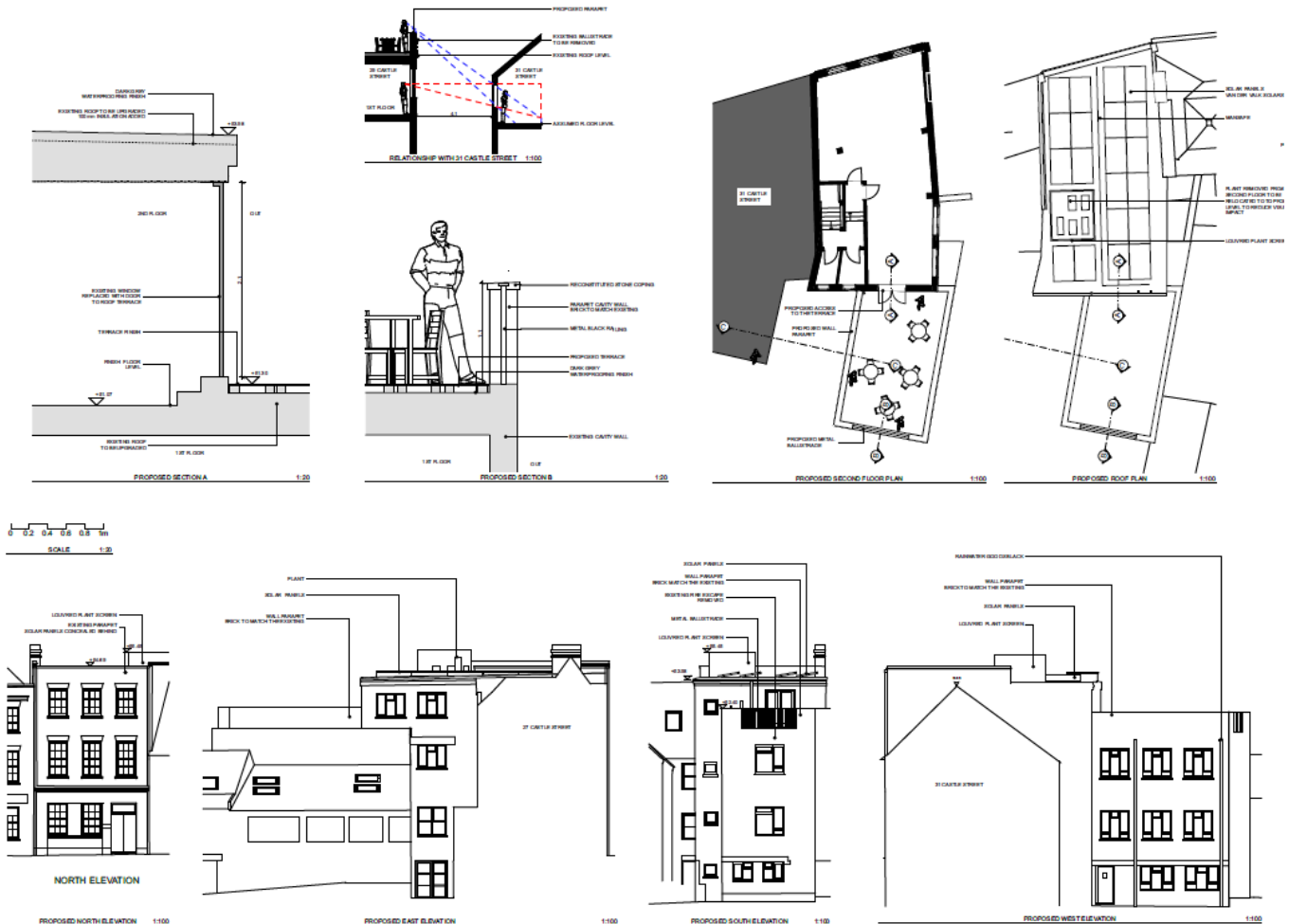
Noise Impact Assessment received 8th June 2026

Drawing No 2909 P02 P2 – Existing Floor Plans and Elevations received 8th June 2026

Drawing No 2909 P01 P1 – Location and Block Plan received 8th June 2026

Drawing No 2909 P04 P3 – 3D Views from Castle Street received 8th June 2026

Drawing No 2909 P03 P8 – Proposed Floor Plans and Elevations and Section Drawings received 29th July 2026



3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

PL/23/0061 - Change of use from offices to residential plus second floor extension. APPROVED 20/01/2023

4. CONSULTATIONS

A site notice was displayed at the front of the site and at the rear of the site by the case officer on 1st July 2026 for a period of 21 days.

No letters of representation have been received.

The following were consulted:

Conservation Area Advisory Committee – No comments received

Conservation Officer - No objections

The Conservation Officer requested additional information regarding the screening and photovoltaic (PV) panels, specifically their design, materials, and colour. This information was subsequently added to the proposed plans, and the Conservation Officer confirmed that the details are acceptable.

Following her site visit, the Conservation Officer provided the following comments:

- The proposed parapet walls would match the existing and would screen the proposed solar panels; as such, while the solar panels would dominate the roof of the building and have an impact on the character of the St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area, they would not be visible. Therefore, there would be a little impact on the character of the area, including settings of Grade II listed buildings at No. 27, 35 to 37 and Grade II* Culvert on Holy Brook.
- The existing fire escape stairs would be removed, which is considered beneficial. However, the proposed louvred plant screen and metal balustrades would balance this as they would alter the massing of the original building and existing appearance. The site is visible from the rear.
- Whilst the proposed 3D illustrations show that the louvred plant screen would not be visible from Castle Street, I am not sure about that as from some points, such as the junction of Cuden Walk and Castle Street, it could be partially visible. Because there is no such new element on the whole street (plant screen and solar panels), the final impact would be less than substantial harm at the lowest level (minimal). I consider some benefits would result from energy efficiency measures.

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.

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'. The following local and national planning policy and guidance is relevant to this application:

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework
National Planning Practice Guidance

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC1 (Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development)
CC2 (Sustainable Design and Construction)
CC7 (Design and the Public Realm)
CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity)
EN1 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment)
EN3 (Enhancement of Conservation Areas)

EN6 (New Development in a Historic Context)
EN15 (Air Quality)
H10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space)

Other documents/legislation

St Marys Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area Appraisal 2008
Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Sections 72(1) and 66.

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 pre-submission draft was submitted to the Secretary of State on the 9th of May 2025 and is currently at examination.

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 appraisal below and are not considered to be ‘out of date’.

6. APPRAISAL

Character and Appearance

Policy CC7: Design and the Public Realm is a strategic policy seeking high standards of design quality in new development. It sets out how various components of development including layout, urban structure and urban grain, and scale, make a positive contribution to their surroundings and respond positively to their local context.

Policy EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment sets out the LPA’s requirements for the historic environment. The policy requires that all proposals protect, and where possible enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings, historic character and local distinctiveness of the area in which they are located. Policy HE4 of the 2026 NPPF requires proposals to avoid or minimise harm to the significance of heritage assets and requires clear and convincing justification where harm would occur.

The existing lower flat roof at the rear of the site is currently used for maintenance access and plant, as well as being an escape route. It is proposed to covert this area into a terrace for use by office staff working within the building. The application form indicates that the proposed number of employees at the site is 21 full-time and 4 part-time staff and that the terrace would provide a simple breakout space where occupants can take short breaks during the working day.

To facilitate the creation of the roof terrace, the existing mechanical equipment located on the lower-level roof would be relocated to the upper-level roof. This would result in a more discreet arrangement by removing plant equipment from the more visible lower roof, reducing visual clutter. The fire escape on the South elevation would also be removed together with the steel elements in front of the lower floor windows. The proposal also includes the installation of solar panels on the upper roof and upgrading the roofs

insulation to improve the thermal performance of the building, and the removal of a small redundant pitched roof area which is not visible from street level as it is located behind the parapet when viewed from Castle Street.

The proposed alterations would be restricted to the roof areas at the rear of the building and, as such, would not have any adverse effect on the character and appearance of the Castle Street street-scene.

In terms of the wide Conservation Area the proposed parapet walls would screen the solar panels, so although these would have an impact on the character of the St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area, they would not be visible. Therefore, there would be a little impact on the character of the area, including settings of Grade II listed buildings at No. 27, 35 to 37 and Grade II* Culvert on Holy Brook.

Regarding the roof terrace and associated works it is considered that these would have less than substantial harm at the lowest level (minimal), and this limited impact has been weighed against the positive benefits arising from the proposed measures that would improve the environmental performance of the building including the installation of solar panels on the roof of the building as a means to maximise the use of energy efficiency and energy conservation. Overall, it is considered that proposal would not cause significant harm to the Conservation Area and would also comply with the objectives of sustainability policies CC1 and CC2.

The Design and Access Statement states that access to the terrace will be provided through the existing internal circulation routes within the building. The existing window facing the roof would be replaced by a patio door. There would be no new staircases or external access structures to access the area. Access to the top roof for maintenance would be via a ladder from the proposed terrace.

Due to the context of the existing site and given that the proposed development would not enlarge the footprint of the roof area of the proposed terrace, on balance, it is considered that the proposed development would not adversely affect the character and appearance of the building or the surrounding area.

Residential Amenity

Policy CC8: Safeguarding Amenity sets out expectations to ensure that new development does not reduce the quality of the environment for others, particularly where it would affect residential properties.

Officers initially raised concerns regarding the potential impact on residential amenity arising from the introduction of an outdoor amenity area. However, it is noted that the proposed roof terrace would be used solely in connection with the office use, and the description of development has been amended to reflect this. Whilst planning permission exists for the conversion of the building to residential use, this permission has not been implemented and the agent advised that the building has remained in office use (Class E(g)(i)) throughout. A separate planning application would be required for any use of the roof terrace as residential amenity space, and such a proposal may not be considered acceptable.

The submitted Noise Assessment states that the proposed usage hours would be 09:00 – 19:00 hours, Monday to Friday. These hours of use for the terrace will be controlled via condition to ensure that the terrace will not be used at unreasonable hours causing disturbance to nearby residential units. The Noise Assessment also states that the likely activities on the proposed terrace would be conversations, telephone calls, etc. with no amplified music proposed. A further condition is also attached to this planning permission to ensure that there would be no amplified music.

With regard to the noise generated from the plant equipment on the upper roof level, this will be enclosed within a louvred plant screen to further mitigate the noise impact.

The Noise Assessment demonstrates that noise is unlikely to be a concern. The Environment Protection Officer reviewed the submitted Noise Assessment and had no objection.

The submitted overlooking assessment demonstrates that opportunities for direct overlooking are limited and that the proposed balustrade arrangement would further restrict views towards neighbouring windows.

It is not considered that the new views created from the proposed terrace would be significantly different to the existing views due to the context of the existing window arrangements.

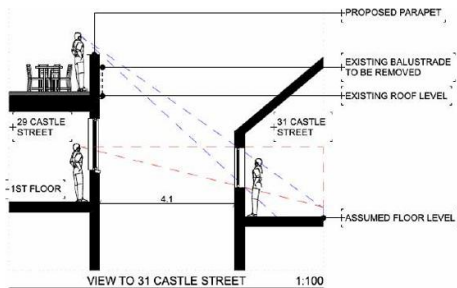


Figure 10 – View on 31 Castle Street.

Possible view from the terrace creates less impact than existing views from 1st floor

The design of the terrace has incorporated measures to further reduce the potential for overlooking. Solid parapet walls are provided along the boundaries with neighbouring properties, helping to minimise overlooking in these directions. In contrast, a more open metal balustrade with vertical uprights is proposed along the rear edge of the terrace, directing views southwards.

Taking into account the existing building arrangement, the separation distances, and the modest scale of the terrace, the proposal is not considered to give rise to any material adverse impacts on the residential amenity of neighbouring occupiers, subject to conditions.

7. CONCLUSION

The proposed development has been assessed as set out above and is considered to be acceptable on that basis, subject to the following conditions.

8. RECOMMENDATION - GRANT

Recommended Conditions:

Time limit

Approved Plans

Materials

No Amplified Music

Ancillary to Office Use

Hours of Use

Implementation of Balustrades and Parapet Walls (prior to occupation)