

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Katesgrove Ward

App Ref: PL/26/0883 Full planning permission

Address: REGENTS GATE, 25-41 CROWN STREET, READING, RG1 2PQ

Proposal: External alterations to building including new rooflights, smoke shafts, windows and doors.

Applicant: Gaurav Vahi

Received date: 03/07/2026

Target Decision date: 28/08/2026

Case Officer: Catrin Davies

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

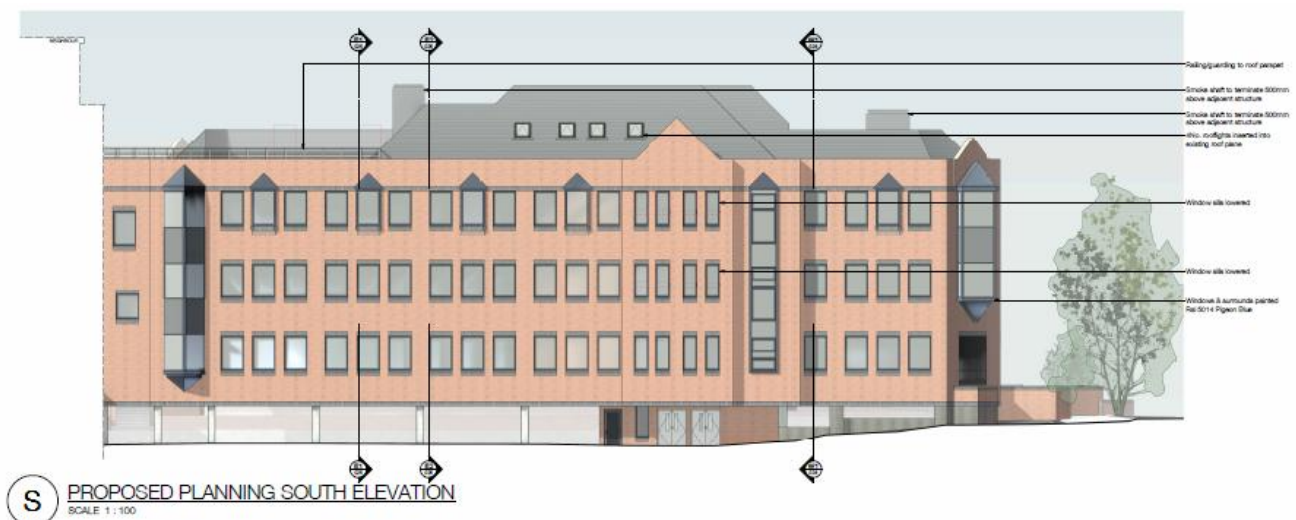
The building is located south of Reading Town Centre at the junction of Crown Street and Newark Street. The property was occupied as offices by Spire Healthcare. The application site is a three storey building with a under croft used for parking.

The site is within an article 4 area, but this restricts the change of use from C3 dwelling to C4 small HMO and not Class MA. The site is within an Air Quality Management Area and an area at risk of surface water flooding.

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The application seeks planning permission for external alterations to building this includes:

- New windows on the first and second floor rear elevation
- Erection of 2 smoke shafts (1 on the east side and 1 on the west side)
- 11 rooflights inserted on the roof slope (4 on the south elevation, 7 on the north elevation)
- Railing/guarding to roof parapet
- Replacement of doors
- Window sills lowered (on the south elevation)



Plans:

25-31-001-/ site location plan received 3rd July 2026

25-31-021-/ Proposed block plan received 3rd July 2026

25-31-022-/ Proposed Plans received 3rd July 2026

25-31-023-/ Proposed Plans received 3rd July 2026
25-31-024-/ Proposed plans received 3rd July 2026
25-31-025-/ Proposed elevations received 3rd July 2026
25-31-026-/ Proposed elevations received 3rd July 2026
5-31-006-/ Existing elevations received 3rd July 2026
25-31-005-/ Existing elevations received 3rd July 2026
25-31-002-/ Existing plans received 3rd July 2026
25-31-003-/ Existing Plans received 3rd July 2026
25-31-004-B Existing plans received 3rd July 2026

Planning History:

PL/26/0539- Change of use from Class E (offices) to C3 (dwelling houses) to comprise 29 Flats. Prior Notification under Class MA, Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015. Approved

PL/26/0232- Change of use of existing building from Class E (offices) to C3 (dwelling houses) to comprise 29 new apartments. Prior Notification under Class MA, Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015. Refused. Allowed at appeal.

3. CONSULTATIONS

A site notice was displayed on the application site, and no neighbour letters of representations were received.

4. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Local Plan Partial 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 consultation version of the draft update of the Local Plan was published on 6th November 2024.

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 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 determination of this planning application and are not considered to be ‘out of date’

The Local Plan Partial Update was submitted to the Secretary of State on 9th May 2025. Officer advice in respect of the Local Plan policies pertinent to this application is that they remain in accordance with national policy (aside from Policy H1, which is acknowledged to be out-of-date) and that the objectives of those policies remains very similar in the submission 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’ (aside from Policy H1).

Relevant Policies:

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework 2026

National Planning Practice Guidance 2014 onwards

Reading Borough Local Plan (Nov 2019)

CC1 (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development)

CC2 (Sustainable Design and Construction)

CC7 (Design and the Public Realm)

CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity)

EN18 (Flooding and Sustainable Drainage System)

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. APPRAISAL

Land use considerations

The site benefits from prior approval for the change of use of the building from office to residential. The key consideration is whether the proposed external works are acceptable in planning terms, having regard to their impact on the character of the area, neighbouring amenity and other material planning considerations.

Design Considerations

Policy CC7 aims to preserve or enhance the character of the area in which a development is in terms of layout, landscape, density, scale, height, massing, architectural detail and materials.

The proposed alterations are modest in nature. The insertion of additional windows together with the erection of a smoke shaft and associated roof level works. Whilst the smoke shaft would represent a noticeable addition to the roofscape, it would be viewed in the context of the existing building and associated rooftop plant and equipment. The structure would be positioned away from the edges of the building and would not appear unduly prominent or incongruous within wider views of the site. Furthermore, the proposal would not alter the overall footprint, scale or massing of the host building.

The proposed windows would be of a design, scale and appearance that reflects the existing fenestration pattern of the building and would utilise materials to match the existing windows. As a result, they would integrate appropriately with the host building and would not appear as incongruous additions.

Taken as a whole, the proposed alterations are considered proportionate to the scale of the existing building and would not materially harm its appearance or the character of the surrounding area. The development would therefore preserve the visual amenities of the streetscene and accords with Policy CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

Residential Amenity

Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan seeks to ensure that development does not result in unacceptable impacts on the amenity of existing or future occupiers, including in relation to privacy, outlook, daylight and sunlight, noise and disturbance, and visual dominance.

The proposed alterations are modest in nature. Whilst additional windows are proposed, these replace existing openings and would therefore result in a similar relationship with neighbouring properties to that currently experienced. The proposed rooflights would not give rise to harmful overlooking or direct views towards neighbouring habitable room windows. As the development does not increase the scale of the building or bring built form closer to neighbouring residential properties, it is not considered that the proposal would result in any adverse impact on neighbouring amenity. The proposal therefore complies with Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

In addition, the proposed development would provide improved living conditions for future occupiers through the provision of additional windows, which would enhance levels of natural light and outlook to a number of rooms within the building.

The proposal therefore complies with Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

Flooding

Policy EN18 (Flooding and Sustainable Drainage Systems) seeks to ensure that development does not increase flood risk on or off site.

The application site is identified as being at risk of surface water flooding. However, the proposal does not involve an increase in the building footprint or any significant increase in impermeable surfacing. As such, the development is not considered to increase flood risk or have an adverse impact on surface water drainage. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with Policy EN18 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

6. CONCLUSION

The development is considered acceptable in terms of appearance and with no harmful impacts on residential amenities. The general fire safety improvements are a benefit (the specific requirements remain subject to detailed review by other relevant authorities in due course). The development has been assessed against the policies within the Reading Local Plan and the policies of the NPPF. It has been concluded that the development would not result in any harm that would justify refusal in the public interest. The decision has been taken in compliance with the requirement of the NPPF to foster the delivery of sustainable development in a positive and proactive manner

7. RECOMMENDATION

Grant subject to conditions