

Planning Statement

Address: 54 Norcot Road, Tilehurst, Reading, RG30 6BU

Proposal: Change of Use; Converting to 2 x 1 Bedroom Flat

Planning Application: Prior Approval - Change of Use

Date: September 2026

1. INTRODUCTION

This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of an application for Prior Approval under Schedule 2, Part 3, Class MA of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) for the change of use of the building at 54 Norcot Road, Tilehurst, Reading, RG30 6BU to create two self-contained 1-bedroom residential flats.

The proposal represents an appropriate and efficient reuse of an existing building to provide two additional residential units within the established urban area of Reading. The proposal makes effective use of an existing building and provides modest-scale residential accommodation without requiring the creation of a new standalone building.

The proposed accommodation has been carefully arranged to provide two independent and self-contained homes, each incorporating a bedroom, shower room, kitchen/living/dining accommodation and storage. The submitted drawings demonstrate that the resulting accommodation would provide a good standard of internal living environment, together with dedicated external amenity space, cycle storage, refuse storage and off-street vehicle parking.

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL

The application proposes the change of use of the existing building to form two self-contained 1-bedroom flats.

Flat 1: 1-bedroom self-contained flat for 1 person; total internal floor area approximately 56.04 m²; bedroom approximately 9.17 m²; shower room; kitchen/living/dining area approximately 28.69 m²; storage; and dedicated private garden/amenity space approximately 37.66 m².

Flat 2: 1-bedroom self-contained flat for 1 person; total internal floor area approximately 37.44 m²; bedroom approximately 8.01 m²; shower room; kitchen/living/dining area approximately 22.37 m²; storage; and dedicated private garden/amenity space approximately 37.67 m².

The submitted Ground Floor Plan identifies the two proposed parking spaces, individual entrances to the flats, the two private garden areas and the rear servicing/storage arrangements.

3. CLASS MA PRIOR APPROVAL

The application is submitted under Class MA of Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the General Permitted Development Order. Class MA provides the relevant permitted development route for qualifying changes of use to residential use, subject to the limitations, conditions and prior approval requirements contained within the Order.

The proposal should be considered principally against the matters capable of consideration under the Class MA prior approval process rather than as an unrestricted full planning application.

The relevant matters include, as applicable, transport impacts and safe access, contamination, flooding, noise impacts from commercial premises upon intended residential occupiers, and adequate natural light to habitable rooms, together with any additional statutory matters that apply to the site.

4. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

The principal adopted local planning documents relevant to the proposal include the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019, the Residential Conversions Supplementary Planning Document adopted March 2023, and the Revised Parking Standards and Design Supplementary Planning Document adopted 2011, together with relevant national planning policy.

The Reading Residential Conversions SPD is particularly relevant to the assessment of conversions into self-contained flats. It addresses internal accommodation, residential amenity, outdoor amenity space, parking, cycle storage and refuse storage.

5. PRINCIPLE OF RESIDENTIAL USE

The proposed development would provide two additional residential units within an established built-up residential environment. The proposal makes efficient use of an existing building and would contribute to the supply of smaller residential accommodation within Reading.

The development would not involve construction of a new residential block or a substantial redevelopment of the site. Instead, it would utilise the existing building and its established curtilage.

The resulting development would therefore represent an efficient form of residential intensification which is proportionate to the scale and character of the site.

6. HOUSING MIX AND TYPE OF ACCOMMODATION

The proposal would create two 1-bedroom self-contained flats, both intended for occupation by one person. The proposal responds to the demand for smaller residential units and provides accommodation suitable for smaller households.

The scheme is deliberately limited to two units and provides substantial private amenity space, off-street parking, cycle storage and refuse storage. The development is therefore materially different from a high-density HMO conversion or an intensive subdivision involving numerous occupants.

The proposal would result in a total of two residential units, with a maximum indicated occupancy of two persons based upon the submitted accommodation schedule. This represents a modest level of intensification which can be appropriately accommodated by the existing site.

7. INTERNAL ACCOMMODATION AND SPACE STANDARDS

The proposed flats provide a good standard of internal accommodation. The submitted plans identify Flat 1 at approximately 56.04 m² and Flat 2 at approximately 37.44 m², both as 1-bedroom flats for 1 person.

The bedrooms measure approximately 9.17 m² and 8.01 m² respectively. The kitchen/living/dining areas measure approximately 28.69 m² and 22.37 m² respectively. Both units also have storage areas.

The overall arrangement provides practical living accommodation rather than cramped or excessively subdivided units.

8. NATURAL LIGHT, OUTLOOK AND VENTILATION

The provision of adequate natural light to habitable rooms is a specific matter capable of consideration under Class MA. The proposed layout has been designed so that the principal

habitable accommodation, including the bedrooms and living areas, benefits from external windows and natural light.

The submitted drawings demonstrate that the proposed accommodation is arranged around the existing external elevations rather than relying upon internal or enclosed spaces for primary habitable accommodation. The arrangement also provides an appropriate outlook from the principal rooms.

Detailed compliance with Building Regulations, including ventilation and fire safety requirements, would be addressed separately through the Building Regulations process.

9. RESIDENTIAL AMENITY

The proposal has been designed to provide an acceptable standard of amenity for future occupants. Each flat has its own dedicated accommodation rather than relying upon shared communal living facilities.

The layout provides a self-contained kitchen/living/dining space, separate bedroom, dedicated shower room, storage, individual entrance, private garden/amenity space, access to cycle storage, appropriate refuse storage and off-street vehicle parking.

The relatively low number of occupants associated with the proposal is also relevant. Each flat is intended for occupation by one person, so the likely intensity of activity associated with the proposal is modest.

10. PRIVATE GARDEN / OUTDOOR AMENITY SPACE

A particularly positive feature of the proposal is the provision of private garden/amenity space for each flat. The submitted drawings identify approximately 37.66 m² for Flat 1 and approximately 37.67 m² for Flat 2, giving a combined external amenity area of approximately 75.33 m².

The Reading Residential Conversions SPD identifies approximately 25 m² per flat for one- and two-bedroom flats outside central Reading. Each proposed garden therefore exceeds this benchmark by a substantial margin.

Each flat has its own clearly defined private outdoor space rather than relying upon a small or shared communal area. The gardens provide opportunities for sitting out, recreation, drying clothes and general domestic use, while also assisting in maintaining an appropriate relationship between the building and surrounding properties.

11. PARKING PROVISION

The proposal retains two existing off-street parking spaces for vehicles. No loss of the existing parking spaces is proposed. The submitted Ground Floor Plan identifies the arrangement as parking space for two vehicles.

The retention of these spaces is an important feature of the proposal. The two spaces provide one indicative off-street space per proposed flat and avoid the creation of a development that would be wholly dependent upon on-street parking.

The proposal does not require the creation of a new extensive area of hardstanding or unnecessary removal of landscaping in order to provide parking.

12. TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAY IMPACTS

Transport impacts are one of the principal matters specifically identified for consideration under Class MA. The proposal would create two small residential units with a combined indicated occupancy of two persons, and the level of traffic generation is expected to be modest.

The proposal does not introduce a new vehicular access arrangement, and the existing parking provision is retained. The development therefore makes use of established access and parking arrangements.

The residential use would not be expected to generate the type of servicing, deliveries or visitor activity associated with many commercial uses. Accordingly, the change to residential use is not considered likely to result in an unacceptable transport impact or prejudice highway safety.

13. CYCLE STORAGE

The proposal incorporates secure cycle storage towards the rear of the property. The cycle storage has direct access from the street, providing a practical and convenient means for residents to access bicycles without having to take cycles through the principal living accommodation.

The submitted drawing specifically identifies the facility as secure cycle storage and provides an enclosed storage arrangement.

This is consistent with the Council's residential conversion guidance encouraging secure, covered and conveniently located cycle storage. The provision will support sustainable travel and reduce the likelihood of bicycles being stored within gardens, entrances or internal living areas.

14. BIN AND REFUSE STORAGE

Dedicated bin storage is provided towards the rear of the property, with direct access from the street. The submitted drawings provide for 1 x 240 litre general waste bin, 2 x 240 litre recycling bins (480 litres total) and 1 x 180 litre food waste bin.

The detailed storage arrangement provides 150 mm clearance around and between bins, 2 m clear space in front of each bin for ease of access, a minimum 2 m internal height to the storage and access door, and an enclosed storage arrangement.

The location and direct street access provide a practical refuse collection solution without requiring refuse collectors to pass through the residential accommodation. The enclosed arrangement will also help maintain an orderly appearance.

15. NOISE AND DISTURBANCE

Class MA permits consideration of the impact of noise from commercial premises upon intended residential occupants. The proposed development would introduce residential accommodation into the building, but the proposed use itself would not introduce a noise-generating commercial activity.

The two flats are modest in scale and each is intended for occupation by one person. The overall level of activity associated with the development is consequently expected to be low.

Any detailed sound insulation requirements between units or between the flats and neighbouring premises can be addressed through Building Regulations and, where appropriate, planning conditions.

16. PRIVACY AND RELATIONSHIP WITH NEIGHBOURING PROPERTIES

The proposal has been designed to avoid unnecessary adverse effects upon neighbouring residential amenity. The change of use itself does not require the introduction of a substantially larger building and therefore does not inherently create a significant increase in visual dominance or overbearing impact.

The proposed residential use is considered capable of operating without unacceptable effects upon the privacy or amenity of neighbouring occupiers, subject to the detailed consideration of the associated external alterations through the separate full planning application.

17. EXTERNAL ALTERATIONS - SEPARATE FULL PLANNING APPLICATION

It is important to distinguish between the Class MA prior approval application and the separate planning application relating to the proposed external alterations.

A full planning application has been submitted simultaneously with this Class MA prior approval application in respect of the external changes associated with the proposal. That application is registered under Planning Portal reference **PP-15221709**.

The two applications should be read together as part of the overall development proposal, while recognising that they have different statutory purposes and are subject to separate decision-making processes.

The Class MA application seeks approval for the change of use to residential accommodation and the matters falling within the relevant Class MA prior approval provisions. The separate full planning application, reference PP-15221709, deals with the external alterations and operational development proposed to the building.

This approach ensures that the external works are assessed through the appropriate full planning application process, where the Council can fully consider matters including design, appearance, materials, relationship with the existing building, visual impact and the character of the surrounding area.

The Class MA application should therefore not be interpreted as seeking approval for external works which are instead the subject of planning application PP-15221709. The two applications are complementary: the Class MA application addresses the proposed change of use, whilst application PP-15221709 addresses the associated external alterations.

18. DESIGN AND CHARACTER

The proposal represents the conversion and adaptation of an existing building rather than construction of a new standalone residential building. The internal subdivision has been designed to create two practical self-contained flats without creating an excessive number of units or an intensive form of occupation.

The external appearance of the building is addressed through the separate full planning application under reference PP-15221709, which provides the appropriate mechanism for consideration of the proposed external changes.

19. CONTAMINATION

Contamination risk is a specific matter that may be considered under the Class MA prior approval process. The proposed use would introduce residential occupation and therefore the land and building should be suitable for residential use.

The proposal itself does not involve a use that would generate new contamination. Any relevant historic contamination issues associated with the site's previous use can be assessed by the Council through the prior approval process and, where necessary, addressed by appropriate investigation or mitigation.

20. FLOOD RISK

Flooding is also one of the specific matters capable of consideration under Class MA. The proposal relates principally to the change of use of an existing building and does not involve the creation of a new building footprint.

The development therefore does not itself introduce a substantial increase in built form or alter the overall site arrangement in a manner that would inherently increase surface water runoff. The proposal is considered capable of being accommodated without unacceptable flooding implications, subject to the Council's assessment of the site's relevant flood risk information.

21. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The proposal would make efficient use of an existing building to provide additional housing within the established urban area. The reuse of an existing building supports the sustainable use of land.

The development incorporates features which encourage sustainable living, including secure cycle storage, private external amenity space, retained off-street parking, compact one-bedroom accommodation, access to established transport infrastructure, reuse of an existing building and dedicated waste and recycling facilities.

22. REFUSE, RECYCLING AND SERVICING

The development incorporates an appropriately designed refuse and recycling storage area. The detailed bin arrangement includes capacity for general waste, recycling and food waste and provides sufficient access and circulation space around the bins.

The storage is enclosed and located towards the rear of the property. Direct street access enables refuse collection to take place without unnecessary movement through residential areas and avoids prominent bin storage at the front of the property.

23. ACCESSIBILITY

The proposal provides direct access to the two flats and incorporates practical circulation arrangements within the existing building. Detailed requirements of Part M of the Building Regulations will be addressed separately as part of the Building Regulations approval process.

24. COMMUNITY AND HOUSING BENEFITS

The proposal would provide two additional residential units without requiring a new-build residential scheme. The development would increase housing supply, make effective use of an existing building, provide two self-contained homes, provide accommodation suitable for smaller households, retain two off-street parking spaces, provide secure cycle storage and dedicated refuse/recycling facilities, and utilise existing access arrangements.

25. SUMMARY OF PROVISION

Number of dwellings: 2

Unit type: 2 x 1-bedroom flats

Occupancy: 1 person per flat

Flat 1 internal area: 56.04 m²

Flat 2 internal area: 37.44 m²

Vehicle parking: 2 existing spaces retained

Flat 1 garden: approximately 37.66 m²

Flat 2 garden: approximately 37.67 m²

Cycle storage: secure rear cycle storage with direct street access

Bin storage: enclosed rear bin storage with direct street access

Waste provision: 1 x 240L general, 2 x 240L recycling, 1 x 180L food waste **External**

alterations: subject to separate full planning application PP-15221709.

26. CONCLUSION

The proposal at 54 Norcot Road, Tilehurst, Reading, RG30 6BU seeks prior approval under Class MA for the change of use of the existing building to create two self-contained one-bedroom flats.

The proposal represents an appropriate and efficient use of the existing building and would make a positive contribution to housing supply through the provision of two modest residential units.

The proposed accommodation is of a good standard, with internal floor areas of approximately 56.04 m² and 37.44 m², separate bedrooms, shower rooms, generous kitchen/living/dining areas and storage.

The scheme provides a strong level of private external amenity space, with approximately 37.66 m² for Flat 1 and 37.67 m² for Flat 2. This is substantially above the 25 m² benchmark identified within the Council's Residential Conversions SPD for one- and two-bedroom flats outside central Reading.

The development also retains two existing off-street vehicle parking spaces, providing an indicative one space per proposed flat and reducing reliance upon on-street parking.

The proposal incorporates secure cycle storage and enclosed bin/recycling storage towards the rear of the property, with direct street access to facilitate convenient use and collection. The proposed refuse arrangement includes general waste, recycling and food waste facilities and has been carefully designed to provide appropriate access and clearance.

The scale of the proposal is modest, with each flat intended for occupation by one person. The development would therefore not result in an excessive level of residential intensification or the type of high-occupancy arrangement associated with HMOs.

The associated external alterations are being considered separately through the concurrently submitted full planning application under Planning Portal reference PP-15221709. That application provides the appropriate mechanism for the Council to assess the detailed external design, appearance and associated operational development. The present Class MA application is concerned with the proposed change of use and the matters falling within the applicable prior approval provisions.

Having regard to the above, the proposal is considered to provide a suitable form of residential accommodation, with appropriate internal space, private amenity space, parking, cycle storage, refuse facilities and access arrangements. It is therefore respectfully submitted that the proposal satisfies the relevant requirements of Schedule 2, Part 3, Class MA of the GPDO and that prior approval should be granted.