

Planning Statement

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

Proposal: External Alterations; Removal and Addition of External Walls to the Front Elevation, Addition of New Windows to Front, Rear, Side Elevation, Reducing Width of Existing Side Window, Addition of a New External Entrance Door to Front Elevation, Removal of Front Commercial Sign, Addition of a French Door to Rear Elevation and All Associated Works.

Planning Application: Full Planning Application

Date: September 2026

1. INTRODUCTION

This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a Full Planning Application for external alterations to 54 Norcot Road, Tilehurst, Reading, RG30 6BU.

The proposal comprises a series of external alterations to the existing building, including the removal and addition of external walls to the front elevation, the introduction of new windows to the front, rear and side elevations, the reduction in width of an existing side window, the installation of a new external entrance door to the front elevation, the removal of the existing commercial sign, the installation of French doors to the rear elevation, and all associated works.

The proposed works are illustrated on the submitted drawings, including the proposed ground floor plan, roof plan, front, rear and side elevations, section and 3D view. The proposed drawing package specifically identifies the proposed windows, French doors, new entrance door, reduction to the existing side window and removal of the existing commercial sign.

The external alterations are being proposed in conjunction with a separate but simultaneous planning application for a change of use of the existing commercial premises. The associated change-of-use application has been submitted under Planning Portal reference PP-15221854. The external works should therefore be considered in the context of the wider proposal for the future use of the building, while this application specifically seeks planning permission for the physical external alterations.

The purpose of this statement is to explain the nature of the proposed development, its relationship with the existing building and surrounding area, and its compliance with the relevant planning policies and material considerations.

2. SITE AND SURROUNDING CONTEXT

The application property is located at 54 Norcot Road, Tilehurst, Reading, RG30 6BU.

The existing building contains commercial premises at ground-floor level, with an entrance serving accommodation at first-floor level. This arrangement is evident from the existing ground-floor plan, which identifies the commercial/shop area together with an entrance serving the flat above.

The submitted existing drawings also identify the existing building elevations, including the front, rear and side elevations, providing the baseline against which the proposed external alterations are assessed.

The property forms part of an established urban street environment along Norcot Road. The surrounding area contains a mixture of residential and commercial uses. Reading Borough Council planning material concerning the wider Norcot Road area identifies the area as having a mixture of uses, including commercial and residential accommodation, and describes the wider area as transitioning between the district centre and surrounding residential areas.

The character of the immediate surroundings is therefore not defined exclusively by a single uniform building type or use. The presence of commercial premises alongside residential accommodation provides an established mixed-use context in which modest external alterations can be accommodated where they are appropriately designed.

The proposal does not involve the construction of a substantial new building or an increase in the overall scale or height of the property. Instead, it principally involves alterations to the existing external envelope and fenestration.

3. EXISTING BUILDING

The existing property is an established building with a commercial ground-floor element and residential accommodation above.

The existing ground-floor plan records a commercial/shop area, with an existing entrance serving the upper-floor accommodation.

The existing elevations submitted with the application establish the current appearance of the building and its existing openings.

The existing front elevation includes a commercial sign which is proposed to be removed as part of the application. The proposed front elevation specifically identifies the removal of the existing commercial sign and the introduction of a new entrance door and window arrangement.

The proposal therefore represents a considered alteration of an existing building rather than a redevelopment of the site.

4. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The application seeks Full Planning Permission for the following works:

- Removal and addition of sections of external walling to the front elevation;
- Addition of new windows to the front elevation;
- Addition of new windows to the rear elevation;
- Addition of new windows to the side elevation;
- Reduction in width of an existing side window;
- Addition of a new external entrance door to the front elevation;
- Removal of the existing commercial sign from the front elevation;
- Addition of French doors to the rear elevation; and
- All associated works.

The proposed drawing package confirms the proposed window and French door locations and identifies the new entrance door and removal of the commercial sign.

The proposed external alterations are predominantly concerned with improving the relationship between the building and its intended future use, providing appropriate openings, access and natural light while maintaining the overall scale and form of the existing building.

The proposed alterations are not intended to result in a significant change to the overall massing of the building.

5. RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ASSOCIATED CHANGE OF USE APPLICATION

A key consideration in understanding the rationale for the proposed external alterations is their relationship with the simultaneous change-of-use application for the property.

The existing building currently incorporates a commercial/shop use at ground-floor level. The proposed change of use seeks to facilitate the future use of the premises, and the external alterations are required to appropriately adapt the existing building to accommodate that proposed use.

The change-of-use application is being progressed concurrently under Planning Portal reference PP-15221854.

The two applications are therefore closely related. The change-of-use application considers the principle and planning implications of the proposed change in use, whereas this Full Planning Application deals specifically with the physical external alterations required to facilitate and properly express the proposed use.

The external alterations are consequently not being proposed as an unrelated or speculative redevelopment of the building. Rather, they form part of a coordinated approach to the appropriate adaptation of the existing premises.

In particular, the proposed new windows and external entrance arrangement will assist in providing a suitable and functional relationship between the building and its intended future use. The removal of the existing commercial sign is also appropriate in the context of the proposed change from the existing commercial presentation of the premises.

The proposals should therefore be considered as complementary applications forming part of a single overall project for the appropriate reuse and adaptation of the existing building.

6. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Reading Borough Council confirms that the Reading Borough Local Plan, adopted in November 2019, is the principal development plan document used to determine planning applications within the Borough. The Local Plan provides the planning policy framework for development up to 2036.

The Council has undertaken a review of the Local Plan and the Partial Update was submitted for examination in May 2025. However, the examination remains ongoing, and the adopted 2019 Local Plan therefore remains the relevant adopted development plan at the time of this application.

The principal policies considered relevant to the proposed external alterations include:

- Policy CC7 – Design and the Public Realm;
- Policy CC8 – Safeguarding Amenity;

- Relevant national planning policy relating to design and the appropriate reuse and adaptation of existing buildings.

Reading Borough Council also has an adopted Design Guide to Shopfronts Supplementary Planning Document, which provides detailed guidance relating to shopfront design, and a Sustainable Design and Construction SPD.

Given the limited nature of the proposed works, the principal consideration is whether the alterations represent an appropriate response to the existing building and surroundings without causing harm to the character of the area or the amenities of neighbouring occupiers.

7. PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

The proposal involves alterations to an existing building within an established urban area.

There is no proposal for a substantial increase in the footprint, height or overall massing of the building. The works are principally limited to alterations to the existing external walls and openings, together with changes to the external appearance of the building.

The principle of adapting existing buildings is consistent with the objectives of sustainable development and the effective use of existing buildings and previously developed land.

The proposal also supports the continued beneficial use of an existing building rather than requiring the construction of a new building elsewhere.

The associated change-of-use application provides the detailed consideration of the proposed future use. This application should therefore be considered primarily in relation to whether the physical alterations required to facilitate that use are acceptable in design and amenity terms.

8. DESIGN AND CHARACTER OF THE BUILDING

Policy CC7 – Design and the Public Realm requires development to be of a high design quality and to maintain and enhance the character and appearance of the area. The policy considers matters including layout, landscape, scale, architectural detail and materials. It also requires proposals to respond positively to their local context and create safe, accessible and visually attractive environments.

The proposed external alterations are considered to accord with these principles.

The proposal does not seek to impose a substantial or visually dominant alteration upon the building. Instead, it makes a series of proportionate changes to the existing elevations.

8.1 FRONT ELEVATION

The front elevation will be altered through the removal and addition of sections of external walling, the introduction of a new entrance door and the provision of a new window.

The existing commercial sign will also be removed. This will result in a less commercially dominated appearance to the frontage and allow the building to present a more appropriate appearance in association with its proposed future use.

The proposed front elevation has been designed as an integrated alteration to the existing façade rather than as an isolated or incongruous addition. The new openings will provide a clear and functional relationship between the building and the street.

8.2 REAR ELEVATION

The proposal introduces a new window and French doors to the rear elevation.

The rear elevation is generally less visually prominent from the public realm than the principal front elevation. The introduction of additional openings therefore represents a proportionate alteration to the existing building.

The French doors will provide an appropriate connection between the internal accommodation and the rear external area while also improving natural light and the usability of the space.

8.3 SIDE ELEVATION

The proposal introduces a new window to the side elevation while reducing the width of an existing side window.

The reduction in width of the existing side window is a particularly modest intervention and ensures that the revised arrangement is appropriately integrated into the side elevation.

The proposed side elevation therefore remains substantially within the established form of the building.

9. VISUAL APPEARANCE

The proposed development will retain the fundamental form and scale of the existing building.

The alterations are primarily limited to openings and localised sections of external walling. There is no proposal for additional storeys or a substantial extension to the building.

The proposed external changes will therefore be read as alterations to an existing building rather than as a new or separate structure.

The removal of the commercial sign is also considered to improve the visual appearance of the property by reducing unnecessary commercial clutter on the front elevation.

The National Planning Policy Framework places significant emphasis on good design, requiring development to be visually attractive, sympathetic to local character and responsive to the surrounding built environment.

The proposal meets these objectives by retaining the existing building and making proportionate, functional alterations to its elevations.

10. RESIDENTIAL AMENITY

Policy CC8 – Safeguarding Amenity requires development not to cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties. Matters specifically identified include privacy and overlooking, access to sunlight and daylight, visual dominance, outlook, noise and disturbance, artificial lighting and other environmental impacts.

The proposed works are not considered to give rise to unacceptable impacts upon neighbouring residential amenity.

10.1 PRIVACY AND OVERLOOKING

The proposed windows are positioned within the existing building elevations and do not involve the creation of a substantial new structure projecting towards neighbouring properties.

The introduction of windows has the potential to alter views from the building; however, given the established urban and mixed-use context, the proposed openings would not result in an unacceptable level of overlooking beyond that which could reasonably be expected from an occupied building in this location.

The reduction in width of the existing side window also demonstrates that the fenestration arrangement has been considered carefully rather than simply maximising the amount of glazing.

10.2 DAYLIGHT AND SUNLIGHT

The proposal does not involve a substantial increase in building massing or height.

Consequently, the development would not materially alter the existing relationship between the building and neighbouring properties in terms of overshadowing.

The additional windows will instead provide improved levels of natural light to the accommodation within the application building.

10.3 OUTLOOK AND OVERBEARING IMPACT

The proposal does not introduce a significant new built form adjacent to neighbouring properties. There would therefore be no material increase in visual dominance or overbearing effects.

10.4 NOISE AND DISTURBANCE

The works themselves are relatively limited and would be undertaken within the existing building footprint. Once completed, the external alterations themselves would not generate noise or disturbance.

Any construction activity would be temporary and can be appropriately controlled through normal construction practices.

Overall, the proposal is considered consistent with the objectives of Policy CC8.

11. ACCESS AND ENTRANCES

The proposal includes the creation of a new external entrance door to the front elevation.

The new entrance is an important element of the proposed adaptation of the building and will provide a clear and identifiable point of access.

The proposal also retains the existing entrance arrangement serving the upper-floor accommodation, as identified on the existing drawings.

The creation of a clear entrance arrangement is consistent with the design objectives of Reading Borough Council's Policy CC7, particularly in relation to legibility, accessibility and ease of movement.

The detailed construction and accessibility requirements will, where applicable, be addressed through Building Regulations approval.

12. NATURAL LIGHT AND VENTILATION

The proposed additional windows and French doors will improve the relationship between the internal accommodation and the external environment.

Additional glazing can provide improved natural daylight and ventilation opportunities, subject to the detailed design and Building Regulations requirements.

The introduction of the French doors to the rear elevation will additionally provide increased access to natural light and a stronger connection between the accommodation and the rear external area.

These alterations are therefore considered to provide functional benefits in addition to their visual contribution.

13. HERITAGE CONSIDERATIONS

The proposal does not involve substantial redevelopment of the building or any significant alteration to its overall form.

The wider Norcot Road area is characterised by a mixture of commercial and residential uses. A recent Reading Borough Council planning report concerning the wider Norcot Road area identifies the site context as a transition between the district centre and the surrounding residential area.

The available planning information reviewed for the surrounding Norcot Road area also indicates that the relevant site context is not within a conservation area and that the referenced site is not listed.

On the information available, there is no identified designated heritage constraint that would prevent the proposed external alterations.

Nevertheless, the proposal has been designed to be proportionate to the existing building and its surroundings.

The National Planning Policy Framework requires proposals affecting heritage assets to take account of their significance and setting, where relevant.

Given the nature and scale of the proposed alterations, there is not considered to be any significant adverse impact upon the historic character of the surrounding area.

14. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND REUSE OF EXISTING BUILDINGS

The proposal represents the adaptation and continued use of an existing building rather than the redevelopment of a site through substantial new construction.

The works therefore make effective use of an existing building and its associated infrastructure.

The National Planning Policy Framework identifies the effective use of land and the delivery of sustainable development as important considerations in planning decisions.

The proposed works are modest in scale and do not require a significant increase in the physical footprint of the property.

The reuse and adaptation of the existing building also reduces the need for unnecessary demolition and new construction.

The proposal can therefore be regarded as a proportionate and sustainable form of development.

15. BIODIVERSITY

The application relates principally to external alterations to an existing building.

The works do not propose a substantial redevelopment of the site or the creation of a significant area of new built development.

The Council's planning information confirms that biodiversity net gain requirements are subject to the relevant statutory exemptions and that applicants should refer to the Council's biodiversity net gain validation guidance.

The biodiversity implications of the development should therefore be considered in accordance with the statutory BNG regime and the circumstances of the application.

Given the nature of the works, which are predominantly alterations to the existing building envelope, the proposal is not expected to result in significant impacts upon existing habitats.

16. HIGHWAYS AND PARKING

The proposal does not involve the creation of a new vehicular access or changes to the existing highway arrangement.

There is no proposed extension that would materially increase the footprint of the building or create additional parking requirements as a consequence of the external alterations themselves.

The proposed new entrance door is pedestrian in nature and does not require alterations to the public highway.

Any parking or transport implications arising from the proposed change of use are appropriately considered as part of the associated change-of-use application under Planning Portal reference PP-15221854.

17. IMPACT ON THE STREET SCENE

The proposed works will result in a modest change to the appearance of the property when viewed from Norcot Road.

The principal changes to the front elevation comprise:

- removal of the existing commercial sign;
- introduction of a new entrance door;
- introduction of a new window; and
- localised alterations to the external wall.

The removal of the commercial sign will reduce visual clutter and contribute to a cleaner appearance.

The new entrance and window arrangement will provide a clearer and more appropriate frontage, while remaining proportionate to the existing building.

The proposal therefore represents an enhancement and rationalisation of the existing frontage rather than an intrusive alteration to the street scene.

18. IMPACT ON NEIGHBOURING PROPERTIES

The proposed development has been carefully considered in relation to the adjoining properties.

The proposal does not introduce a significant increase in the height, footprint or massing of the building. The proposed works are predominantly alterations to openings within the existing elevations.

The side elevation includes both the introduction of a new window and the reduction in width of an existing window. This provides a balanced approach to the fenestration of the side elevation and avoids an excessive increase in glazing.

The rear French doors and rear window are similarly located within the existing rear elevation and do not create a new projecting built form.

Accordingly, the development is not considered to result in unacceptable overlooking, loss of light, overbearing impact or loss of outlook to neighbouring properties.

19. PLANNING BALANCE

The proposed development should be assessed as a modest alteration to an existing building. The principal benefits of the scheme are:

- Appropriate adaptation of an existing building to support its proposed future use;
- Improved functionality through the introduction of an appropriate external entrance;
- Improved natural light through additional windows and French doors;
- Improved relationship between the building and its external areas;
- Removal of an existing commercial sign, reducing visual clutter;
- Retention and reuse of the existing building, making effective use of existing built resources;
- No significant increase in building massing or height;
- No new vehicular access or highway alterations; and
- No significant adverse impact upon neighbouring residential amenity.

These benefits should be considered alongside the limited visual and physical nature of the proposed works.

Policy CC7 seeks high-quality development that responds positively to its context and contributes positively to local character and the public realm.

Policy CC8 seeks to safeguard the living environment of existing and future residents. The proposal is considered to satisfy both policy objectives.

20. COMPLIANCE WITH PLANNING POLICY

Planning consideration	Assessment
Principle of development	The proposal involves proportionate external alterations to an existing building and supports its appropriate adaptation and reuse.
Design and character	The works retain the existing scale and form of the building and provide a coordinated approach to the external elevations.
Street scene	The front elevation will be rationalised through the removal of the commercial sign and introduction of a new entrance and window arrangement.
Neighbouring amenity	No significant adverse impact is anticipated in respect of privacy, overlooking, daylight, sunlight, outlook or overbearing effects.
Access	A clear new pedestrian entrance is proposed to the front elevation.
Highways	No new vehicular access or alteration to the highway is proposed.
Heritage	No significant heritage impact has been identified based on the available site context information.
Sustainability	The proposal makes effective use of an existing building and avoids substantial redevelopment.
Biodiversity	The proposal principally concerns alterations to an existing building and does not involve substantial new site development.
Associated change of use	The external alterations are directly related to and proposed alongside the separate change-of-use application, reference PP-15220661.

21. CONCLUSION

The proposed external alterations at 54 Norcot Road, Tilehurst, Reading, RG30 6BU represent a proportionate and appropriate adaptation of the existing building.

The works comprise the removal and addition of sections of external walling, new windows to the front, rear and side elevations, the reduction in width of an existing side window, a new front entrance door, removal of the existing commercial sign, new French doors to the rear elevation and associated works.

The alterations are required to facilitate and appropriately accommodate the proposed future use of the premises, which is being considered concurrently through a separate change-of-use planning application under Planning Portal reference PP-15221854. The two applications should therefore be viewed as complementary components of the overall proposal, with the change-of-use application addressing the principle and effects of the proposed use and this application addressing the associated physical external alterations.

The proposal maintains the fundamental scale and form of the existing building and does not result in a substantial increase in its height, footprint or massing.

The revised fenestration and entrance arrangements provide functional improvements while remaining proportionate to the existing building. The removal of the commercial sign will also reduce visual clutter on the principal elevation.

The proposal is considered to respond positively to the established character of Norcot Road and the mixed-use context of the surrounding area. It is consistent with the objectives of Policy CC7 – Design and the Public Realm, which requires development to maintain and enhance local character through high-quality design, appropriate scale, architectural detail and materials.

The development also accords with Policy CC8 – Safeguarding Amenity, as it is not considered to result in unacceptable impacts upon neighbouring properties in terms of privacy, overlooking, daylight, sunlight, outlook, overbearing effects or other environmental impacts.

At the national level, the proposal is consistent with the NPPF's emphasis on high-quality design, appropriate response to local character, effective use of existing land and buildings, and the creation of safe and functional places.

Overall, the proposed external alterations constitute a well-considered, proportionate and visually appropriate adaptation of the existing building, with no significant adverse impacts identified. The proposal therefore represents sustainable and appropriate development and is considered to comply with the relevant policies of the Reading Borough Local Plan and national planning policy.

Planning permission is therefore respectfully requested.