



AIR QUALITY STATEMENT

4-5 West Street, Reading, RG1 1TT

Conversion of Existing Upper Floors to Residential Flats

Document	Air Quality Statement
Site	4-5 West Street, Reading, RG1 1TT
Proposal	Conversion of the existing upper floors to self-contained residential flats
Prepared by	Architectural Visions
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1. Introduction

This Air Quality Statement has been prepared in support of the planning application at **4-5 West Street, Reading, RG1 1TT**. The proposal comprises the conversion and reconfiguration of the existing upper floors of the three-storey building to provide self-contained residential flats.

The purpose of this statement is to consider whether the development would materially affect local air quality and whether the proposed residential accommodation can provide an acceptable environment for future occupiers. Particular regard has been given to Policies EN15 and EN16 of the Reading Borough Local Plan and to the site's location within Reading's Air Quality Management Area (AQMA).

Sustainable transport approach

The scheme is proposed without residential car parking. Secure cycle storage will be provided for residents together with electric charging facilities for cycles/e-bikes. This is an important feature of the proposal because it avoids the creation of additional parking capacity and supports low-emission travel in a highly accessible town-centre location.

2. Site and Proposed Development

The application site is an existing three-storey building on West Street within Reading town centre. The surrounding area is urban in character and includes a mix of commercial, retail, leisure and residential uses. West Street forms part of the established town-centre highway network.

The application principally concerns the reuse of existing upper-floor accommodation. It does not involve a substantial increase in the scale of the building and would not introduce an industrial, manufacturing or other significant source of atmospheric emissions.

The site is well placed for day-to-day travel without a private car. Reading railway station, bus services, employment, shops and services are all available within the town centre. The proposal therefore adopts a car-free approach, supported by secure cycle parking and electric cycle charging.

3. Air Quality Context

Reading Borough Council has declared an Air Quality Management Area covering the town centre and principal transport corridors. The designation reflects historic exceedances of the annual mean air quality objective for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), with road traffic being a key local source.

The application site lies within the central Reading area covered by the AQMA. The conversion would therefore introduce residential receptors into an area where air quality is a material planning consideration. The AQMA designation does not, in itself, prevent residential development; the relevant question is whether exposure can be appropriately addressed and whether the development would worsen local air quality.

For this proposal the pollutants of greatest relevance are nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and particulate matter (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}), principally associated with road traffic and other combustion sources.

4. Planning Policy

National Planning Policy

National planning policy requires planning decisions to take account of air quality, including the presence of AQMAs, and to consider whether development would expose people to unacceptable levels of pollution or materially worsen existing conditions. The level of assessment should be proportionate to the scale, nature and

location of the proposal.

Reading Borough Local Plan

Policy EN15 - Air Quality seeks to protect and improve air quality. Where development introduces or intensifies sensitive uses within an AQMA, detrimental effects on those uses should be mitigated. Where significant effects cannot be satisfactorily mitigated, development may be unacceptable.

Policy EN16 - Pollution and Water Resources seeks to ensure that development does not result in unacceptable effects from pollution and that appropriate environmental conditions are secured for occupiers and neighbouring uses.

5. Existing Air Quality and Future Occupiers

The principal air quality issue is the introduction of residential accommodation within the AQMA, rather than emissions generated by the development itself.

The proposed flats are located on the upper floors of the existing building rather than at street level. This provides physical separation from the immediate source of road traffic emissions. The detailed design and ventilation arrangements can also be used to limit exposure, particularly where openings or air intakes are located on the more traffic-exposed elevations.

Where mechanical ventilation is required, fresh-air intakes should, so far as reasonably practicable, be positioned away from the principal traffic source and at an elevated location. This represents a proportionate response to the site's town-centre context.

6. Development-Generated Effects

The proposed development is modest in scale and would not introduce a significant new source of air pollution. In particular, it does not provide residential car parking and therefore does not create additional on-site parking capacity that could encourage routine private vehicle trips associated with the new flats.

- No residential car parking is proposed.
- Secure cycle storage will be provided for future residents.
- Electric charging facilities will be provided for cycles/e-bikes.
- The development does not involve significant HGV activity.
- No industrial process or significant combustion source is proposed.
- The town-centre location provides ready access to rail, bus, walking and cycling routes.

Taken together, these characteristics mean that the operational traffic and emissions attributable to the development are expected to be very limited. The car-free approach and cycle infrastructure are positive measures that support Reading's wider objective of reducing transport-related emissions.

7. Sustainable Transport and Air Quality Mitigation

The transport strategy is integral to the air quality response. Rather than seeking to accommodate private cars within a constrained town-centre site, the scheme is designed around sustainable modes. Future residents will have secure cycle storage and access to electric charging facilities for cycles and e-bikes, making cycling a practical option for a wider range of journeys.

The absence of dedicated residential parking also avoids adding parking capacity within the AQMA. Given the site's proximity to public transport, employment and town-centre services, this is considered appropriate to the location and helps minimise the development's contribution to traffic-related emissions.

Measure	Air quality benefit
Car-free residential scheme	Avoids new residential parking capacity and discourages routine private-car dependency.
Secure cycle storage	Supports cycling as a realistic everyday travel option.
E-bike charging	Supports low-emission travel over longer distances and for a wider range of users.

Measure	Air quality benefit
Upper-floor accommodation	Provides separation between habitable rooms and immediate street-level vehicle emissions.
Appropriate ventilation design	Can reduce exposure by locating fresh-air intakes away from the most traffic-exposed frontage where practicable.

8. Construction and Refurbishment

The works principally comprise conversion and refurbishment of an existing building. The potential for construction-related air quality effects is therefore materially lower than for a scheme involving substantial demolition and redevelopment. Some temporary dust may nevertheless arise from internal alterations, material handling, deliveries and minor external works.

Standard good-practice controls should be used during the works, including keeping the site and adjacent highway clean, covering dusty loads, using suitable dust suppression for cutting operations where necessary, containing construction waste and avoiding unnecessary engine idling. With these measures in place, construction effects are expected to be temporary, localised and not significant.

9. Proportionality of Assessment

The application introduces residential receptors within the AQMA and it is therefore appropriate for air quality to be addressed as part of the planning submission.

However, the proposal is a conversion of existing upper floors and is not a major traffic-generating development. It provides no residential car parking, includes cycle and e-bike facilities, and does not introduce significant HGV movements, process emissions or substantial combustion plant.

On that basis, a qualitative assessment is considered proportionate. Should the Council's Environmental Protection Officer identify a specific concern regarding a particular façade or ventilation arrangement, that matter could be addressed through detailed ventilation design or, if necessary, an appropriately worded planning condition.

10. Compliance with Policies EN15 and EN16

The development would not materially worsen local air quality. Its operational emissions are expected to be limited and the proposal is deliberately car-free. The provision of secure cycle storage and electric cycle charging further supports low-emission travel.

The proposed flats are sensitive receptors within the AQMA, but they are located above ground-floor level and appropriate ventilation arrangements can be incorporated where required. The proposal can therefore provide suitable living conditions while making efficient use of an existing building in a highly sustainable location.

The scheme is consequently considered consistent with the objectives of Policies EN15 and EN16 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

11. Conclusion

The proposal at 4-5 West Street would convert existing upper floors to residential flats within Reading town centre. The site is within the Reading AQMA and the introduction of residential accommodation therefore requires appropriate consideration of air quality.

The proposal would not introduce a significant new source of emissions. No residential car parking is provided. Instead, the scheme includes secure cycle storage and electric charging facilities for cycles and e-bikes, supported by excellent access to public transport, employment, shops and services.

The upper-floor position of the accommodation provides separation from street-level traffic emissions, while proportionate ventilation measures can be incorporated where necessary. Temporary construction effects can be managed through standard dust-control practice.

Overall, the development is not expected to result in a significant adverse effect on local air quality, and there is no reason to conclude that acceptable living conditions cannot be achieved for future occupiers. Air quality considerations should therefore not represent a barrier to the granting of planning permission.

Overall finding

The car-free nature of the scheme, together with secure cycle storage and electric cycle charging facilities, materially strengthens the sustainable transport case and helps minimise the development's contribution to traffic-related emissions within the AQMA.