



Drs. Swami and Swami c/o Marianne Smith, Mathewson Waters Architects

By email to:

marianne@mw-architects.co.uk

Emma Gee
Executive Director for Economic Growth
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Planning Services

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Our Ref: PL/25/1085

Your Ref:

Direct: ☎ 0118 937 3338

E-mail: Richard.Eatough@reading.gov.uk

Date: 1 October 2026

Your contact is: Richard Eatough, Planning Services

Dear Sirs,

Planning permission PL/25/1085

Change of use of existing doctor's surgery into two one bedroom flats

79 Russell Street, Reading

By way of background, your planning agent, Marianne Smith of Mathewson Waters Architects has brought to our attention various discrepancies with the decision notice for planning permission PL/25/1085. I discussed this matter with Marianne at some length on the phone on 24 March 2026.

I provide this letter in response to the issuing of the permission, in order to confirm the Local Planning Authority's position in relation to each of the conditions which have been applied to the planning permission.

Condition 1 (three year compliance period)

The condition is restrictive and continues to apply. For clarification, the date runs from the date on the decision notice and not the date the decision was issued to you/received.

Condition 2 (approved plans)

The condition is restrictive and continues to apply. I find no issues with the plans and as far as I am aware the plans were not altered during the course of the application, so I am content that this condition has been correctly applied.

Condition 3 (materials)

The condition is restrictive and continues to apply. The application site is within the Russell Street/Castle Hill/Oxford Road Conservation Area, where development shall preserve or enhance views within, into and out of the conservation area in

accordance with Local Plan Policy EN1. In terms of external alterations, these are comparatively limited and show a new entrance porch and a new window in the rear of the building. The condition requires the materials to be, 'as specified within the supporting statement, plans and application form'. There is no supporting statement, but submitted with the application were a covering letter and a Design and Access Statement. The DAS discusses external changes and materials on Page 9. The (proposed elevation) plans indicate the location of these changes. The application form also confirms that the bricks are to match existing, with the roof of the canopy will be in matching grey slates and upvc gallows brackets and the windows and doors shall be upvc to match that existing. The meaning and purpose of the condition is suitable and this condition continues to apply.

Condition 4 (submission of hard and soft landscaping scheme)

This is a prior to occupation condition which continues to apply. As discussed with Marianne, I advised that generally, the blockwork to the front yard/drive area is suitable and can be used. However, the remainder will require some changes to the present outdoor space(s) surrounding the current surgery, with a consequent improvement for the flats in terms of the outdoor amenity and outlook and views within the Conservation Area.

Regarding the front area, this is, as I described on the phone, would be a cramped and unsuitable arrangement. Unfortunately, I have to inform you that there were various concerns from the Highway Authority which were not dealt with, including that the current parking/access arrangement is not suitable and should have been adjusted. Issues are swept paths, congestion to the bins and manoeuvring space and lack of cycle parking (see below). I attach these with this letter and would strongly recommend that you consider the submission of a NMA ('Non-Material Amendment') application to be able to produce a more acceptable arrangement which in my opinion, would benefit from the removal of one of the parking spaces. In the circumstances, I would be prepared to waive a fee for such an application.

As I described on the phone, a suitable arrangement would probably include:

- the reduction of one parking space to allow suitable manoeuvring space (although this may still not allow turning on site)
- the freed up space would allow for access to the bin and recycling store (please bear in mind that such stores need to be very secure in this area due to the high incidence of rats in central Reading (for this reason, the mention of 'mammal gaps' is not appropriate here)).
- it is agreed that there is minimal opportunity for soft landscaping in the frontal area. I would suggest a shrub where the current visitor cycle parking is and inclusion of a small, upright tree in a carefully chosen location. Both to be suitably rooted into the ground with details as required by the condition.

Whilst I appreciate that there the present/former 'free for all' parking situation is established, the use that refers to has already ceased. For hopefully obvious reasons, the trigger of prior to occupation on this matter is very late and given that there may be adjustments required, early submission of your application(s) to discharge planning conditions is advisable.

To the rear, I observed on site that the open side entrance is currently allowing open parking associated with the garage, which must cease. The rear area will need to show a suitable hard and soft landscaping arrangement for residents.

Please take the above observations into account when submitting your formal application(s) to discharge planning conditions.

Condition 5 (removal of various PD rights)

This is a restrictive-type condition, however, the condition has been incorrectly applied and as the proposal is not relevant to dwelling(houses), the condition is therefore *ultra vires* and therefore unenforceable. **This condition should be disregarded.**

Condition 6 (boundary treatment)

This 'prior to occupation' condition continues to apply. We discussed the present boundary treatment on our phonecall. For reasons of providing a secure and suitable boundary treatment within the Conservation Area, my advice is that the wall, where presently truncated with its boundary with the tyre garage next door, should be continued across this gateway with bricks to match, at the same height, mortar bond/mix, and rounded brick capping. I also advised Marianne that for reasons of high incidences of drug-taking, anti-social behaviour and prostitution in the locality, leaving this access open between the properties is not acceptable as it would create an undue security risk for future tenants. Local Plan Policy CC7 applies. The condition trigger is 'prior to occupation', but I would suggest a submission in good time to allow for any potential adjustments which may be required.

Condition 7 (there is no condition, the condition is missing)

Condition 8 (construction method statement)

This is a 'pre-commencement' type condition and it was erroneously applied without the applicant's agreement. As it was unlawful to apply without yours/your planning agent's agreement, **this condition should be disregarded.**

Having said that, I discussed with your agent how construction was likely to be undertaken and my view is that the condition should have been applied (with your agreement) but it should have been much more focused, to account for the level of organisation/disturbance. Marianne advised that Mathewson Waters would be likely to be administering a Contract and that all materials would be stored within the site.

Condition 9 (cycle parking)

This is a restrictive-type condition and states that prior to occupation of the development, the bicycle parking facilities shall have been provided in accordance with the approved plans. However, the proposed plans merely indicate the existing visitor cycle parking spaces in the front of the surgery to be retained. We discussed on the phone that these facilities are inappropriate for residents' cycle storage (they would be completely insecure) and my advice is to remove the current stands and repair the paving to match and either seek to provide a suitable lockable and secure store within the site (advisable) or not. However, in the circumstances, the condition makes no sense and accordingly, **this condition should be disregarded.**

Condition 10 (vehicle access-restrictive)

This restrictive-type condition requires that the development shall not be occupied until the vehicle access serving it has been constructed in accordance with the approved plans. The approved plans (ie. the proposed plans) are the same as the existing in respect of the access, so this condition makes no sense and is essentially unenforceable. However, please note the observations in respect of hard and soft landscaping above. Given that the condition does not require anything to be done, **this condition should be disregarded.**

Condition 11 (vehicle parking spaces-restrictive)

This is a restrictive-type condition and continues to apply. It states that prior to occupation of the development, all parking spaces shall have been provided in accordance with the approved plans and retained thereafter. Unfortunately, as discussed on the phone, the parking arrangement as shown on the proposed plans is not suitable, see comments above in relation to hard and soft landscaping.

Condition 12 (no bonfires)

This is a standard restrictive-type RBC planning condition and although it is probably of limited applicability to the proposal, it continues to apply.

Condition 13 (electric vehicle charging)

This restrictive-type condition requires details of an EV charging scheme to be provided prior to first occupation of the dwellings and then the EV scheme delivered. However, as can be seen from the attached Transport memorandum, this was not requested, neither is such required by our parking standards Policy (TR5) or our adopted parking standards SPD. **This condition should be disregarded.**

Condition 14 (no change to C4 (small houses in multiple occupation))

This is a restrictive-type condition which attempt to remove permitted development (PD) rights. The development proposes two modest flats. Whilst each C3 flat could

technically mutate to a C4 use, the risk here is minimal and in my opinion, there was limited planning harm/risk and the condition should not have been applied. **This condition should be disregarded.**

Informatives:

These are correct with the exception of informative 5. It is my understanding that CIL is not chargeable on this development, as the former use of the doctor's surgery was in place comparatively recently.

On the basis of the above, I confirm that the above conditions, where indicated, would not be pursued by the Local Planning Authority and I can confirm that any conditions marked as 'disregarded' would not be subject to enforcement control.

I hope this confirmation by letter is suitable for your purposes, but please let me know if you require anything further.

Once again, I sincerely apologise for the poor standard of service which you have received from us in this instance which falls far below our expected service standards. Please be assured that we are looking into this matter to ensure that this does not happen again.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Richard Eatough', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Richard Eatough
Planning Projects Team Leader

Encs. Transport Memorandum, dated 11 August 2025