

To: Councillor Gavin (Chair)
Councillors Davies, Cresswell, Ennis, Goss,
Hornsby-Smith, Leng, Lovelock, Moore,
Rowland, Tarar and Yeo

Direct ☎ : 0118 9372112

25 February 2025

Your contact is: Nicky Simpson - Committee Services (nicky.simpson@reading.gov.uk)

NOTICE OF MEETING - PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE 5 MARCH 2025

A meeting of the Planning Applications Committee will be held on Wednesday, 5 March 2025 at 6.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Bridge Street, Reading RG1 2LU. The Agenda for the meeting is set out below.

AGENDA	ACTION	WARDS AFFECTED	PAGE NO
<u>KEY TO CODING</u>			
1. MINUTES	-		9 - 12
2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	-		
3. QUESTIONS	-		
4. POTENTIAL SITE VISITS FOR COMMITTEE ITEMS	Decision		13 - 16
5. PLANNING APPEALS	Information		17 - 20

PLANNING APPLICATIONS TO BE CONSIDERED

6.	PL/24/1593 (FUL) - ST MARY'S HOUSE, 66-68 ST MARY'S BUTTS	Decision	ABBEY	21 - 54
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Proposal: Change of use of first to third floors from office (Class E) to 31 serviced apartments (Class C1), erection of a fourth storey comprising 6 serviced apartments (Class C1) and various associated alterations.

Recommendation: Grant with S106

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|----|--|----------|------------|---------|
| 7. | PL/24/1684 (FUL/REG3) - JOHN
RABSON RECREATION GROUND
NORTHUMBERLAND AVENUE | Decision | CHURCH | 55 - 66 |
| | <p>Proposal: Formation of Skatepark, associated landscaping and ramped pedestrianised access (amended description)</p> <p>Recommendation: Grant</p> | | | |
| 8. | PL/25/0160 (FUL/REG3) - 134
NORTHUMBERLAND AVENUE | Decision | KATESGROVE | 67 - 76 |
| | <p>Proposal: Use as class C2 (Residential institution) including Internal refurbishment and external landscape works</p> <p>Recommendation: Grant</p> | | | |
| 9. | PL/25/0159 (FUL/REG3) -
ALEXANDRA ROAD COMMUNITY
DAY NURSERY, 35 ALEXANDRA
ROAD | Decision | REDLANDS | 77 - 86 |
| | <p>Proposal: Authorisation to confirm use class to C2 (Residential institution) including Internal refurbishment and external landscape works</p> <p>Recommendation: Grant</p> | | | |

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Members of the public who participate in the meeting will be able to speak at an on-camera or off-camera microphone, according to their preference.

Please speak to a member of staff if you have any queries or concerns.

1. There are many different types of applications processed by the Planning Service and the following codes are used to abbreviate the more common types of permission sought:
 - FUL - Full detailed planning permission for development or change of use
 - OUT - Principal of developing a site or changing a use
 - REM - Detailed matters “reserved matters” - for permission following approval of an outline planning application.
 - HOU - Applications for works to domestic houses
 - ADV - Advertisement consent
 - APC - Approval of details required by planning conditions
 - VAR - Significant change to a planning permission previously granted
 - NMA - Insignificant change to a planning permission previously granted
 - ADJ - Consultation from neighbouring authority on application in their area
 - LBC - Works to or around a Listed Building
 - CLE - A certificate to confirm what the existing use of a property is
 - CLP - A certificate to confirm that a proposed use or development does not require planning permission to be applied for.
 - REG3 - Indicates that the application has been submitted by the Local Authority.

2. Officer reports often refer to a matter or situation as being “a material consideration”. The following list tries to explain what these might include:

Material planning considerations can include (but are not limited to):

- Overlooking/loss of privacy
- Loss of daylight/sunlight or overshadowing
- Scale and dominance
- Layout and density of buildings
- Appearance and design of development and materials proposed
- Disabled persons' access
- Highway safety
- Traffic and parking issues
- Drainage and flood risk
- Noise, dust, fumes etc
- Impact on character or appearance of area
- Effect on listed buildings and conservation areas
- Effect on trees and wildlife/nature conservation
- Impact on the community and other services
- Economic impact and sustainability
- Government policy
- Proposals in the Local Plan
- Previous planning decisions (including appeal decisions)
- Archaeology

There are also concerns that regulations or case law has established cannot be taken into account. These include:

- Who the applicant is/the applicant's background
- Loss of views
- Loss of property value
- Loss of trade or increased competition
- Strength or volume of local opposition
- Construction noise/disturbance during development
- Fears of damage to property
- Maintenance of property
- Boundary disputes, covenants or other property rights
- Rights of way and ownerships disputes over rights of way
- Personal circumstances

Glossary of usual terms

Affordable housing - Housing provided below market price to meet identified needs.

Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) - Area where air quality levels need to be managed.

Apart-hotel - A use providing basic facilities for self-sufficient living with the amenities of a hotel. Generally classed as C1 (hotels) for planning purposes.

Article 4 Direction - A direction which can be made by the Council to remove normal permitted development rights.

BREEAM - A widely used means of reviewing and improving the environmental performance of generally commercial developments (industrial, retail etc).

Brownfield Land - previously developed land.

Brown roof - A roof surfaced with a broken substrate, e.g. broken bricks.

Building line -The general line along a street beyond which no buildings project.

Bulky goods - Large products requiring shopping trips to be made by car:e.g DIY or furniture.

CIL - Community Infrastructure Levy. Local authorities in England and Wales levy a charge on new development to be spent on infrastructure to support the development of the area.

Classified Highway Network - The network of main roads, consisting of A, B and C roads.

Conservation Area - areas of special architectural or historic interest designated by the local authority. As designated heritage assets the preservation and enhancement of the area carries great weight in planning permission decisions.

Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) Competent Authority - The Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1999 (COMAH) and their amendments 2005, are the enforcing regulations within the United Kingdom. They are applicable to any establishment storing or otherwise handling large quantities of industrial chemicals of a hazardous nature. Types of establishments include chemical warehousing, chemical production facilities and some distributors.

Dormer Window - Located in the roof of a building, it projects or extends out through the roof, often providing space internally.

Dwelling- A single housing unit - a house, flat, maisonette etc.

Evening Economy A term for the business activities, particularly those used by the public, which take place in the evening such as pubs, clubs, restaurants and arts/cultural uses.

Flood Risk Assessment - A requirement at planning application stage to demonstrate how flood risk will be managed.

Flood Zones - The Environment Agency designates flood zones to reflect the differing risks of flooding. Flood Zone 1 is low probability, Flood Zone 2 is medium probability, Flood Zone 3a is high probability and Flood Zone 3b is functional floodplain.

Granny annexe - A self-contained area within a dwelling house/ the curtilage of a dwelling house but without all the facilities to be self contained and is therefore dependent on the main house for some functions. It will usually be occupied by a relative.

Green roof - A roof with vegetation on top of an impermeable membrane.

Gross floor area - Total floor area of the house, including all floors and garage, measured externally.

Hazardous Substances Consent - Consent required for the presence on, over, or under land of any hazardous substance in excess of controlled quantity.

Historic Parks and Gardens - Parks and gardens of special historic interest, designated by English Heritage.

Housing Association - An independent not-for-profit body that provides low-cost "affordable housing" to meet specific housing needs.

Infrastructure - The basic services and facilities needed for the smooth running of a community.

Lifetime Home - A home which is sufficiently adaptable to allow people to remain in the home despite changing circumstances such as age or disability.

Listed building - Buildings of special architectural or historic interest. Consent is required before works that might affect their character or appearance can be undertaken. They are divided into Grades I, II and II*, with I being of exceptional interest.

Local Plan - The main planning document for a District or Borough.

Luminance - A measure of the luminous intensity of light, usually measured in candelas per square metre.

Major Landscape Feature - these are identified and protected in the Local Plan for being of local significance for their visual and amenity value

Public realm - the space between and within buildings that is publicly accessible, including streets, squares, forecourts, parks and open spaces whether publicly or privately owned.

Scheduled Ancient Monument - Specified nationally important archaeological sites.

Section 106 agreement - A legally binding agreement or obligation entered into by the local authority and a land developer over an issue related to a planning application, under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Sequential approach A method of considering and ranking the suitability of sites for development, so that one type of site is considered before another. Different sequential approaches are applied to different uses.

Sui Generis - A use not specifically defined in the use classes order (2004) - planning permission is always needed to change from a sui generis use.

Sustainable development - Development to improve quality of life and protect the environment in balance with the local economy, for now and future generations.

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS) - This term is taken to cover the whole range of sustainable approaches to surface water drainage management.

Tree Preservation Order (TPO) - An order made by a local planning authority in respect of trees and woodlands. The principal effect of a TPO is to prohibit the cutting down, uprooting, topping, lopping, wilful damage or wilful destruction of trees without the LPA's consent.

Guide to changes to the Use Classes Order in England.

Changes of use within the same class are not development.

Use	Use Class up to 31 August 2020	Use Class from 1 September 2020
Shop - not more than 280sqm mostly selling essential goods, including food and at least 1km from another similar shop	A1	F.2
Shop	A1	E
Financial & professional services (not medical)	A2	E
Café or restaurant	A3	E
Pub, wine bar or drinking establishment	A4	Sui generis
Takeaway	A5	Sui generis
Office other than a use within Class A2	B1a	E
Research & development of products or processes	B1b	E
For any industrial process (which can be carried out in any residential area without causing detriment to the amenity of the area)	B1c	E
Industrial	B2	B2
Storage or distribution	B8	B8
Hotels, boarding & guest houses	C1	C1
Residential institutions	C2	C2
Secure residential institutions	C2a	C2a
Dwelling houses	C3	C3
Small house in multiple occupation 3-6 residents	C4	C4
Clinics, health centres, creches, day nurseries, day centre	D1	E
Schools, non-residential education & training centres, museums, public libraries, public halls, exhibition halls, places of worship, law courts	D1	F.1
Cinemas, theatres, concert halls, bingo halls and dance halls	D2	Sui generis
Gymnasiums, indoor recreations not involving motorised vehicles or firearms	D2	E
Hall or meeting place for the principal use of the local community	D2	F.2
Indoor or outdoor swimming baths, skating rinks, and outdoor sports or recreations not involving motorised vehicles or firearms	D2	F.2

Present: Councillor Gavin (Chair);

Councillors Davies (Vice-Chair), Cresswell, Goss, Hornsby-Smith, Leng, Lovelock, Moore, Rowland, Tarar and Yeo

Apologies: Councillor Ennis

RESOLVED ITEMS

72. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 January 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

73. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Yeo declared a pecuniary interest in Item 78 as he was the applicant.

74. POTENTIAL SITE VISITS FOR COMMITTEE ITEMS

The Committee considered a report setting out a schedule of applications to be considered at future meetings of the Committee to enable Councillors to decide which sites, if any, they wished to visit prior to determining the relevant applications. The report also listed previously agreed site visits which were yet to take place.

Resolved -

That the following application be the subject of an accompanied site visit:

PL/24/0173 – BROAD STREET MALL

Part-demolition of existing retail units, car park and service areas, demolition and rebuild of car park ramp, and construction of a residential-led, mixed-use development fronting Queens Walk and Dusseldorf Way, including all necessary enabling and alteration works required.

75. PLANNING APPEALS

The Committee received a report on notifications received from the Planning Inspectorate on planning appeals registered with them or decisions made and providing summary reports on appeal decisions of interest to the Committee.

No new appeals had been lodged since the last Committee. Appendix 2 to the report set out details of five appeals decided since the last Committee with comments from officers.

The Committee noted that all five appeals in Appendix 2 had been dismissed, with the Planning Inspector supporting the reasons for refusal given by the case officers.

Resolved –

- (1) That the outcome of the recently determined appeals, as set out in Appendix 2, be noted;
- (2) That planning officers be congratulated on the appeal outcomes, which reflected their considered and policy-driven decisions on planning applications.

76. THIRD QUARTER PERFORMANCE REPORT - PLANNING & BUILDING CONTROL

The Committee received a report on the work and performance of the Planning Development Management and Building Control team for the third quarter of 2024/2025 (October to December) with comparison to same quarters in the previous year. The report focussed on planning and building control application processing performance and fee income.

Resolved –

That the report be noted.

77. PL/23/0107(FUL) & PL/23/0108(LBC) - 10 GUN STREET

PL/23/0107(FUL) – Application for Full Planning Permission: Proposed partial change of use from offices (Class E) to provide an expansion to existing entertainment venue (Sui Generis use) at 9 Gun Street (Purple Turtle) with erection of rear extensions and internal alterations. Detached 3-storey ancillary building to rear boundary with yard over Holy Brook.

PL/23/0108(LBC) – Application for Listed Building Consent: Proposed extensions and internal alterations associate with partial change of use from offices (Class E) to provide an expansion to existing entertainment venue (Sui Generis Use) at 9 Gun Street (Purple Turtle) with erection of rear extensions and internal alterations. Detached 3-storey ancillary building to rear boundary with yard over Holy Brook

Further to Minute 67 of the meeting held on 8 January 2025 the Committee considered a report on the above applications, consideration of which had been deferred from the previous meeting for a site visit. Attached to the report at Appendix 1 was the report submitted to the meeting on 8 January 2025 which included the officer recommendation and proposed conditions and informatives.

Comments and objections were received and considered.

Objector Evelyn Williams, on behalf of the Conservation Area Advisory Committee, and the applicant's agent Paul Tunstall, attended the meeting and addressed the Committee on this application.

Resolved –

- (1) That planning permission for application PL/23/0107(FUL) be granted, subject to the conditions and informatives as recommended in Appendix 1 to the report;
- (2) That listed building consent for application PL/23/0108(LBC) be granted, subject to the conditions and informatives as recommended in Appendix 1 to the report.

78. PL/24/1148 (HOU) - 4 SCHOLAR'S CLOSE, CAVERSHAM

Proposed erection of front, side and rear single-storey extensions (rear extension off existing structural slab) with associated internal alterations and fenestration changes. Roof finish to be changed and installation of solar panels to roof.

The Committee considered a report on the above application.

Comments were received and considered.

Resolved –

That planning permission for application PL/24/1148 (HOU) be granted, subject to the conditions and informatives as set out in the report.

(Councillor Yeo declared a pecuniary interest in this application, as he was the applicant. He left the meeting and took no part in the debate or decision.)

79. PL/24/1520 (FUL) - 300 BROOK DRIVE, GREEN PARK

External refurbishment of an existing office building (Use Class E) including alterations to the main entrance space, elevations, installation of solar photovoltaics (PV) panels and electric vehicle charging points, replacement plant equipment, external lighting, erection of a new cycle store with changing facilities, a new external pergola and associated landscaping works.

The Committee considered a report on the above application. It was verbally reported at the meeting that the proposed conditions would be renumbered to correct an error in the report.

Comments were received and considered.

Resolved –

That planning permission for application PL/24/1520 (FUL) be granted, subject to the conditions and informatives as set out in the report.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 5 FEBRUARY 2025

(The meeting started at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.25 pm)

Planning Applications Committee 05 March 2025



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Title	POTENTIAL SITE VISITS FOR COMMITTEE ITEMS
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Report author	Julie Williams, Development Manager (Planning & Building Control)
Lead Councillor	Councillor Micky Leng, Lead Councillor for Planning and Assets
Corporate priority	Not applicable, but still requires a decision
Recommendations	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. note this report and any officer recommendations for site visits. 2. confirm if there are other sites Councillors wish to visit before reaching a decision on an application. 3. confirm if the site(s) agreed to be visited will be arranged and accompanied by officers or can be unaccompanied but with a briefing note provided by the case officer.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. To identify those sites where, due to the sensitive or important nature of the proposals, Councillors are advised that a Site Visit would be appropriate before the matter is presented at Committee and to confirm how the visit will be arranged. A list of potential sites is appended with a note added to say if recommended for a site visit or not.

2. The Proposal

- 2.1. A site visit helps if a proposed development and context is difficult to visualise from the plans and supporting material or to better understand concerns or questions raised by a proposal.
- 2.2. Appendix 1 of this report provides a list of, mainly major, applications recently received that may be presented to Committee for a decision in due course and which Officers consider Members would benefit from visiting to inform decision making. Appendix 2 then lists those sites that have previously been agreed should be visited before considering the officer report.
- 2.3. More often it is when considering a report on a planning application that it becomes apparent that Councillors would benefit from visiting a site to assist in reaching the correct decision. In these instances, Officers or Councillors may request a deferral to allow a visit to be carried out.
- 2.4. Accompanied site visits are appropriate when access to private land is necessary to appreciate matters raised. These visits will be arranged and attended by officers on the designated date and time. Applicants and objectors may observe the process and answer questions when asked but lobbying is discouraged. A site visit is an information gathering opportunity to inform decision making.
- 2.5. Unaccompanied site visits are appropriate when the site can be easily seen from public areas and allow Councillors to visit when convenient to them. In these instances, the

case officer will provide a briefing note on the application and the main issues to assist when visiting the site.

- 2.6. It is also possible for officers to suggest, or Councillors to request, a visit to a completed development to assess its quality.

3. Contribution to Strategic Aims

- 4.1 The processing of planning applications contributes to creating a healthy environment with thriving communities and helping the economy within the Borough, identified as the themes of the Council's Corporate Plan.

4. Environmental and Climate Implications

- 4.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).
- 4.2. The Planning Service uses policies to encourage developers to build and use properties responsibly by making efficient use of land and using sustainable materials and building methods.

5. Community Engagement

- 5.1. Statutory neighbour consultation takes place on planning applications.

6. Equality Implications

- 6.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 6.2. It is considered that an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not relevant to the decision on whether sites need to be visited by Planning Application Committee. The decision will not have a differential impact on people with the protected characteristics of; age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex (gender) or sexual orientation.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1. None arising from this report.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1. The cost of site visits is met through the normal planning service budget and Councillor costs.

9. Timetable for Implementation

- 9.1. Site visits are normally scheduled for the Thursday prior to committee. Planning Administration team sends out notification emails when a site visit is arranged.

10. Background Papers

- 10.1. There are none.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Potential Site Visits. List of applications received that may be presented to Committee for a decision in due course:

PL/24/1501 - 20-30 Greyfriars Road, Reading, RG1 1NS – Demolition of the existing building and the erection of a part-7, part-13 storey co-living building (Sui Generis) and associated communal amenity facilities, refuse storage, cycle parking and plant equipment.

Unaccompanied. Briefing note to be provided.

Appendix 2

Previously Agreed Site Visits with date of PAC when requested:

- 231041 - Portman Road – unaccompanied agreed by PAC 06.09.23.
- 230822/OUT Forbury Retail Park (west) – accompanied agreed by PAC 24.07.24.
-
- 240846/FUL Napier Court, Napier Road – accompanied agreed by PAC 24.07.24.

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Planning Applications Committee

05 March 2025



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Title	PLANNING APPEALS
Purpose of the report	To note the report for information
Report status	Public report
Report author	Julie Williams, Development Manager (Planning & Building Control)
Lead Councillor	Councillor Micky Leng, Lead Councillor for Planning and Assets
Corporate priority	Inclusive Economy
Recommendations	The Committee is asked: 1. To note the report.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. To advise Committee on notifications received from the Planning Inspectorate on planning appeals registered with them or decision made and to provide summary reports on appeal decisions of interest the Planning Applications Committee.

2. Information provided

- 2.1. Please see Appendix 1 of this report for new appeals lodged since the last committee.
- 2.2. Please see Appendix 2 of this report for appeals decided since the last committee.
- 2.3. Please see Appendix 3 of this report for new Planning Officers reports on those appeal decisions of interest to this committee.

3. Contribution to Strategic Aims

- 3.1. Defending planning appeals made against planning decisions contributes to creating a sustainable environment with active communities and helping the economy within the Borough as identified as the themes of the Council's Corporate Plan.

4. Environmental and Climate Implications

- 4.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).
- 4.2. The Planning Service uses policies to encourage developers to build and use properties responsibly by making efficient use of land and using sustainable materials and building methods

5. Community Engagement

- 5.1. Planning decisions are made in accordance with adopted local development plan policies, which have been adopted by the Council following public consultation. Statutory consultation also takes place on planning applications and appeals, and this can have bearing on the decision reached by the Secretary of State and his Inspectors. Copies of appeal decisions are held on the public Planning Register.

6. Equality Implications

- 6.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 6.2. It is considered that an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not relevant to the decision on whether sites need to be visited by Planning Application Committee. The decision will not have a differential impact on people with the protected characteristics of; age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex (gender) or sexual orientation.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1. Public Inquiries are normally the only types of appeal that involve the use of legal representation. Only applicants have the right to appeal against refusal or non-determination and there is no right for a third party to appeal a planning decision.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1. Public Inquiries and Informal Hearings are more expensive in terms of officer and appellant time than the Written Representations method. Either party can be liable to awards of costs. Guidance is provided in Circular 03/2009 “Cost Awards in Appeals and other Planning Proceedings”.

9. Timetable for Implementation

- 9.1. Not applicable.

10. Background Papers

- 10.1. There are none.

APPENDIX 1

Appeals Lodged:

WARD:	CAVERSHAM HEIGHTS
APPEAL NO:	APP/E0345/D/25/3359487
CASE NO:	PL/24/0824
ADDRESS:	The Shanty
PROPOSAL:	Extensions and alterations to dwelling
CASE OFFICER:	Nathalie Weekes
METHOD:	Householder Written Representation
WARD:	KATESGROVE
APPEAL NO:	APP/E0345/Z/25/3359854
CASE NO:	PL/24/1345
ADDRESS:	70-72 Whitley Street, Reading, RG2 0EQ
PROPOSAL:	Replacement of internally illuminated D48 poster with digital display
CASE OFFICER:	Gary Miles
METHOD:	Advertisement Written Representation
WARD:	KATESGROVE
APPEAL NO:	APP/E0345/W/25/3359426
CASE NO:	PL/24/0765
ADDRESS:	78 Basingstoke Road
PROPOSAL:	Roof enlargement to facilitate the insertion of 3 rear dormers, single storey rear extension, single storey side/rear infill extension to the existing HMO and erection of an outbuilding
CASE OFFICER:	Louise Fuller
METHOD:	Full Written Representation

APPENDIX 2

Appeals Decided:

None

APPENDIX 3

Planning Officers reports on appeal decisions.

None

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05 March 2025



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Title	PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT
Ward	Abbey
Planning Application Reference:	PL/24/1593
Site Address:	St Mary's House, 66-68 St Mary's Butts, Reading, RG1 2LG
Proposed Development	Change of use of first to third floors from office (Class E) to 31 serviced apartments (Class C1), erection of a fourth storey comprising 6 serviced apartments (Class C1) and various associated alterations.
Applicant	Mr V Goldstein
Report author	Jonathan Markwell, Principal Planning Officer
Deadline:	Originally 7 th March 2025, but an extension of time has been agreed with the applicant until 4 th April 2025
Recommendation	Delegate to the Assistant Director for Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services (AD PTPPS) to (i) GRANT full planning permission subject to the satisfactory completion of a Section 106 legal agreement and delegate to the AD PTPPS to make such minor changes to the conditions, Heads of Terms and details of the legal agreement as may be reasonably required to issue the permission or (ii) to REFUSE permission should the Section 106 legal agreement not be completed by the 4 th April 2025 (unless the AD PTPPS agrees to a later date for completion of the legal agreement).
S106 Terms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Securing the Class C1 serviced apartments use: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Serviced apartment Use (Class C1) only and for no other purpose (including any other purpose in the same Use Class of the Schedule to the Town & Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended), or in any provision equivalent to that Class in any statutory instrument revoking or re-enacting that Order with or without modification – (for example as a hotel (Class C1), self-contained residential units (Class C3), small/large houses in multiple occupation (Class C4 or Sui Generis) or co-living (Sui Generis)) - not to let or licence for occupation or permit or suffer occupation of any of the serviced apartment units for a continuous period of more than 3 months to the same occupier or occupiers - other than those customers staying in accordance with the above, not to let or licence for occupation or permit or suffer occupation of any serviced apartment unit for a continuous period for more than 3 months to the same customer or customers

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - not to require customers of any serviced apartment unit to agree to any minimum period of occupation (of whatever duration) - to provide to the Council within 14 days of written request evidence regarding the use or occupation of the serviced apartment units or any of them • Employment, Skills and Training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The production, implementation and monitoring of an Employment and Skills Plan (ESP) for both the construction and end use phases of the development. <u>or</u>, in the event that the developer chooses not to provide the ESP themselves, financial contribution commuted sums for the two phases, calculated using the Employment, Skills and Training SPD 2013 formula, will be secured in lieu of an ESP. • Contribution towards monitoring costs plus a separate commitment to pay the Council's reasonable legal costs in connection with the proposed S106 Agreement, to be payable whether or not the Agreement is completed. • Any unexpended contributions to be repaid within ten years beginning with the start of the Financial Year after the final obligation payment for each obligation is received. In accordance with Policy CC9 . • Indexation - All financial contributions to be index-linked from date of permission unless expressly stated otherwise.
Conditions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Time Limit for implementation – 3 years. 2. Approved plans. 3. * Pre-commencement details of all external materials to be submitted to the LPA (and sample details to be provided on site) and approved in writing with the LPA. Approved details to be retained on site until the work has been completed. 4. * Pre-commencement Construction Method Statement (also including Environmental Protection measures) 5. Vehicle Parking provided as shown prior to first occupation (compliance condition) 6. Cycle Parking provided as shown prior to first occupation (compliance condition) 7. Refuse, recycling and food waste bins and storage provided as shown prior to first occupation (compliance condition) 8. Pre-occupation submission and approval of measures to prevent pests and vermin accessing bin stores 9. *Pre-commencement internal noise mitigation scheme 10. Demolition/ Construction hours of works (compliance condition) 11. Noise mitigation scheme provided as specified prior to first occupation (compliance condition) 12. *Pre-commencement site access and security strategy 13. * Pre-commencement submission and approval of an interim BREEAM Certificate demonstrating a minimum BREEAM 'Very Good' rating 14. Pre-occupation submission and approval of a final BREEAM Certificate demonstrating a minimum BREEAM 'Very Good' rating 15. Pre-occupation submission of green roof specification and maintenance details, with installation and the approved details to be provided prior to first occupation and subsequently retained and maintained.

	<p>16. Pre-occupation submission of bird and bat box details, with installation and the approved details to be provided prior to first occupation and subsequently retained and maintained.</p> <p>17. Compliance condition stipulating a maximum of 37 serviced apartments, within the proposed Class C1 serviced apartment use, with no fewer than 2 accessible rooms.</p> <p>18. No flat roof area to be use as a balcony, roof garden or similar amenity area (compliance condition).</p>
Informatives	<p>1. Positive and Proactive Working – approval</p> <p>2. Pre-commencement conditions</p> <p>3. Highways</p> <p>4. S106 Legal Agreement</p> <p>5. Terms and conditions</p> <p>6. Building Regulations</p> <p>7. Complaints about construction</p> <p>8. Encroachment</p> <p>10. Community Infrastructure Levy</p> <p>11. Parking Permits</p> <p>12. Thames Water Informatives</p> <p>13. Specific advice regarding level of information associated with spandrel panels as per condition 3</p>

1. Executive summary

- 1.1. Full planning permission is sought for the change of use of the upper floors and the creation of one additional storey at roof level to create a total of 37 serviced apartments, together with a series of associated alterations. The two ground floor units are not part of the proposals. The loss of the existing upper floor use and the principle of the proposed serviced apartment use in this Central Reading location is considered acceptable, with the serviced apartments being controlled for short-term use only via legal agreement. In terms of design and heritage matters, the proposed works are supported and considered appropriate on this prominent crossroad location, aided by some refinements at application stage following input from the Reading Design Review Panel. An overall good standard of accommodation would be provided for future guests, while not significantly impacting the amenity of neighbouring occupiers or users either. In overall terms the proposals are supported, subject to the completion of a legal agreement and a series of planning conditions.

2. Introduction and site description

- 2.1. The application site is located on the corner of St Mary's Butts (eastern side) and Broad Street (southern side), at the prominent crossroads of Oxford Road, Broad Street, St Mary's Butts and West Street within the town centre (see Figure 1 below). The application site building is basement and four storeys in height as existing, with a rooftop plant room. There are two basement and ground floor level commercial units (Class E – Caffé Nero and Cancer Research UK), the entrances to which are on Broad Street. These units are designated primary frontages in Central Reading, as per Policy CR7 of the Local Plan. The upper floors are in use as offices, accessed from a separate entrance on St. Mary's Butts. The first floor is occupied by Reed Recruitment Agency, the second floor by Agility and the third floor is vacant. To the rear (east) of the site is a hard-surfaced parking and servicing area accessed from the south. This comprises 16 car parking spaces and bin storage, with the Transport Statement specifying that 2 parking spaces are allocated to Caffé Nero, 4 to Reed, 3 to Agility and the remaining 7 are unallocated. The servicing area within the site is enclosed by a security gate, beyond which is a wider servicing area

utilised by a series of premises on both Broad Street and St Mary's Butts. This wider servicing area is in the process of being upgraded with its own security gates, with vehicular access to this space off St Mary's Butts, adjacent to the Church of St Mary's.

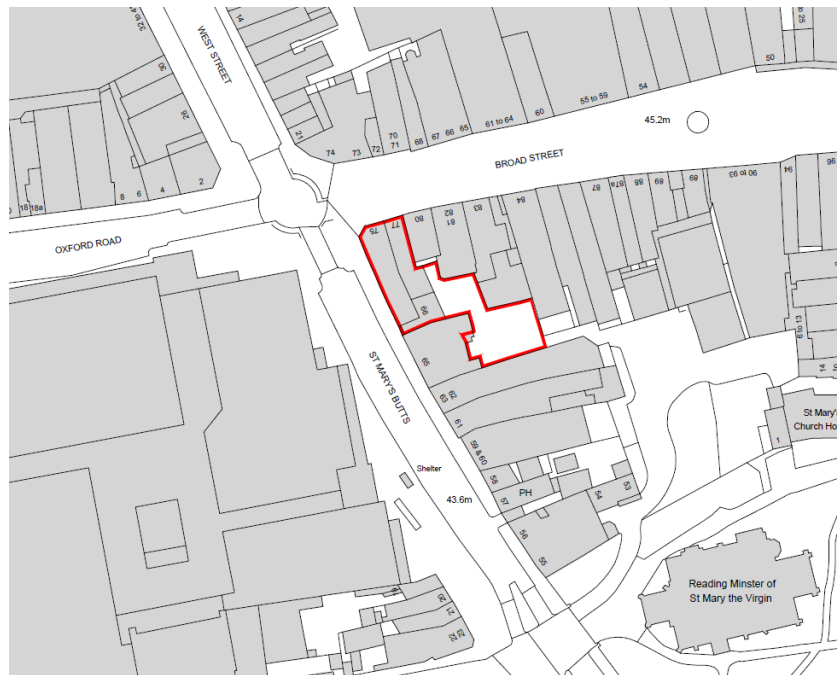


Figure 1 - Extract of the site location plan submitted with the application

- 2.2. The original building has been re-clad at upper floors in the past decade (see section 4 for details), to create a more contemporary style of building. The building is prominent in its setting given its position in the streetscape (see Figure 2 below). The buildings on this crossroads vary in age, style and design quality, with the south-west corner of the crossroads opposite the site featuring the squarer Metrobank unit, part of Broad Street Mall. The application site building currently stands one storey higher than the three storey buildings directly to the east on Broad Street and south on St. Mary's Butts.



Figure 2 – Present view showing both the Broad St & St Mary's Butts frontages

- 2.3. The site is surrounded by buildings which similarly comprise retail/commercial uses such as restaurants, shops and cafés at ground floor level with a variety of uses (storage, office and residential) above, although many of these buildings are more traditional in appearance, particularly directly to the south along St. Mary's Butts and to the east along Broad Street.
- 2.4. Based on the Local Plan policies, as adopted in November 2019, it is first clarified that the application site is not specifically allocated for development within the local plan. The site is not part of a site allocation as part of the emerging Local Plan Partial Update either.

Whilst the site is not within a conservation area (nor is it a listed building), the St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area is further to the south of the site (27m away at its closest point – see Figure 3 below), along with a cluster of Listed Buildings, most notably the landmark Grade I Listed Church of St Mary's in St Mary's Butts (shown below). To the north of the site nearby Greyfriars Church is Grade I listed too, while on Broad Street to the east of the site No's 67, 68, the Congregational Church (currently occupied by Waterstones bookshop), 89 & 89a are all Grade II listed. In addition, No's 85-88 Broad Street, to the east of the site, are locally listed.



Figure 3 - Extract from St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area Appraisal, showing the proximity of the application site to the conservation area and various listed buildings (in red).

- 2.5. The site is within the Central Area of Reading, as defined by the Local Plan. It also sits within the Office Core, an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and is restricted by the Article 4 Direction removing the ability to convert Class E uses to residential through the prior approval process. St Mary's Butts is part of the classified highway network, while Broad Street is pedestrianised. From a transport perspective the area is well served by rail and bus links and also contains the largest proportion of public car parking spaces within the Borough. St Mary's Butts and the surrounding road network all have extensive parking restrictions that include time restricted access, operation of the Council's residential parking permit scheme, double yellow lines and red route restrictions, all preventing unauthorised on street parking. An aerial view of the site and surrounding area is shown below in Figure 4, with further aerial images provided in Appendix 2.

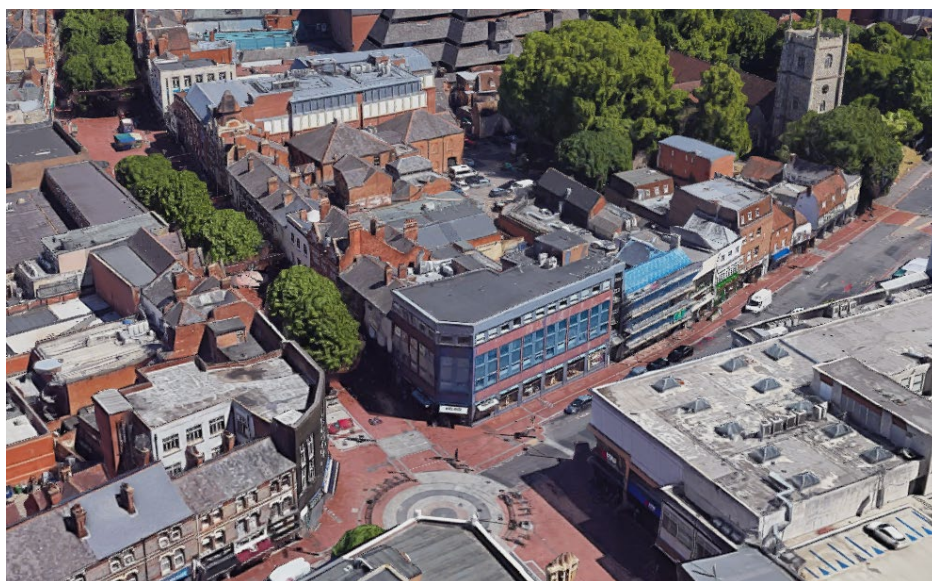


Figure 4 - Aerial view from Google Maps looking south-east

- 2.6. The application is being considered by the Planning Applications Committee as it involves the change of use of gross floorspace in excess of 1000sqm, which as per the scheme of delegation is required to be considered by the Committee.

3. The proposal

- 3.1. Full planning permission is sought for the change of use of the first to third floors from office (use Class E) to 31 serviced apartments (Class C1). In addition, it is also proposed to erect a fourth floor roof extension to provide 6 further serviced apartments, resulting in a grand total of 37 serviced apartments being proposed. The fourth floor addition takes the form of a mansard roof extension with dormer on the Broad Street and St Mary's Butts frontages, with a straight vertical extension with conventional windows on the rear (east) elevation. To clarify, the two ground floor units do not form any part of the proposed development works.

- 3.2. Within the glossary of the draft updated Local Plan November 2024, serviced apartments are defined as:

A use falling between hotels and housing, providing basic facilities for self-sufficient living but also the amenities of a hotel, and let on short-term tenancies, often less than three months. Generally classed as C1 hotels for planning purposes.

- 3.3. A series of associated alterations are also proposed, such as the inclusion of additional spandrel panels on the upper floors of the Broad Street and St Mary's Butts elevations and window/door changes on the eastern (rear) elevation. The existing third floor diamond shaped metal cladding is proposed to be changed to vertical standing seam metal cladding to provide consistency with the proposed additional storey material. At newly created roof level, an area of green roof is proposed. Within the rear parking area, it is proposed to reduce the number of car parking spaces from 16 to 10, to create space for a proposed cycle store (4 Sheffield Stands providing space for 8 cycles) and additional waste storage areas. The Transport Statement specifies that 2 spaces will continue to be used by Caffé Nero, 2 will be for the existing retail use and 6 spaces are proposed "for the operational needs and residents/guests of the serviced apartments". However, the statement then continues by stating, "In practice due to the rear access not being attractive to users especially at night these spaces would not be used by residents/guests". To clarify, both internally and externally the two commercial units at ground floor level remain unchanged in the proposals.

- 3.4. In floorspace terms, the proposals (according to information provided by the applicant) involves the change of use of 1022.5sqm (gross internal area) from Class E to Class C1, with the proposed roof extension creating an additional 250.4sqm (gross internal area) Class C1 floorspace. This, together with a breakdown of the proposed accommodation on a floor-by-floor basis, is stipulated below in Figure 5:

Floor	Existing GIA floorspace (in sqm)	Proposed GIA floorspace (in sqm)	Change in GIA floorspace (in sqm)	Number of serviced apartments
1 st floor	347.9	347.9	0	9
2 nd floor	337.3	337.3	0	11
3 rd floor	337.3	337.3	0	11
4 th floor	0	250.4	+ 250.4	6
Total	1022.5	1272.9	+ 250.4	37

Figure 5 – The existing/proposed floorspaces and number of units per floor

- 3.5. During the course of the application a series of revisions and additional information was submitted in order to address officer comments. A summary of the main changes incorporated since the original submission of the application are:

- Provision of a proposed green roof and lift overrun at roof level, rather than the originally submitted flat roof area not including any such features
 - Spandrel panel locations amended, with associated internal layout changes too
 - The existing third floor diamond shaped metal cladding is proposed to be changed to standing seam to provide consistency with the proposed additional storey material.
 - The dormer window widths have been reduced, cill height of the glazing reduced, chamfering of the dormer cheeks back towards the glazing and internal layouts adjusted accordingly.
 - An accessible ramp has been added to the rear entrance, with the provision of three accessible rooms indicated on the proposed plans.
 - Elevation plans associated with the cycle and bin store have been provided, together with the layout of the stores
 - A revised noise report has been submitted to address consultee comments.
- 3.6. In terms of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), the applicant has submitted the necessary forms as part of the application. The provision of 250.4sqm of new-build Class C1 accommodation will generate a CIL payment of £46,063.58 (250.4 x the 2025 CIL rate of £183.96 for hotel accommodation). Given that the existing upper floors are still in use, it is likely that the liability will in practice be reduced to zero for these floors. This is on the basis of the building being in use for a continuous period of at least 6 months in the previous 36 months prior to a decision being issued. However, this will only be able to be confirmed once any planning permission has been issued.
- 3.7. The plans and documents submitted with this application are listed at Appendix 1 of this report.

4. Planning history

Application site

- 4.1. There have been numerous planning applications at this site in the past, many of which are not particularly relevant to the current proposals (e.g. various advertisements associated with the ground floor uses). Those considered to be relevant to the proposals are listed below:
- 4.2. PL/94/0606 - Change of use from (Class B1) offices to (Class A2) employment agency. Granted 17/11/1994.
- 4.3. PL/13/1550 - The replacement of the exterior skin and exterior single glazing units with new cladding and double glazed units to the active facades on St Mary's Butts and Broad Street, whilst retaining the interior skin and secondary glazing. Granted 06/01/2014.
- 4.4. PL/15/1901 - Non-material amendment following a grant of planning permission (131550) to increase the height of the junction between the flat lock zinc cladding and Alucobond cladding within the existing entryway up to a height of 4.19m (previous approved height of Alucobond cladding of 3.42m). Non-material amendment agreed 17/11/2015.
- 4.5. PL/21/1160 - Recladding of Broad Street and St Mary's Butts elevation. Certificate of Lawfulness Granted 21/09/2021.

Nearby to the application site

200-202 Broad Street (diagonally to the north-west of the application site)

- 4.6. PL/23/0330 - Erection of a two storey roof extension to create six flats, with cycle store and bin store at basement level. Alterations to shopfront, reduction of parapet to front elevation and insertion of nine windows to rear elevation. Current application under consideration by the local planning authority.

Broad Street Mall, Broad Street (to the west of the application site)

- 4.7. PL/24/0173 - Part-demolition of existing retail units, car park and service areas, demolition and rebuild of car park ramp, and construction of a residential-led, mixed-use development fronting Queens Walk and Dusseldorf Way, including all necessary enabling and alteration works required. Current application under consideration by the local planning authority.

5. Consultations

5.1. RBC Transport

- 5.1.1 In summary, there are no transport objections to the proposals subject to a number of conditions.
- 5.1.2 Considering parking matters, the site currently has 16 car parking spaces within the existing service courtyard. The proposals seek to reduce this provision to 10, with 4 allocated for use by the existing retail use and 6 for the operational needs of the proposed C1 use. In accordance with the Council's current parking standards and Design and SPD C1 (Hotels) would require 0.25 parking spaces per room, equating to 9 parking spaces. Given the site's highly sustainable location and extensive parking restrictions that operate in the area, the availability of short term on street parking and longer-term parking in the public car parks located nearby, a lower parking provision for the C1 use can be accepted in this instance. This is essentially a car free development, with visitors/guests being able to rent available spaces. Occupants of the serviced apartments would not be eligible to apply for resident or visitor permits; conditions to secure this are not considered necessary in this instance (with the short-term occupation being secured via legal agreement), so an informative will suffice to clarify this matter.
- 5.1.3 Turning to consider cycle parking, 4 Sheffield stands are proposed, which will provide 8 spaces in total. In accordance with the Council's current Parking Standards and Design SPD, a C1 use would require 1 cycle storage space per 6 staff, with none required for guests (owing to the nature of the use). The proposal therefore exceeds the SPD requirements, which in itself is welcomed and supported, with the cycle provision secured via condition.
- 5.1.4 With regard to servicing, the C1 use would be serviced via the existing courtyard. The ground floor Class E premises would continue to be serviced as existing, with loading bays also available on St Mary's Butts. Refuse storage is also located in the rear courtyard, with the proposal introducing an additional refuse area (through the removal of 6 car parking spaces), which is welcomed. The proposal does not change the existing commercial refuse or servicing arrangements which will continue to be collected by a private contractor from the rear and the front of the building. The C1/serviced apartments would be serviced in the same way by a private contractor from the rear of the site. The refuse store space will be secured via a compliance condition.
- 5.1.5 Given the site's location, a comprehensive Construction Method Statement (CMS) will be required, in order to protect amenity and highway safety. Any works affecting the highway would have to comply with the Borough's Guidance Notes for Activities on the Public Highway and works would need to be scheduled with the Council's Streetworks team prior to commencement on site. A CMS will therefore be secured via a pre-commencement condition.

5.2. RBC Conservation Officer

- 5.2.1 It is considered that the proposed massing of the new fourth floor has no substantial impact on the settings of heritage assets (listed buildings and conservation area). This is due to its set back position, height, mansard roof form, proportionate new openings and existing matching materials. It can be considered consistent in scale with the existing scale and character of the surrounding historic environment.
- 5.2.2 The works involving the spandrel panels would have a neutral impact on the settings of heritage assets, given the anticipated same materials and those being altered being vertically in-line with each other.

- 5.2.3 There is no impact on the historic environment from the proposed bin and cycle store, given its scale and location.
- 5.2.4 In overall terms there are no objections to the proposal, with the submitted Heritage Statement being satisfactory.
- 5.3. RBC Environmental Protection
- 5.3.1 It is confirmed that the submitted air quality assessment is acceptable and nothing further is required in this regard.
- 5.3.2 In terms of the noise assessment, the originally submitted noise assessment was largely considered acceptable, barring a lack of clarity as to precisely how the proposed mitigation for external noise met the criteria and the absence of consideration of noise transfer from the ground floor uses to the first floor. During the course of the application more information has been submitted, demonstrating in terms of external noise, the proposed mitigation can meet the Lowest Observed Adverse Effect Level (LOAEL), but the more stringent No Observed Effect Level (NOEL) is not proposed to be met. Environmental Protection would prefer for the NOEL standard to be met, but Planning Officers consider that the temporary serviced apartment use (rather than permanent residential accommodation) means flexibility can be applied in this specific instance. A condition will secure the mitigation measures specified within the report. In terms of insulation between the ground and first floors, the applicant proposes to use the Council's standard criterion, so there is agreement that this can be secured via the submission of further details prior to the commencement of the development. Accordingly, subject to these conditions, the proposals are acceptable from a noise perspective.
- 5.3.3 It is also considered necessary that the Council's standard environmental protection based conditions associated with the construction of the development, including hours of works, are secured to protect nearby amenity. For similar reasons, measures to prevent pests and vermin accessing bin stores are also required to be secured via condition too.
- 5.4. RBC Waste Services
- 5.4.1 Initial comments raised queries in relation to the number of existing and proposed bins and the arrangements for collection, within the context of the wider servicing area to the rear of Broad Street and St Mary's Butts at this point. Whilst the serviced apartments would not be entitled to the standard household waste collection service and would need to have a private commercial waste contract in place, there will still be a need to have space for separate collections of general waste, recycling and food waste. The dimensions of the store and number of bins would need to be indicated, so that the frequency of collection can be calculated.
- 5.4.2 In response, the applicant reiterated their intention for a private contractor to continue to collect waste from the site, with 2 x 1100L refuse, 2 x 1100L recycling and 1 x 180L food waste bins shown to be provided within an enclosed store within the parking area. The applicant has also confirmed that the precise arrangements for the collections will be agreed with the Waste Contractors, in conjunction with the serviced apartments on-site staff, thereby ensuring that the waste is moved to the correct location, collected, and then returned immediately to the appropriate storage area. RBC Waste Services are satisfied with the additional information submitted during the application and concur with the RBC Transport recommended condition (see section 5.1 above) for the store and provision of bins to be secured via a pre-occupation compliance condition.
- 5.5. GS Ecology (RBC's ecology consultants)
- 5.5.1 The ecology technical note (AAE, 2024) concludes that the proposals are unlikely to affect protected species and as such there would be no ecological objections to the plans. Habitats on site comprise entirely hardstanding and buildings. Given the existing site characteristics, the development is exempt from mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain, owing to the de-minimis exemption.

5.5.2 The technical note recommends bird and bat roosting boxes to be provided, which is positive. However, the submitted plans do not show where these will be located or any details. These details are therefore recommended to be secured via condition. In a related regard, there is considered to be scope for a blue/green roof to be provided as part of the development, with this potentially providing numerous ecological benefits. Again, such details can be secured via condition.

5.6. RBC Building Control

5.6.1 Comment that for the purposes of Building Regulations this would be treated as flats. The general layout is acceptable, subject to some minor tweaks. For example, sprinklers will be required to be installed throughout the building, as the top floor more than 11 m high. In addition, smoke ventilation to the common corridors will be required to be provided, necessitating a smoke outlet on the roof.

5.7. RBC CCTV / Community Safety

5.7.1 No objections raised, with the external changes not interfering with the current CCTV views of the area and no extra/new external lighting shown.

5.8. Reading's Economic and Destination Agency (REDA)

5.8.1 The proposed development of serviced apartments is part of a trend in small, flexible, short term let units in the town centre more suited to people visiting / staying on business, possibly for leisure purposes, that want a more self-contained alternative to a hotel. In REDA's 2023 Tourism Survey it was reported that there were 1.35 million nights spent by people in the area as a result of overnight trips; this would be a mixture of single and multiple nights and £121 million is generated by overnight trips.

5.8.2 Retaining offices in the town centre is important, but hybrid and a mix of home working is here to stay. In addition, so called 'older offices' have been replaced with new offices on other sites (for example, Station Hill) and offices such as St Marys House are less attractive as offices to investors.

5.8.3 As we lose office workers and office space in the town centre the replacement as hotel/ serviced apartment accommodation is a useful addition to the town centre and important to meet demand for visiting Reading for leisure and business purposes. It contributes to the local day and night time economy with additional spend in town centre hospitality, retail and leisure services, helping maintain the vibrancy of the town centre.

5.8.4 Operators of serviced apartments themselves are businesses so not classed as residential so contributes to the economic output of the Reading economy and business rates collected in Reading

5.8.5 REDA is happy to support this application and has no objection to its increase height by an additional storey. REDA recommends that a construction stage and end user ESP is secured via legal agreement. This can be secured on a flexible basis of either an 'on-site' ESP or financial contribution.

5.9. Reading Design Review Panel (DRP)

5.9.1 The proposals were considered by the Reading DRP on 16th January 2025. Below is a summary of the comments received:

- The mansard roof approach is generally supported and could be considered an improvement, helping to soften the existing 'top' of the building.
- Most of the Panel support the proposed dormers, although their width could be reduced to create a more elegant roofscape. Some panel members suggested rooflights instead of dormers.
- The hipped termination of the mansard roof on Broad Street was considered successful; query whether this could be replicated on St Mary's Butts

(currently terminates with a vertical mansard profile), to improve the overall appearance and reduce the impact on the neighbouring building.

- Suggestion for the existing upper storey to be reclad to match the other lower floors, so that only the new storey has a vertical metal standing seam finish.
- Additional glazed spandrel panels questioned, owing to the impact on the building's appearance at night. In addition, concerns about the 'new' spandrel panels not matching the existing visually, and the longevity of them if they are only treated internally.
- Some of the Panel suggested an alternative materiality for the panels should be considered. One suggestion was for insulated metal panels to match the roof and tie all storeys together, and bring practical and energy efficiencies too.
- Comment for any proposed mansafe, services or lift installations visible at roof level to be shown on the planning drawings.
- The Heritage Statement missed the opportunity to fully assess the impacts of the proposals upon Heritage Assets. A more positive impact may occur if the elevations are to be redesigned.

5.10. Designing Out Crime Officer at Thames Valley Police

5.10.1 In the absence of information on security measures and arrangements for the proposed development, it is recommended that the applicant submits an Access and Security strategy. This could potentially be secured via condition. The strategy should include information relating to:

- on site staff/security personnel roles and responsibilities;
- access control measures for residents/guests and visitors;
- compartmentation of the building;
- the bin and cycle store area;
- provision for secure postage and deliveries to the site;
- location, number and type of CCTV cameras, informed by an Operational Requirements Study;
- the security specifications of all communal doorsets.

5.11. Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service

5.11.1 RBFRS advise that at this stage there is no duty placed upon the Fire Authority under legislation to make any comment relative to the application. The proposals have, however, been cursorily examined and in as much as would affect the planning application and appear to meet the basic principles of means of escape in case of fire.

5.11.2 Any structural fire precautions and all means of escape provision will have to satisfy Building Regulation requirement. These matters are administered by the local authority Building Control or approved inspectors. No comments made by the Fire Authority at this stage should be taken as formal approval that the plans conform to the requirements of current Guides or Codes of Practice for means of escape in case of fire.

5.12. Thames Water

5.12.1 Thames Water advises with regard to surface water drainage that if the developer follows the sequential approach to the disposal of surface water no objection is raised.

5.12.2 Thames Water has confirmed no objection with regard to the waste water network, sewage treatment works infrastructure capacity matters, the water network and water

treatment infrastructure capacity matters, subject to informatives being included on any future decision notice.

5.13. Public Consultation

- 5.13.1 Three separate site notices were erected on 15/01/2025, expiring on 05/02/2025. A press notice was published on 23/01/2025, expiring on 13/02/2025. No responses have been received but any that are received will be reported to your meeting.

5.14. Local Groups

- 5.14.1 Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC) was formally consulted owing to the proximity of the site to the St Mary's Butts / Castle Street Conservation Area, but no response has been received at the time of writing.

6. **Legal context**

- 6.1. Section 16(2) and 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special interest which it possesses.
- 6.2. Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority in the exercise of its functions to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.
- 6.3. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. However, the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making (NPPF paragraph 12).
- 6.4. In this regard, the NPPF states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the Local Plan 2019 according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).
- 6.5. Accordingly, the latest NPPF and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

NPPF December 2024

- 2. Achieving sustainable development
- 4. Decision-making
- 6. Building a strong, competitive economy
- 7. Ensuring the vitality of town centres
- 8. Promoting healthy and safe communities
- 9. Promoting sustainable transport
- 11. Making effective use of land
- 12. Achieving well-designed places
- 15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- 16. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

National Planning Practice Guidance (2014 onwards)

Reading Borough Local Plan 2019

- CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction
- CC3: Adaptation to Climate Change
- CC5: Waste Minimisation and Storage

CC6: Accessibility and the Intensity of Development
 CC7: Design and the Public Realm
 CC8: Safeguarding Amenity
 CC9: Securing Infrastructure
 EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
 EN3: Enhancement of Conservation Areas
 EN5: Protection of Significant Views with Heritage Interest
 EN6: New Development in a Historic Context
 EN9: Provision of Open Space
 EN10: Access to Open Space
 EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network
 EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodland
 EN15: Air Quality
 EN16: Pollution and Water Resources
 EN17: Noise Generating Equipment
 EM3: Loss of Employment Land
 TR1: Achieving the Transport Strategy
 TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
 TR4: Cycle Routes and Facilities
 TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging
 RL1: Network and Hierarchy of Centres
 RL2: Scale and Location of Retail, Leisure and Culture Development
 CR1: Definition of Central Reading
 CR2: Design in Central Reading
 CR3: Public Realm in Central Reading
 CR4: Leisure, Culture and Tourism in Central Reading
 CR6: Living in Central Reading
 CR7: Primary Frontage in Central Reading

Reading Borough Council Supplementary Planning Documents

Topics

Employment, Skills and Training (2013)
 Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)
 Planning Obligations under Section 106 (2015)
 Sustainable Design and Construction (2019)

Sites

Minster Quarter Area Development Framework (2018)

Other relevant documentation

Reading Borough Local Plan Pre-Submission Draft Partial Update, November 2024
 St Mary's Butts / Castle Street Conservation Area Appraisal (2008)
 Reading Borough Council Tree Strategy (2021)
 Reading Biodiversity Action Plan (2021)
 Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking (Historic England, 2015)
 Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 3 (2nd Edition) The Setting of Heritage Assets (Historic England, 2017)

Local Plan Update

- 6.6 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 updated version of the Local Plan was published on 6th November 2024.
- 6.7 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.

- 6.8 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’.

7. Appraisal

- 7.1. The main considerations relevant to the determination of this application are:

- i. Land use principles
- ii. Design & related matters: scale, massing, appearance and impact on heritage assets
- iii. Quality of accommodation for future occupiers/users
- iv. Amenity for nearby occupiers
- v. Transport and Highways
- vi. Sustainability
- vii. Ecology / Natural Environment
- viii. Other matters – legal agreement and pre-commencement conditions
- i. Land use principles

- 7.2 The starting point for the assessment of these proposals are the land use principles. The proposals involve the loss of the upper floor Class E use (which, as per the planning history section above, relates to a 1994 permission for Class A2, now Class E (c) (ii) Professional services), totalling 1022.5sqm of gross internal floorspace at first to third floor level. Based on the officer site visit, the first and second floors are presently occupied, with the third floor vacant and stripped out internally (see Figure 6 below). The applicant has provided commentary in respect of Policy EM3 (Loss of Employment Land), which broadly applies in this instance, most notably (as per EM3v) advocating that the need for the proposed use is greater than the need for the retention of employment land and that (as per EM3iii) there is a surplus of a similarly sized/type of accommodation in Reading. In short, these points are accepted by officers in this specific instance.



Figure 6 - Internal photographs of the existing offices at second (left) and third (right) floor level.

- 7.3 Such proposals are also required to be considered in the context of the proposed serviced apartments (Class C1) use. Whilst there is no explicit adopted (2019) or emerging (draft updated) local plan policy specifically relating to serviced apartments, Policy RL1 (Network and hierarchy of Centres) acknowledges that Central Reading will see the greatest levels of development and change, Policy CR1 (Definition of Central Reading) recognises that other main town centre uses (such as serviced apartments) will take place in the Central Core (which the site is within), while Policy CR4 (Leisure, Culture and Tourism in Central Reading) encourages uses that would attract a wide range of people into the centre, which the proposed use would help facilitate. The overriding strategy for the Central Area, at paragraph 5.2.5 of the Local Plan, recognises a mix of uses across the central area. All of these policies and references weigh in favour of the proposed use, with such matters also referenced within the REDA consultation response (see section 5.8 above), which supports the proposed use.
- 7.4 In addition, adopted Policy CR6iv (and replicated in the emerging policy) does reference that where serviced apartments fall outside of a Class C3 use (as proposed in this instance), they will be located within the Central Core of the Borough. The proposals comply in this regard. Furthermore, the policy goes on to reference there being a requirement to restrict the duration of occupancy, with monitoring information regularly supplied. Accordingly, the serviced apartment use is recommended to be secured via s106 legal agreement for serviced apartment (within Class C1) use only, with maximum occupancy of no more than 3 months. Further obligations are proposed, including those in relation to monitoring, as stated in the Recommendation at the outset of this report. The applicant confirmed agreement to these matters prior to the validation of the application.
- 7.5 Amongst other matters, this robustly guards against the scheme being occupied for other uses (e.g. residential flats, as referenced in Policy CR6) without first applying for planning permission. In addition, a separate planning condition will secure there being a maximum of 37 serviced apartments at the site (as proposed), to prevent the possible future subdivision of units in the future, given the proposal has been assessed solely on the basis of the 37 units proposed. Accordingly, subject to the use being secured via legal agreement and the maximum number of units being managed through a planning condition, the principle of the proposed use is considered to be suitable. Moreover, this is considered to outweigh the loss of the existing use on the upper floors of the building. Therefore, in terms of land use principles, the proposed use is considered to be established.
- ii. Design & related matters: scale, massing, appearance and impact on heritage assets
- 7.6 Considering first the principle of a roof addition at the host building, whilst it is acknowledged that the existing top storey could already appear as a natural terminating point for the building, the recessive nature of the proposed mansard roof addition on the street frontages (set back 1.2m from the façade) means the proposal is considered to sit comfortably within the context of the host building and wider streetscene. The proposed massing has been tested in various short and long views from all directions (as shown below in Figures 7-11, with further viewpoints also provided in Appendix 2), with the additional massing not being overly discernible or harmful in either short or long views, assisted by the mansard form proposed. The principle of the additional storey is supported by both the RBC Conservation Officer (see section 5.2 above) and the Reading Design Review Panel (see section 5.9 above). It also adheres with the indicative building heights parameters stated within the Minster Quarter Area Development Framework SPD (figure 20). This is a prominent location, with the other corner buildings at the crossroads being all distinctly different in style and appearance. Whilst adding an additional storey would make this building taller than the other corner buildings, as well as further increasing the differential in height to the existing neighbouring buildings on both Broad Street and St Mary's Butts, this is not considered to be harmful in this instance, with the corner location and setting of the surroundings meaning this can comfortably assimilate into the streetscene and in overall terms be a positive addition of suitable high quality. In addition, it is not considered that positively determining this application would impinge on

the Council's on-going assessment of a current application diagonally to the north-west of the site at 200-202 Broad Street, or the current application to the west of the site at Broad Street Mall (see section 4 of this report for details of these separate applications).



Figure 7 - Comparison of the existing context (top) and a proposed* visualisation of the corner elevation view (provided by the applicant) from the junction of West Street and Oxford Road.

(* the proposed visualisation is as per the original application submission – a revised version showing the amended design may be submitted in time for an update report to committee)

- 7.7 From a heritage perspective, it is considered that the site is in a sensitive location, as although not being a listed building or within a conservation area itself, the site is within 27m of the St Mary's Butts / Castle Street Conservation Area and close to statutory listed and locally listed buildings along Broad Street, as highlighted at paragraph 2.4 above. Accordingly, the applicant has submitted a detailed Heritage & Townscape Assessment, which the Council's Conservation Officer considers to suitably justify the proposals in terms of protecting the heritage assets (in accordance with Policy EN1 – Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment), conserving the setting of the nearby conservation area (in accordance with Policy EN3 – Enhancement of Conservation Areas) and would not unduly affect locally important heritage assets (therefore complying with Policy EN4 – Locally Important Heritage Assets). As per the Conservation Officer's

comments at section 5.2 above, the proposals are supported, with the roof addition considered to be consistent with the existing scale and character of the surrounding historic environment, with the set back and mansard form on the street elevations minimising any impact on the streetscape.

- 7.8 In terms of Policy EN5 (Protection of Significant Views with Heritage Interest), the proposals are not considered to harm the view northwards down Southampton Street from Whitley Street towards St Giles Church, St Mary's Church or Greyfriars Church, with the relatively modest increase in height and bulk at the application site being indiscernible in these long views.



Figure 8 - Comparison of the existing St Mary's Butts streetscene looking north (officer photo on the left), with a visualisation of the proposals* on the right, as provided by the applicant

(* the proposed visualisation is as per the original application submission – a revised version showing the amended design may be submitted in time for an update report to committee).



Figure 9 - Comparison of the existing (officer photo left and applicant massing centre) and proposed (applicant massing right) long views from St Mary's Butts looking north.



Figure 10 - Comparison of the existing (officer photo left and applicant massing centre) and proposed (applicant massing right) long views from Oxford Road looking east.

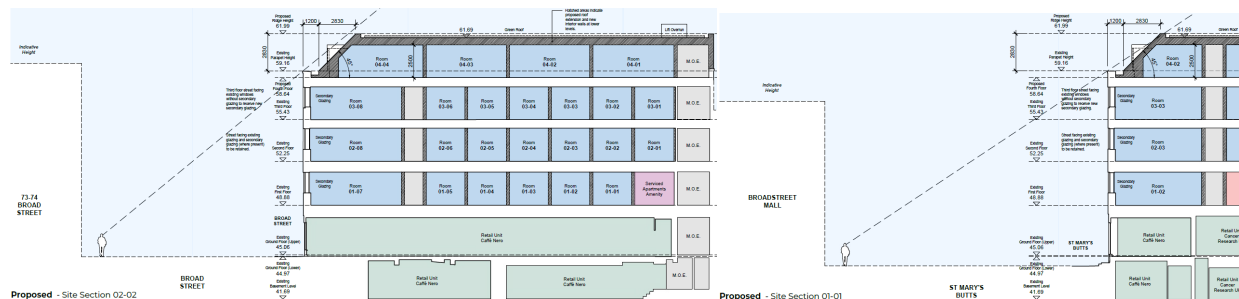


Figure 11 - Proposed sections indicating the limited visibility of the proposed roof addition in close views from St Mary's Butts (left) and Broad Street, owing to the set-back dormer design.

- 7.9 In respect of the detailed design of the proposed roof works, during the course of the application, following input from the Reading Design Review Panel (see section 5.9 above), the dormer windows have been narrowed in width and the glazing has increased in depth (in comparison with the original submission) to make the dormers better align with the windows/panels below and appear more elegant in form. These alterations are considered to be positive moves in respect of the overall appearance of the building as a whole and within the wider streetscenes. The proposed materials of the roof extension comprise vertical standing seam metal cladding, with the applicant indicating that this will match the proposed material of the third floor. The proposals also involve replacing the existing diamond shaped metal cladding at third floor level with vertical standing seam metal cladding. The dormer windows will also be metal clad too. These works will result in consistency with the third floor, bringing forward a coherent and high quality finish which is considered appropriate in principle. Given the prominence of the site and the need to ensure high quality design, as per Policies CC7 (Design and the public realm) and CR2 (Design in Central Reading), samples and details of the materials are recommended to be secured via condition.
- 7.10 The proposals also incorporate a significant increase in glass spandrel panels on the main street frontages (instead of conventional glazing) at first to third floor level, as shown below in Figure 12. This is acknowledged to be a necessary component of the scheme to facilitate an efficient internal layout of units, as proposed. Given the façades already includes spandrel panels between the existing first and second floors, these are an existing feature. Whilst the increase in provision of panelling does change the balance between glazing and spandrel panels (altering the overall appearance of the facades), they have been sensitively located at consistent intervals (following revisions during the application) to add a degree of vertical rhythm to the building and have attempted to align with the ground floor pilasters. Accordingly, providing the spandrel panels match the appearance of those existing as stated (with material details again considered to be required to be secured via condition – with an informative recommended to supplement the condition to outline the expectations, following on from the Reading Design Review Panel discussions – see section 5.9 above), these alterations are considered appropriate.

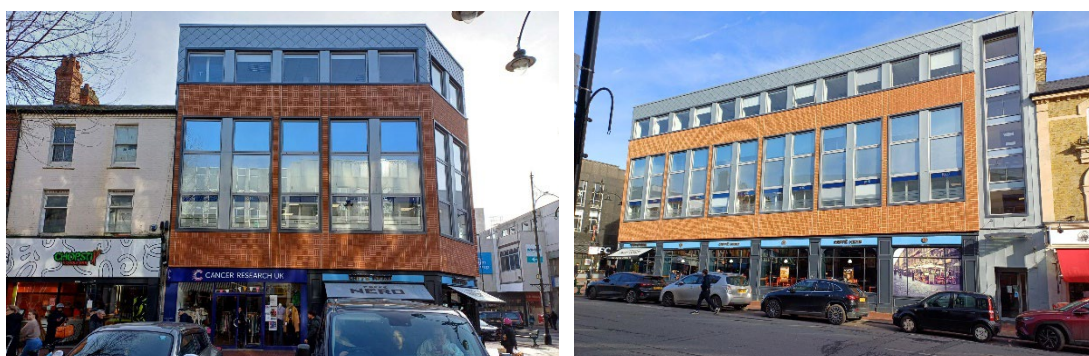




Figure 12 - Existing (middle row) and proposed (bottom row) Broad Street (left) and St Mary's Butts (right) elevations, indicating the increase in spandrel panels being proposed. Officer site photos are provided in the top row for additional context of the existing arrangements.

7.11 On the rear elevation the existing windows are to be replaced with new grey metal framed windows, in generally the same locations as existing, as shown in Figure 13 below. These are considered to be positive alterations, with the also proposed concrete string course at each floor re-finished in grey to align with the proposed window frames being supported too, representing a clear visual improvement at this point. The roof addition at this point is a straight vertical extension, differing from the street frontages where a dormer design is proposed. Given the limited visibility of this rear elevation from the public realm, together with the existing floors being in brickwork (meaning the proposed metal clad finish contrasts from the other floors, acting as a natural single storey 'top' to the building at this point), such an approach is considered appropriate in this instance. The indicated removal of various unsightly plant units is another improvement to the visual appearance of the building, aligning with Policies CC7 (Design and the public realm) and CR2 (Design in Central Reading).



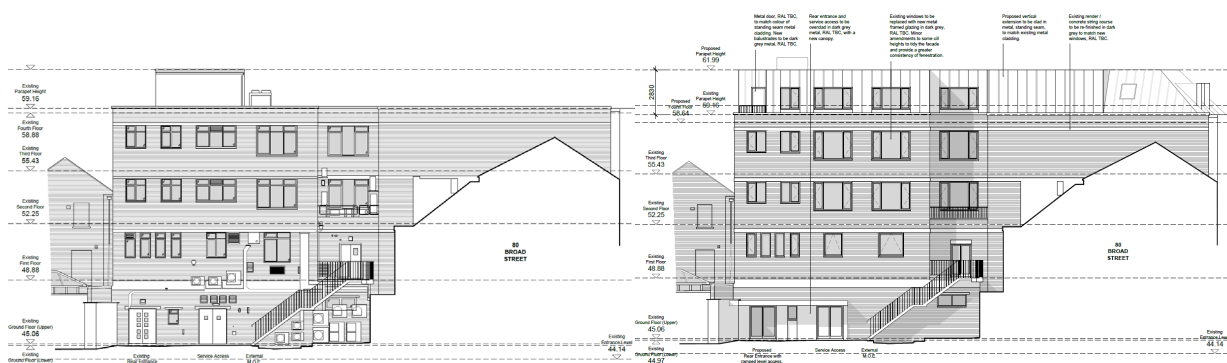


Figure13 - Existing (left) and proposed (right) rear elevation plans, with an existing officer site photo (top left) and aerial view via Google Maps (top right).

7.12 Accordingly, in overall terms the proposed works are considered appropriate from a design and heritage perspective, subject to material details being secured via condition.

iii. Quality of accommodation for future occupiers/users

7.13 It is considered that an overall good standard of accommodation would be provided for future occupiers of the proposed serviced apartments. Each of the upper floor rooms are regular in size and shape, providing natural outlook and suitable access to daylight and sunlight for future occupiers. The units are all shown to be open plan in nature, with combined living/dining/kitchen/bedrooms throughout (no bedrooms include separate doors or are enclosed). In addition, at first floor level a dedicated reception space, staff room, toilet and back of house stores are provided, together with an indoor amenity room and luggage space for guests. Although other ancillary facilities such as a gym or clothes washing facilities are not indicated, like some other serviced apartment schemes approved elsewhere in the Borough, this proposal is of a smaller scale to other similar recent proposals considered. Accordingly, it will be for guests to make their own arrangements in these regards. The lack of such facilities are not considered to significantly compromise the overall quality of the accommodation in this instance.

7.14 The serviced apartment units themselves vary in size, but by means of context, all are significantly smaller than the minimum gross internal floor area associated with new permanent residential properties (37sqm), meaning the units would not be appropriately sized for such a use (which, for the avoidance of doubt, is not proposed as part of this application). Just over half (19) of the units are smaller than 20sqm internally, with the smallest unit being 17.5sqm in area. 10 of the units are 20-25sqm in size, with 7 units being between 25-30sqm (with 5 of these on the uppermost floor) and one larger unit being 33.7sqm in size (again on the uppermost floor). These unit sizes are comparable with other similar proposals which have come forward elsewhere in the Borough in recent years, indicating that they are tailored to the distinct serviced apartment market. None of the units include any external amenity space, with no accessible external space indicated on the plans (any flat roof area is for maintenance access only, to the green roof for example). Given the nature of the proposals, in particular the short-term nature of the occupation, and the site constraints (town centre location with a limited existing car park within an enclosed location), the non-provision of open space is accepted in this specific instance. It is however considered that the lack of outdoor amenity space is a sub-optimal component of the development.

7.15 In terms of access and fire safety, the limited height of the building means a fire safety statement is not a statutory requirement as part of this application. However, it is nevertheless noted that a lift and two separate staircores within the building are provided to the upper floors of the building, which provides a welcomed alternative means of escape if necessary. Moreover, fire safety will be secured as part of the normal Building Regulations regime. Step free access is not presently provided to the upper floors of the building, with a series of steps from the current St Mary's Butts entrance (owing to the land levels) and a single step from the rear car park. The proposal seeks to remedy this, providing step free access via a newly proposed ramped entrance from the car park area. This is welcomed as a positive improvement at the site, with it being impractical to expect

step free access from St Mary's Butts, too given the ground floor use and arrangements are not altering. Furthermore, during the application the applicant has indicated that 3 of the serviced apartments are designed internally to be accessible rooms, with turning circles and enlarged bathroom spaces shown on the floor plans (1 unit at 2nd floor unit and 2 units at 3rd floor level – see Figure 14 below). This means that 8% of the units will be accessible. Whilst there is no specific standard for accessible rooms for serviced apartment schemes, bearing in mind that for residential proposals there is a 5% requirement, this is considered to be a benefit of the proposals. Set within this context, the provision of accessible rooms are welcomed, with it recommended for a condition to secure at least 2 accessible units (which would be more than 5% provision), with this being necessary to secure the planning benefit indicated by the proposals.



Figure 14 - Above: Proposed 1st floor. Below: Proposed 2nd (left), 3rd (right), 4th (bottom left) & roof level (bottom right).



7.16 Linked to access matters, an Access and Security strategy is recommended to be secured via pre-commencement condition, in line with observations from the Designing Out Crime Officer at Thames Valley Police (see section 5.10 above). As indicated within the consultation responses from RBC Transport, Waste Services and Environmental Protection (see section 5 above), the applicant has suitably demonstrated the quality of accommodation in respect of matters such as cycle and waste storage, servicing, air quality and noise, subject to a number of conditions. Therefore, in overall terms, whilst it

is considered that the serviced apartments lack some of the facilities seen in other similar proposals within the Borough in recent years, an overall good standard of accommodation for future guests is proposed.

iv. Amenity for nearby occupiers

- 7.17 The change of use and roof extension is not considered to cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing nearby residential occupiers. The closest existing residential occupiers are directly to the south of the application site (flats at Orbit House, 64-65 St Mary's Butts), with other flats on the upper floors of buildings to the south and limited provision to the east on Broad Street too. The roof extension and amended use of the building is not considered to cause a detrimental impact on nearby occupiers, in respect of Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) considerations, including privacy and overlooking, daylight and sunlight, visual dominance and outlook. A series of conditions, as recommended (particularly from Environmental Protection and Transport), will have the effect of assisting in the protection of amenity too, such as preventing flat roof areas being used as terraces.
- 7.18 It is also considered that the proposed use of the upper floors is not judged to inherently compromise the continued occupation and use of the ground floor units (or other nearby units to the site) by the current or any future similar occupiers. Whilst mindful that serviced apartments introduce an element of living accommodation, which is more sensitive in amenity terms to the existing office use (e.g. noise sensitivities), the short-term nature of the accommodation and the Environmental Protection recommended condition for an internal noise mitigation scheme will suitably address this potential future harm. When this is coupled with the long-established characteristics of the immediate area (such as being within the Central Reading area and primary shopping frontage, as referenced in section 1), combined these factors downplay the likelihood of legitimate noise complaints from future serviced apartment occupiers arising. Put another way, the proposed use is not considered to cause unreasonable burdens on existing/future commercial premises.

v. Transport and Highways

- 7.19 As per the RBC Transport comments above at section 5.1 of this report, there are no transport-based objections to these proposals. The reduction in car parking provision at the site (as shown below in Figure 15) is welcomed in providing additional space for refuse storage and newly created cycle parking on site. The provision of secure cycle parking within a dedicated facility is particularly welcomed, encouraging possible future use by staff and guests. This dovetails with the on-going security improvements to the off-site wider servicing area to the rear of St Mary's Butts and Broad Street. The development will essentially be car free, barring the small number of existing parking spaces future guests will have access to, with no parking permits being able to be applied for (secured via informative). Car and cycle parking, together with refuse storage will be secured via recommended compliance conditions.

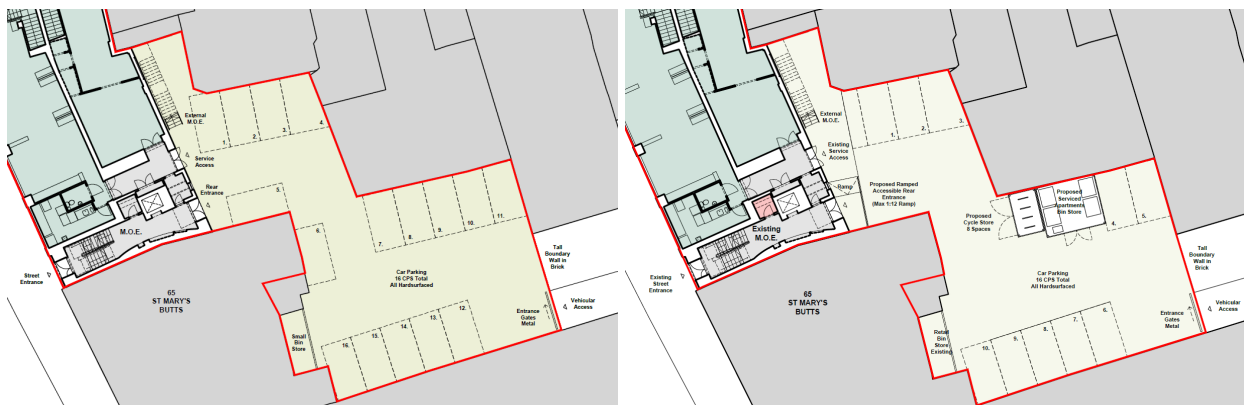


Figure 15 - Existing (left) & proposed (right) rear access, servicing and car & cycle parking area

- 7.20 Finally from a transport perspective, it is essential for a Construction Method Statement to be secured via pre-commencement condition in this case. Not only will this protect the

amenity of neighbouring and nearby occupiers/users, but also the highway safety of the many pedestrians who continuously pass this busy town centre location. Subject to these conditions being secured, there are no Transport objections to this application.

vi. Sustainability

- 7.21 The application is classified as a 'minor' development and therefore, in line with Policy CC2 (Sustainable Design and Construction), the proposals are required to meet the BREEAM 'Very Good' standard as a minimum. In support of the proposals, the applicant has submitted a sustainability report, which includes a BREEAM pre-assessment. This aligns with the requirements detailed within the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD. The submitted report demonstrates that the scheme shall definitely achieve the required 'Very Good' rating, while it is also plausible that if all the 'possible' credits are also incorporated within the final design an 'Excellent' rating could be achieved. The submission follows the required methodology of both policy and the SPD, demonstrating how it has been designed to incorporate measures to adapt to climate change.
- 7.22 Two planning conditions are recommended to secure the BREEAM 'Very Good' rating in practice. The first relates to securing an Interim BREEAM 'Very Good' rating Certificate at the pre-commencement, final design stage of the project. The second will secure a Final BREEAM 'Very Good' rating Certificate prior to the first occupation of any serviced apartment. These conditions are necessary to ensure the development is carried out in accordance with sustainable building standards, adhering to both Policy CC2 and the guidance within the SPD. To clarify, as the development is classified as a 'minor' development, no energy statement is required as part of this application.

vii. Ecology / Natural Environment

- 7.23 As per the GS Ecology consultation response summarised at section 5 above, there are no ecological objections to the proposals. The development is subject to the de-minimis exemption from biodiversity net gain (BNG). Notwithstanding this, details of bird and bat boxes, as recommended within the ecology technical note accompanying the application, will be secured via condition. Furthermore, GS Ecology and the RBC Natural Environment Officer consider that the flat roof area of the proposed roof extension should include either a green, brown or blue roof, in line with Policies CC7 (Design and the Public Realm), CR2 (Design in Central Reading), EN12b (Biodiversity and the Green Network) and EN14 (Trees, Hedges and Woodlands). This will help enhance an otherwise very urban environment, as specifically referenced by Policy CR2c. At the outset of the application no greening of the flat roof area was proposed. However, following officer feedback, the applicant has amended the proposals to indicate a generously sized green roof on the available flat roof (see Figure 14 above). This is welcomed and supported, with exact details of the green roof recommended to be secured via condition.

viii. Other matters – legal agreement and pre-commencement conditions

- 7.24 In addition to securing the Class C1 serviced apartments use via legal agreement, as already referenced above, it is also required for an Employment and Skills Plan (ESP) (construction and end user phases of development) to be secured via S106 Legal Agreement. The applicant agreed to the principle of the ESP, in line with Policy CC9 (Securing Infrastructure) and the Employment, Skills and Training SPD, from the outset of the submission. During the course of the application it has been agreed that this will be secured on a flexible basis, either as a contractor-led ESP to be progressed on site, or the payment of an equivalent financial contribution, as per the SPD formula. The legal agreement will be worded flexibly to enable either eventuality. This is supported by the REDA consultation response at section 5.8 above.
- 7.25 These obligations are considered to comply with the National Planning Policy Framework and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) in that they would be: i) necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, ii) directly related to the development and iii) fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development. A S106 Legal Agreement is therefore in the process of being advanced, pending the outcome of the Planning Applications Committee meeting.

- 7.26 In terms of pre-commencement planning conditions, these have been minimised as far as possible, in line with the NPPG. They are limited to the construction method statement, the site access and security strategy, the external material details, the internal noise mitigation scheme and the interim BREEAM certificate, which have all already been referenced separately above. The wording of these conditions have been agreed with the applicant, as per section 100ZA(5) of the Town and Country Planning Act.

8. Equality implications

- 8.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 8.2. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation. It is considered that there is no indication or evidence that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular application

9. Conclusion & planning balance

- 9.1 This application is required, as per all applications considered by the Local Planning Authority, to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This is as per Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- 9.2 Any harmful impacts of the proposed development are required to be weighed against the benefits in the context of national and local planning policies, as detailed in the appraisal above. Officers consider in this instance that whilst there are some shortfalls in the quality of accommodation for future guests (e.g. lack of outdoor amenity space and some supporting facilities), when compared with other similar recent proposals in the Borough, and the proposals would result in the loss of some currently occupied Class E floorspace, the benefits of the proposals substantially outweigh these relatively very minor shortfalls. The proposed use is broadly welcomed in this Central Reading location, with this being secured via legal agreement, together with an employment and skills plan. The design of the additional massing and alterations to the existing building are considered to be appropriate and represent positive moves from both design and heritage perspectives. The proposals have benefitted from some improvements following input from the Reading Design Review Panel at application stage. An overall good standard of accommodation would be provided, including the provision of accessible rooms. Furthermore, the proposals would not significantly impinge on the amenity of any neighbouring / nearby occupier/use, whilst also meeting the required sustainability and ecology standards too. Accordingly, it is evident in this case that the benefits of the proposals significantly outweigh any possible harmful impacts.
- 9.3 In reaching this conclusion it is considered that officers have applied a suitable planning balance of all material considerations. As such, this application is recommended for approval, subject to the completion of a S106 legal agreement and conditions, as stated at the outset of this report.

Appendix 1 - Plans (those marked with a strikethrough have been superseded during the course of the application)

1065-PL-001 - Site location plan
1065-PL-010 - Existing Block Plan
1065-PL-020 - Existing Basement Floor Plan
1065-PL-021 - Existing Ground Floor Plan
1065-PL-022 - Existing First Floor Plan
~~1065-PL-023 - Existing Second and Third Floor Plan~~
1065-PL-024 - Existing Fourth Floor Plan
1065-PL-025 - Existing Roof Plan
1065-PL-030 - Existing Elevation 01 (west facing)
1065-PL-031 - Existing Elevation 02 (north-west facing)
1065-PL-032 - Existing Elevation 03 (north facing)
1065-PL-033 - Existing Elevation 04 (east facing)
1065-PL-034 - Existing Elevation 05 (south facing)
~~1065-PL-110 - Proposed Block Plan~~
1065-PL-120 - Proposed Basement Floor Plan
~~1065-PL-121 - Proposed Ground Floor Plan~~
~~1065-PL-124 Rev A - Proposed Fourth Floor Plan~~
~~1065-PL-125 - Proposed Roof Plan~~
~~1065-PL-130 - Proposed Elevation 01 (west facing)~~
~~1065-PL-131 - Proposed Elevation 02 (north-west facing)~~
~~1065-PL-132 - Proposed Elevation 03 (north facing)~~
~~1065-PL-133 - Proposed Elevation 04 (east facing)~~
~~1065-PL-134 - Proposed Elevation 05 (south facing)~~
~~1065-PL-136 - Proposed Street Elevation 01 (St Mary's Butts)~~
~~1065-PL-137 - Proposed Street Elevation 02 (Broad Street)~~

As received 27/11/2024

1065-PL-036 Rev A - Existing Street Elevation 01 (St Mary's Butts)
1065-PL-037 Rev A - Existing Street Elevation 02 (Broad Street)
1065-PL-040 Rev A - Existing Section 01
~~1065-PL-041 Rev A - Existing Section 02~~
~~1065-PL-122 Rev B - Proposed First Floor Plan~~
~~1065-PL-123 Rev B - Proposed Second and Third Floor Plan~~
~~1065-PL-140 Rev B - Proposed Section 01~~
~~1065-PL-141 Rev A - Proposed Section 02~~

As received 17/12/2024

1065-PL-023 Rev A - Existing Second Floor Plan
1065-PL-026 - Existing Third Floor Plan
1065-PL-035 - Existing Elevations 06-07
1065-PL-041 Rev B - Existing Section 02
~~1065-PL-110 Rev A - Proposed Block Plan~~
1065-PL-121 Rev A - Proposed Ground Floor Plan
1065-PL-122 Rev C - Proposed First Floor Plan
1065-PL-123 Rev C - Proposed Second Floor Plan
1065-PL-126 - Proposed Third Floor Plan
1065-PL-124 Rev B - Proposed Fourth Floor Plan
1065-PL-125 Rev A - Proposed Roof Plan
1065-PL-130 Rev A - Proposed Elevation 01 (west facing)
1065-PL-131 Rev A - Proposed Elevation 02 (north-west facing)
1065-PL-132 Rev A - Proposed Elevation 03 (north facing)
1065-PL-133 Rev A - Proposed Elevation 04 (east facing)
1065-PL-134 Rev A - Proposed Elevation 05 (rear part elevations)
1065-PL-135 - Proposed Elevation 06-07 (south facing)
1065-PL-136 Rev A - Proposed Street Elevation 01 (St Mary's Butts)

1065-PL-137 Rev A - Proposed Street Elevation 02 (Broad Street)
1065-PL-140 Rev C - Proposed Section 01
1065-PL-141 Rev B - Proposed Section 02
~~1065-PL-150 – Proposed Cycle and Bin Store~~
As received 10/02/2025

1065-PL-110 Rev B - Proposed Block Plan
1065-PL-150 Rev A – Proposed Cycle and Bin Store
As received 12/02/2025

- Planning application form (including ownership certificate)
- CIL form 1, Woolf Bond Planning
- Covering letter by Woolf Bond Planning Ref DB/8532 dated 26/11/2024
- Air Quality Assessment by SLR Ref 416.065616.00001 Revision 2.0 dated 18/10/2024
- ~~- Noise Impact Assessment by KR Associates (UK) Ltd, Ref KR07645 Version 1.3~~
- Heritage, Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment by Turley, Ref 01454, dated October 2024
- Transport Statement by Peter Evans Partnership dated November 2024
- Technical Note: Ecology, by Aae Environmental Consultants Ref 243297 dated October 2024

As received 27/11/2024

- Supporting Planning Statement (Rev A) by Woolf Bond Planning Ref DB/8532 dated December 2024
- ~~- St Mary's House, Reading Design & Access Statement by Rutter Architects, Ref RA-1065-PL-Dec-24~~
- 1434_StMarysHouse_CornerView CGI
- 1434_StMarysHouse_SideView CGI

As received 17/12/2024

- BREEAM Accredited Professional Stage 2/3 Sustainability & Pre-assessment Report by The PES, dated 10/01/2025
- ~~-CIL Area Calculations – Existing~~
- ~~-CIL Area Calculations – Proposed~~

As received 10/01/2025

- St Mary's House, Reading Design & Access Statement by Rutter Architects, Ref RA-1065-PL-Feb 25 – Rev B
- CIL Area Calculations Rev A – Existing
- CIL Area Calculations Rev A – Proposed
- Noise Impact Assessment by KR Associates (UK) Ltd, Ref KR07645 Version 1.4 dated 05/02/2025
- 1065-PL – Schedule of Accommodation Rev A
- 1065_St Mary's House, Reading Planning Drawing Amendments by Rutter Architects dated 10.02.25
- 3865/220 - Block and Location Plan
- 3865/222 – Site Plan – AMENDED
- Photographs of the existing bin store x3
- Email from Woolf Bond Planning Ltd 'St Mary's House, 66-68 St Mary's Butts, Reading (PL/24/1593) (email 1 of 2)', dated 10/02/2025
- Email from Woolf Bond Planning Ltd 'RE: St Mary's House, 66-68 St Mary's Butts, Reading (PL/24/1593) (email 2 of 2)', dated 10/02/2025

As received 10/02/2025

- Email from Woolf Bond Planning Ltd 'RE: St Mary's House, 66-68 St Mary's Butts, Reading (PL/24/1593)', dated and received 12/02/2025

Appendix 2 - Other plans, elevations, viewpoints, aerial views & photographs



Existing floor plans above and proposed floor plans below.





View 05 - Existing Massing - View looking north down St Mary's Butts.



View 06 - Existing Massing - View looking south from the corner of West Street.



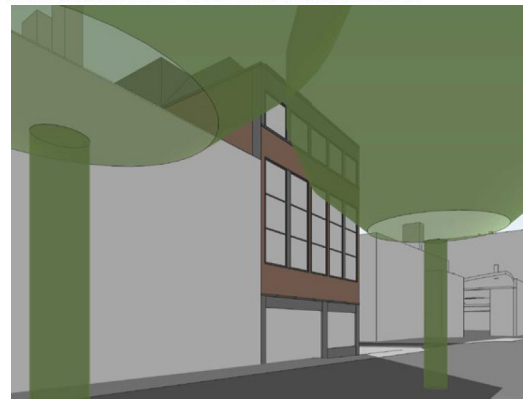
Existing (left) and proposed (right) St Mary's Butts west elevation plans



View 01 - Existing Massing - View looking south down West Street.



View 02 - Existing Massing - View looking west down Broad Street.



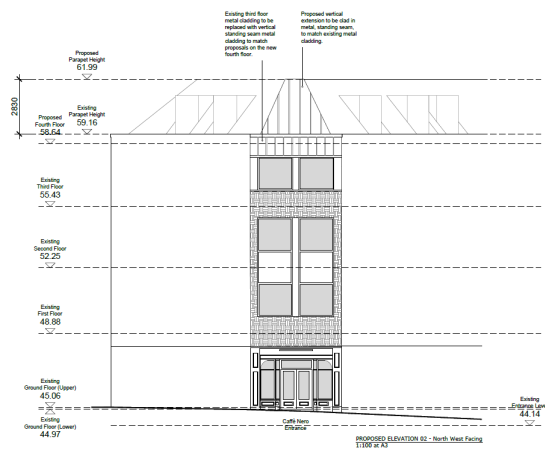
Existing (left) and proposed (right) Broad Street elevation plans



View 03 - Existing Massing - View looking north down St Mary's Butts.



View 04 - Existing Massing - View looking east down Oxford Road.



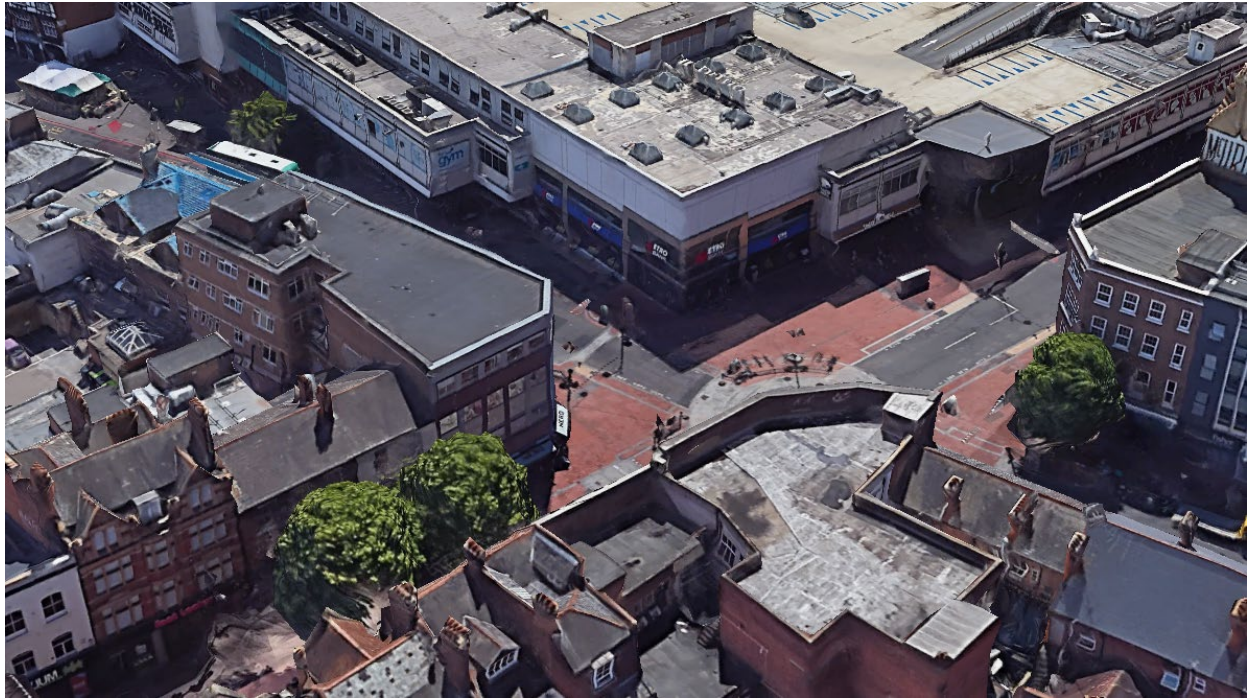
Existing (left) and proposed (right) St Mary's Butts / Broad Street corner elevation plans



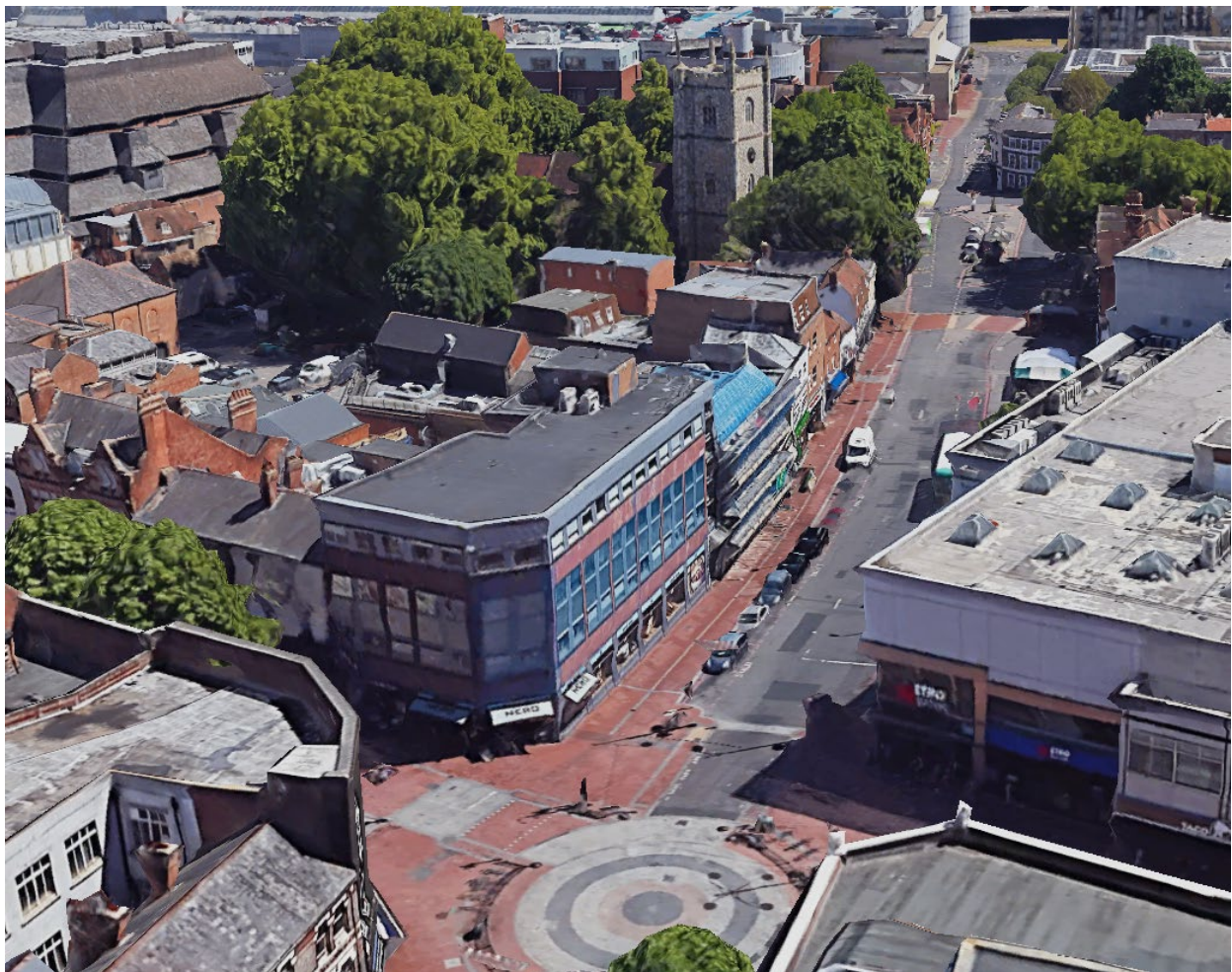
Google Maps aerial viewpoint from the south looking north towards West Street



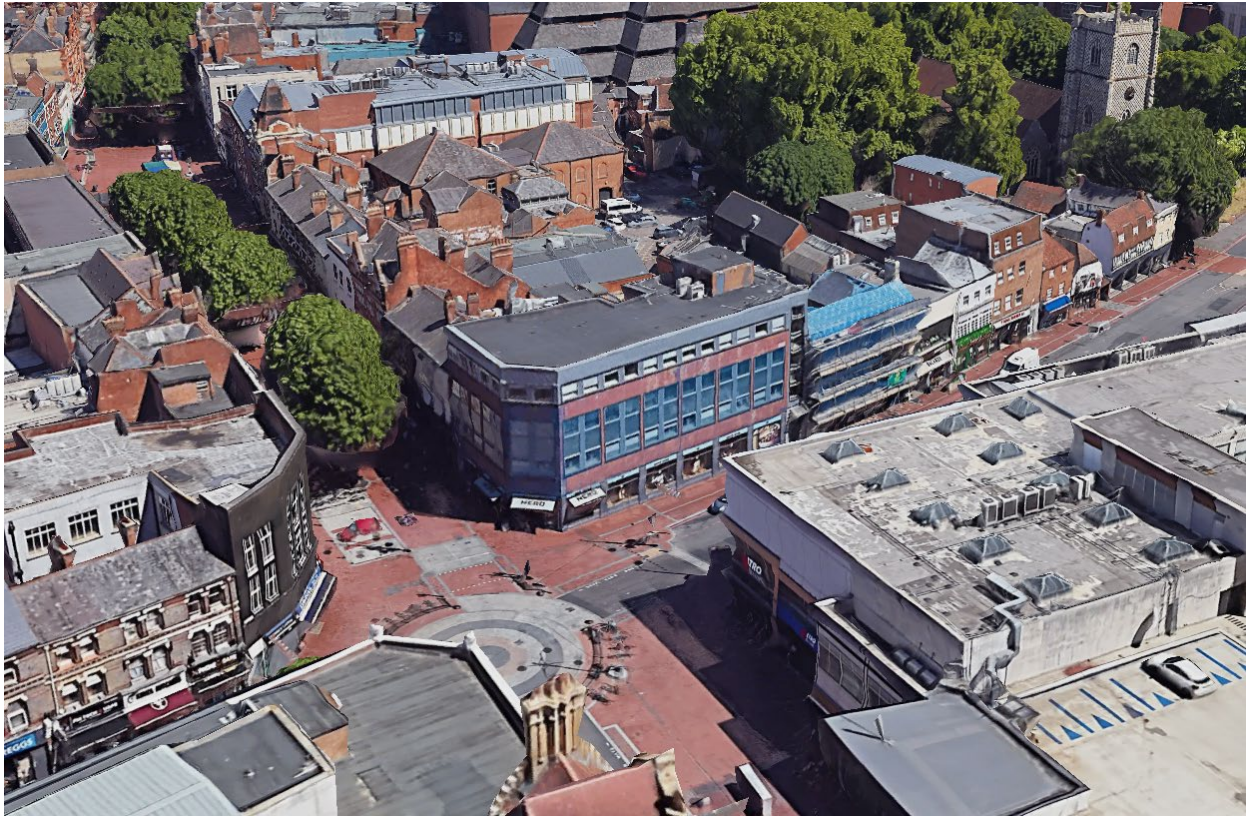
Google Maps aerial viewpoint from the south-east, showing the rear elevation and parking area



Google Maps aerial viewpoint from the north-east looking south-west, showing the Broad Street elevation and towards Broad Street Mall as existing



Google Maps aerial viewpoint from the north looking south showing both street elevations and towards the landmark Grade I Listed Church of St Mary's



Google Maps aerial viewpoint from the north-west, looking south-east.



Google Maps aerial viewpoint from the west, showing the St Mary's Butts street elevation



Google Maps aerial viewpoint from the south-west, showing the Grade I Listed Greyfriars Church (left) and the Grade I Listed Church of St Mary's (right)

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05 March 2025



Title	PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT
Ward	Church
Planning Application Reference:	PL/24/1684
Site Address:	John Rabson Recreation Ground, Northumberland Avenue, Reading, RG2 8DF
Proposed Development	Formation of Skatepark, associated landscaping and ramped pedestrianised access (amended description)
Applicant	Reading Borough Council
Report author	Gary Miles
Deadline:	7 th March 2025
Recommendations	Grant planning permission, subject to conditions as follows
Conditions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>TL1 – Time Limit – Three Years</i> 2. <i>AP1 – Approved Plans</i> 3. <i>M3 – Materials As specified</i> 4. <i>L4A – Landscaping Implementation as specified (visual amenity)</i> 5. <i>Retention of tree planting – 30 years (Biodiversity Net Gain)</i>
Informatives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>IF7 – Complaints about Construction</i> 2. <i>I1 – Positive and Proactive</i> 3. <i>Biodiversity Net Gain</i>

1. Executive summary

1.1. The proposal is to create a purpose built Skatepark in an area of public open space in Whitley, located in Church ward within the borough of Reading. The skatepark will have a positive social impact promoting a more active, healthy and physical lifestyle. The proposal is considered acceptable in terms of its effect on the character of the area and the effect on neighbouring amenity.

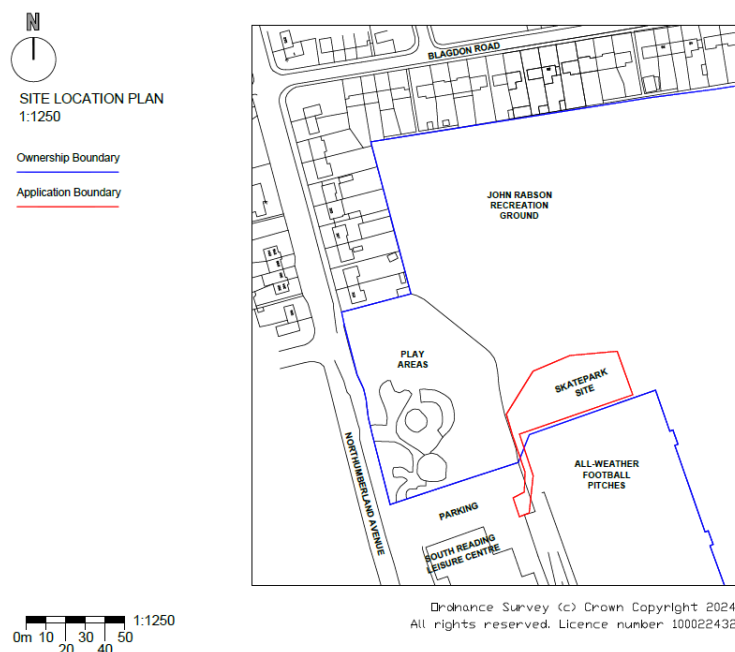
1.2. The proposal is recommended for approval subject to the conditions as outlined above.

2. Introduction and site description

2.1. The proposed skatepark for John Rabson Recreation Ground will provide a purpose-built venue for skateboarding. The proposed skatepark has been designed to be fully inclusive for users and spectators alike.

- 2.2. The application is required to be determined by Planning Applications Committee as Reading Borough Council is the applicant.
- 2.3. The proposal site is positioned in the centre of Whitley, to the east of Northumberland Avenue adjacent to the South Reading Leisure Centre, in the south of the borough. The site consists of a large green open space including full size football pitches, smaller 5-A-Side football pitch, 3G football pitch, tennis courts and a children's play area.
- 2.4. The proposed skatepark is to be positioned adjacent to and north of the existing 3G football pitch, the site is currently laid to grass and slopes in a west-east orientation. John Rabson Recreation Ground is made up of some 8.4 hectares, bordered to the north and the south by residential properties, to the east by Cowsey Wood Nature Reserve and to the west by Northumberland Avenue and additional residential properties. The proposed skatepark will cover an area of 418m squared.

Drawing no: PL-001-Site Location Plan



Photomontage-Images 1 to 7



3. The Proposal

- 3.1. Full planning permission is sought for a purpose-built, concrete Skatepark, along with associated landscaping. The work includes a new access route and ramped pedestrian access from the existing northern carpark associated with the South Reading Leisure Centre, making the facility accessible for all park users including spectators and pedestrians using the adjacent facilities within the John Rabson Recreation Ground.
- 3.2. The proposal includes soft landscaping including grass bund features at slopes of 1:3 planted with a wildflower seed mix, making good any other grassed areas, existing trees to be protected and retained along with the planting of an additional 83 Native trees within the John Rabson Recreation Ground, on land owned and controlled by the applicant.

3.3. Plans received:

Drawing no: PL-001-Site Location Plan, dated Nov 24
Drawing no: PL-002-Existing Site Plan, dated Nov 24
Drawing no: PL-003-Proposed Site Plan, dated Nov 24
Drawing no: PL-004-Dimension Plan, dated Nov 24
3D Visual 01 (Maverick Industries)
3D Visual 02 (Maverick Industries)
3D Visual 03 (Maverick Industries)

3.4. Other documents received:

Design & Access Statement (Maverick Industries)
Photomontage-Images 1 to 7
Noise Assessment (inacoustic) dated 8th August 24
Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (JohnWenman) dated Dec 24
Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (JohnWenman) dated Dec 24

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 17th December 2024

4. Relevant Planning History

PL/24/0123 - Provision of Skate Park – Withdrawn – May 24

PL/03/0966 – Synthetic grass pitch with fencing and floodlighting – Approved - Aug 2004

PL/03/0546 – Improvements of levels and drainage of sports ground & installation of 4m high chain link fence on northern boundary – Approved - May 2003

PL/00/1021 - Development of an all-weather sports centre, comprising pavilion, 12 all-weather floodlit playing courts, training pitch and carparking – Approved - Jan 2003

PL/02/1291 - Improvements of levels and drainage of sports ground – Approved - Sept 2002

5. Consultations

- 5.1. Internal Consultees with an overview of comments received:

5.2. ***RBC, Ecology***

The Ecology officer confirms the Ecology report (John Wenman Ecological Consultancy, December 2024, ref: R2661_BNG_a) has been undertaken to the appropriate standard and concludes that the proposals are unlikely to adversely affect

any priority habitats or protected species. There would therefore be no ecological objections to the development.

The Biodiversity Net Gain report (John Wenman Ecological Consultancy, December 2024) concludes that a 245.67 % net gain will be achieved through the addition of 83 off-site native trees around the edge of the playing field.

In principle, the Ecology officer agrees with the planting as a means of providing the required net gain.

The Ecology officer confirms no objections to the proposal.

Note: 83 Native trees will be planted off-site, though around the edge of the John Rabson Recreation Ground, these new trees are highlighted in pink on the attached Tree Planting Map, the trees will be secured via a condition.

5.3 ***RBC Natural Environment***

The Natural Environment officer confirms the soft landscaping is acceptable and confirms no objections to the proposal.

5.4 ***RBC Environmental Protection***

The Council's Environmental Health Officer identifies some impact on the nearest property when assessed using the BS4142 noise assessment methodology. Although designed for assessing the impact of commercial noise sources it remains a useful measure for this play facility. When assessed in terms of the 'impact' noise (wheels hitting concrete/metal), the noise is deemed acceptable in terms of that assessment standard. The EHO confirms the skate park is a sufficient distance from the nearest property to comply with the guidance from "Fields In Trust".

Overall, the EHO does not consider the noise grounds would be sufficient to recommend refusal of the application. There remains a risk of noise being heard from the gardens of the nearby properties, although due to the distance it is unlikely to be intrusive during the day – it should be noted that this is a prediction and cannot be known until the site is in use. The EHO recommends that the skate park is not to be illuminated, to discourage use of it overnight when the noise impact would be greater.

The EHO confirms no objections to the proposal.

5.5 **External Consultations**

The planning site notice was put up on 7th January 2025 and attached to the RBC street furniture and left in place for a minimum of 3 weeks for the duration of the public consultation.

No letters of representation have been received.

6. Legal context

- 6.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. However, the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making (NPPF paragraph 12).

- 6.2 In this regard, the NPPF states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the Local Plan 2019 according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).
- 6.3 Accordingly, the latest NPPF and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (2023)

National Planning Practice Guidance

SPD – Design Guide to House Extensions 2021

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC7 (Design and the Public Realm)

CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity)

EN7 (Local Green Space and Public Open Space) (EN7Sd John Rabson Recreation Ground and the Cowsey)

EN12 (Biodiversity and the Green Network)

EN14 (Trees, Hedges and Woodlands)

EN17 (Noise Generating Equipment)

CC2 (Sustainable Design and Construction)

OU1 (New and Existing Community Facilities)

Local Plan Update

- 6.6 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 updated version of the Local Plan was published on 6th November 2024.
- 6.7 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. Officer advice in respect of the Local Plan policies pertinent to this application and 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’.

7. Appraisal

- 7.1. The main considerations relevant to the determination of this application are:
- i. Land use principles and appearance
 - ii. Amenity for nearby occupiers

iii. Ecology / Natural Environment

i) Land use principles and appearance

7.2 Officers consider the proposed skatepark, associated landscaping and ramped pedestrianised access will fit in with the use and character of the recreation ground. It would be grouped with the much larger artificial football pitches with their tall fencing and lighting and the existing children's playground and would not result in harmful erosion of the existing open space. The proposed tree planting within the surrounding recreation ground will mitigate the visual effects of small reduction in grassed area and a condition is recommended to secure these. It is considered that the proposal will not harm the open space, or the landscape character of the John Rabson Recreation Ground or the wider streetscene. The proposals do not affect existing sports pitches.

7.3 The proposal is considered compliant with policies CC7 and EN7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

ii) Residential Amenity

7.4 Policy CC8 states that a development will not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties. The following points have been considered as part of this application:

- Visual dominance
- Noise and disturbance
- Artificial lighting

7.5 **Visual dominance:** The John Rabson Recreation Ground covers an area of 8.4 hectares, the proposed skatepark will cover a small proportion of this at 418sqm and be located adjacent to the existing 3G football pitch and children's playground. The proposed skatepark will have a maximum height of 2.3m from existing ground level and 1.5m from the top of the newly created ground level, compared with the much taller fencing adjacent.

7.6 The proposed skatepark is not considered overbearing to neighbouring properties, with the nearest residential property located 80m away. Officers consider there is sufficient space between the proposed skatepark, and the nearest residential property, the proposal is compliant with guidance from "Fields In Trust" - a British charity set up in 1925 as the National Playing Fields Association.

7.7 The proposed skatepark as outline above, will be partially visible from Northumberland Avenue-the nearest road, will be fully visible from the existing carpark north of South Reading Leisure Centre and be fully visible to the north and east. An additional 83 Native trees will be planted around the perimeter of the John Rabson Recreation Ground effectively over time creating additional screening. The skatepark is not considered overbearing, unsightly nor harmful to visual or residential amenity.

7.8 **Noise & disturbance:** Officers have considered mitigation, such as an acoustic barrier, but there were concerns that this acoustic barrier could cause more nuisance by balls being kicked against the fence, creating additional noise. Another option considered was a soil bund positioned between the skatepark and nearest residential properties. However, this option would take up more room and potentially become a focal point for Anti-Social Behaviour. Officers concluded that while the proposed skatepark could result in noise which could result in a degree of harm to residential amenity it would not be unreasonable in the context of the wider site being a recreational area with existing floodlit 3G football pitch and other grass football pitches

and the children's playground. Any harm must be weighed against the public benefits, as discussed at the end of this report.

- 7.9 **Artificial lighting:** No artificial outdoor lighting is included with the proposed skatepark. Therefore, there is no harm to amenity caused by artificial lighting.

iii) Ecology / Natural Environment

- 7.10 Policy EN12 states the key elements of the green network will be maintained, protected, consolidated, extended and enhanced. On all sites, development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity and geodiversity and should provide a net gain for biodiversity wherever possible. The proposals are subject to Mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain provisions.
- 7.11 It is considered that the Ecology report submitted has been conducted to the appropriate standard and that the proposals are acceptable in ecological terms. The proposal consists of landscaping works directly adjacent to the proposed skatepark, with the area planted up with wild flower seed mix. An additional 83 Native trees will be planted around the perimeter of the John Rabson Recreation Ground and will be made up of 3 Quercus Robur, 40 Acer Platanoides Crimson King and 40 Acer Platanoides. Officers confirm that the Biodiversity Net Gain of 245.67% is more than acceptable. A Biodiversity Net Gain Plan will be required to be submitted separately for approval under the requirements of the BNG regulations. A condition is also recommended to secure the trees on grounds of visual amenity. A further condition securing the planting for the 30 year BNG monitoring period is also recommended.
- 7.12 Policy EN14 states that individual trees, groups of trees, hedges and woodlands will be protected from damage or removal where they are of importance, and Reading's vegetation cover will be extended.
- 7.13 The Natural Environment officer was consulted and confirms no objections to the proposal. The additional 83 Native trees to be planted around the perimeter of the John Rabson Recreation Ground is very welcomed, this will create much needed biodiversity. Existing trees adjacent to and near to the proposal will be protected and retained.
- 7.14 Officers confirm that the proposal complies with policy EN12 and EN14 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and relevant BNG provisions included in the NPPF and associated Guidance.

8. Equality implications

- 8.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 8.2 The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation. It is considered that there is no indication or evidence that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this application.

9. Conclusion & planning balance

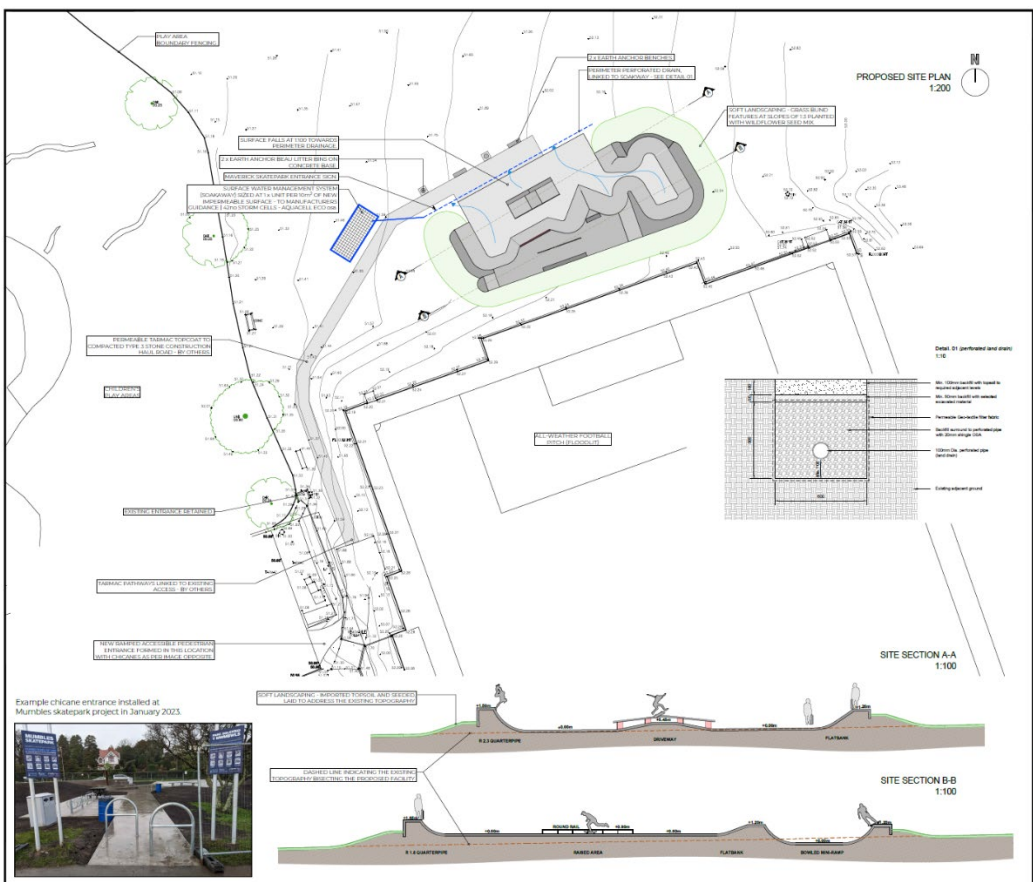
- 9.1 As with all applications for planning permission considered by the Local Planning Authority, the application is required to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise, as per Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- 9.2 It is considered that, subject to the recommended conditions, the proposed formation of a Skatepark would be a beneficial addition as a new community facility and would enhance the existing leisure provision at the recreation ground. The associated landscaping would improve the visual amenity of the area and is an additional benefit. The proposal would have a ramped pedestrian access and would be inclusive in its design. The skatepark is not considered detrimental to the character and appearance of the existing recreation ground open space or the wider area. The development would be located an appropriate distance from neighbouring dwellings and it is considered that any harm in terms of noise and disturbance would be outweighed by the public benefits of the scheme described above. A substantial Biodiversity Net Gain will be achieved. Overall, the proposal is considered to be a positive addition to the area and is recommended for approval, subject to the conditions included in this report.

Plans

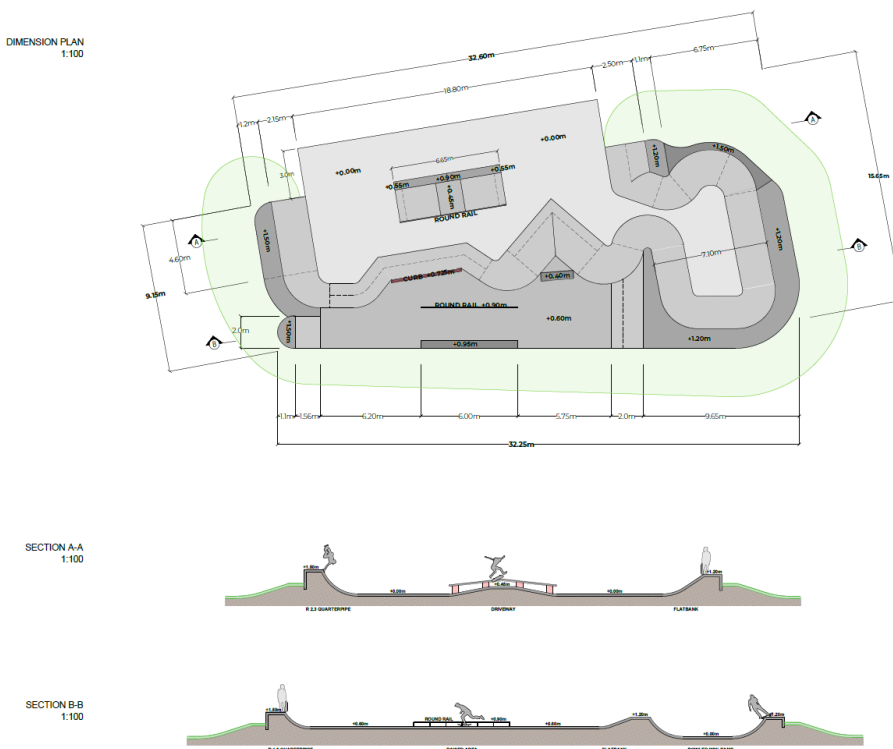
Drawing no: PL-002-Existing Site Plan



Drawing no: PL-003-Proposed Site Plan



Drawing no: PL-004-Dimension Plan



Aerial Plan



3D Visual 01



MAVERICK
INDUSTRIES

3D RENDERING

PARK DIMS
32.3m x 15.5m

JOHN RABSON'S REC SKATEPARK

CONCEPT TWO

01 Quarterpipe 1500mm high (R2.3)	10 Volcano 1200mm high	19 Quarterpipe 900mm high
02 Blend Corner to 600mm Flatbank	11 Bowled End 1200mm high	20 Ledge on Flat 350mm high
03 Flatbank 600mm high	12 Mini Ramp / Bowl 1200mm	21 Flat Bar Rail 350mm high
04 Hippled Bank 600mm high	13 Corner Extension 1500mm	22 Ledge 400mm high
05 Curb 125mm high	14 Hippled Quarterpipe 1200mm	23 Flat Space 3m x 18.5m
06 Blend Corner	15 Flatbank 1200mm high	24 2x Earth Anchor Benches
07 Flatbank Hip 600mm high	16 Driveway 450mm high	25 2x Earth Anchor Beau Blind
08 Blend Corner to 1200mm QP	17 Grind Rail 550 - 500mm high	26 Link Path (by others)
09 Flatbank 600mm high	18 Ledge 550 - 450mm high	27 Safety Sign

JOHN RABSON

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05 March 2025



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT
Ward	Katesgrove
Planning Application Reference:	PL/25/0160
Site Address:	134 Northumberland Avenue, Reading
Proposed Development	Use as class C2 (Residential institution) including Internal refurbishment and external landscape works
Report author	Richard Eatough
Applicant	Reading Borough Council
Deadline:	27 March 2025
Recommendations	Grant planning permission, subject to conditions as follows:
Conditions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. TL1 standard three years for implementation 2. AP1 approved plans 3. No other use other than as a C2 childrens' home 4. Maximum of two residents 5. Retention of parking spaces for parking only 6. Installation of noise suppression measures and retention thereafter
Informatives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Terms and conditions 2. Positive and proactive 3. Building Regulations approval required 4. Environmental Protection Act 1990 requirements

1. Executive summary

- 1.1. This report concerns the re-use/change of use of an end-of-terrace (semi-detached) house on Northumberland Avenue in Whitley. The building has formerly been in use as a home for adults with learning difficulties. The application site is in an established residential area and the proposal is to change the use of the building to a childrens' home, to be operated by Brighter Futures for Children, which is part of the Council. The report explains that given the nature of the proposed use and the character of the area, the use of the building and the site are considered to be suitable for the intended use and consequently, this report recommends the granting of planning permission.

2. Introduction and site description

- 2.1. This application is submitted by the Council and is therefore being reported to your meeting.
- 2.2. The application site concerns a three bedroom, semi-detached property, the northernmost house in a terrace of three houses. There is a frontal drive area with room for three cars, a pedestrian path which slopes gently down to the front door and a side gate to the back garden. The site measures approximately 320 sq.m in area and slopes gently east to west, ie. down from the road. This area of Whitley is largely residential, although opposite the site is the Hexham Road Childrens Centre (under redevelopment and hoarded at this time) and to the southeast, Reading Girls' School.
- 2.3. Below are images of the application site and view from the road.

Location plan (not to scale)



3. The proposal

- 3.1. This planning application is for a change of use of the property to a childrens' home. Although the last use of the property is likely to have been in a similar use, the property has been vacant since 2021 and with the need for the applicant to gain a C2 planning permission (as explained in the Appraisal below), this application for planning permission has been considered necessary. With only very minor works, the application essentially consists of the change of use of the building only and no external works. The home would normally be used to accommodate one child, who would be supported at all times during the day and night by staff.
- 3.2. Documents submitted with the application include:
- Application forms
 - Planning statement
 - Existing and proposed floor plans and block plan
- 3.3. The proposals have been subject to pre-application advice with officers before submission. This type of use attracts a nil charge under the Council's adopted Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) system.

4. Planning history

None.

5. Consultations

RBC Transport Strategy no objection, conditions recommended.

RBC Environmental Protection has sought further details on the method of noise attenuation in respect of the party wall with the neighbouring property.

Officer Note: the requested information was provided – see appraisal.

- 5.1. Public consultation: site notices were displayed on site on Northumberland Avenue and Canterbury Road on 3 February 2025. No representations have been received at the time of writing but any which are received will be reported to your meeting.

6. Legal context

- 6.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. However, the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making (NPPF paragraph 12).
- 6.2. In this regard, the NPPF states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the Local Plan 2019 according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).
- 6.3. Accordingly, the latest NPPF and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024)

Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 policies:

CC1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
CC6 Accessibility and the Intensity of Development
CC7 Design and the Public Realm
H6 Accommodation for Vulnerable People
H7 Protecting the Existing Housing Stock
TR5 Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging
OU1 New and Existing Community Facilities

Supplementary Planning Documents and other guidance

SPD: Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)

Local Plan Update

- 6.5 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 updated version of the Local Plan was published on 6th November 2024.
- 6.6 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.
- 6.7 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’.

7. Appraisal

The main considerations are:

- **Principle of Development**
- **Impact on neighbour amenity (including disturbance and parking)**

Principle of Development

- 7.1 The property is likely to have originally been constructed as a family house, but then appears at some point approximately 20 years ago, the property appears to have been in use in Class C3(b) use, which is defined in the Use Classes Order as, “up to six people living together as a single household and receiving care”. The last resident left in 2021 and the property has been vacant since. The applicant advises that the property typically accommodated 3-4 residents who required extra needs and some of

them were resident there for many years. They would have been supported by staff sleeping over as required. No authorisation of the C3b use was required because C3(a) to C3(b) is within the same use class, and therefore no material change of use would have occurred.

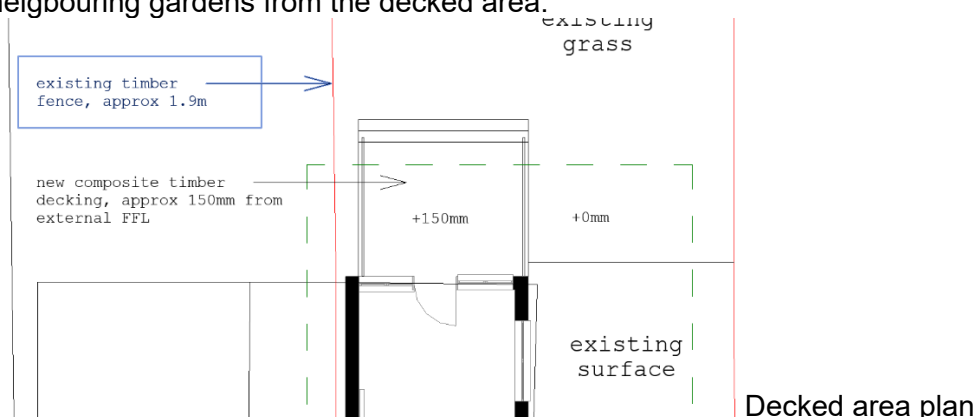
- 7.2 The Applicant's planning statement explains the need for the submission of a planning application. Following the vacancy period, the exact nature of the former use is not completely clear and moreover, Ofsted rules state that the Local Authority must apply for and secure planning permission for it to be able to operate a C2 Childrens' Home use.
- 7.3 The planning statement explains that the proposed occupation is primarily for solo children with complex needs, although if needed and appropriate, this would be extended to siblings or twins (ie. a maximum of two residents). There would be 2-3 staff on site at any one time during the day and one staff member sleeping over each night.
- 7.4 Officers advise that the proposed use would be broadly similar to the last use of the site, save that instead of adults being resident, it would be children, or more likely, one child. The applicant's planning statement explains that the current approach to childrens' homes is different to older examples and large, institutional type buildings are no longer used. Instead, the model is for normal family houses to be used as far as possible, with the presence of a 'family home' which is indistinguishable within a residential street.
- 7.5 The applicant advises that the former adult residents are housed in other family houses within the Borough and they continue to receive daily care commensurate with their needs and in some cases, this will include overnight stays by staff. The applicant advises that there is sufficient accommodation, both Council-owned and in the private sector in the borough to provide this kind of care for these residents, meaning that this property is one which has been identified as surplus to requirements.
- 7.6 The Local Plan contains policies to protect the housing stock (H7), provide accommodation for vulnerable groups (H11) and to protect or improve community facilities (OU1). Whilst the site has not been a family dwelling for very many years, its last use was a C3b use, ie. as residential with an element of care. Therefore, the site could at any time - without planning permission - have potentially lawfully reverted to a C3 dwellinghouse use, as they are in the same use class. Both the last use and the proposed use will provide an element of community use and provide residential accommodation and care for vulnerable groups. The provision of employment (staff required, see below) is also a positive benefit. Overall, officers consider that in this instance, the technical loss of a dwelling is outweighed by the benefits of providing a childrens' home and in principle accepted.

Impact on neighbour amenity (including disturbance and parking)

- 7.7 The applicant's planning statement provides a detailed description of the operation of the home. The previous arrangement appears to have had the three bedrooms upstairs and a fourth resident sleeping downstairs in the single storey rear extension, when required. The proposed plans indicate minor alterations to the layout of the house, such that the ground floor would be given over to communal and staff areas and the upstairs would be adjusted to accommodate two children's bedrooms and a staff bedroom. It would be a two bedroom children's home designed to provide a stable long term home for up to two children. It would be managed by a registered manager with additional staff during the day with a structured daily schedule for the children providing support for the children as required. In other respects, the property would

largely operate as a 'family-style' home. Shift patterns would not start before 7:00 AM or end after 10:00 PM usually with one or more adults sleeping overnight in the home and there would always be adults present. There would be occasional visitors. The minimum length of stay for children would normally be nine months.

- 7.8 The garden is overgrown so will need some work but would provide a suitable place for the residents to relax as it would be with any usual family. It is proposed to provide a decked area. It has been confirmed on amended plans that the combination of the gap to the boundary and the decking height (150mm) will prevent overlooking to neighbouring gardens from the decked area.



- 7.9 Given that this is a semi-detached property and there is a party wall with the attached neighbouring family home, as a precaution, the application plans indicate that noise suppression would be provided. The Council's Environmental Protection Officer's comments requested details of the proposed sound attenuation measures referred to in the application submission. The applicant has confirmed that it is proposed to install acoustic wall lining on party walls in accordance with the manufacturer's details which includes acoustic insulation. There is a natural air cavity which is part of the designed system build up where the acoustic clips go, but this is included within the noise reduction factors. Typically either air separation, a solid build up, or a combination of the two help to reduce acoustics. The Council's Environmental Protection Officer has confirmed that the response provided is acceptable. A condition is recommended to ensure the acoustic wall lining is installed.
- 7.10 The site is in a quite accessible location, being close to local shops nearby on Northumberland Avenue and bus routes. The site has the ability to park three vehicles in the front driveway and the Highway Authority considers that this would be sufficient for the use, however they have noted that the proposal has not indicated cycle parking and asked for a condition to require this. However, given the modest proposed occupancy of the property, this is not considered to be proportionate. The Highway Authority has also requested waste operations information, but as this would be acceptable just by moving bins from the back garden to present on the street on collection day, this is not considered to be necessary. Overall, in parking and transport terms, the use would be appropriate and acceptable in terms of policies CC6 and TR5 and the Council's parking standards.
- 7.11 In this instance, given that the disturbance attributable to the proposed use would be similar to a C3 family home and would also be similar to the last use of the site as a home for adults with learning difficulties, the use is considered to be suitable in terms of Policy CC8.

Other issues

- 7.12 Officers have considered the extent to which the building would be accessible to all, but on the basis that this would function in much the same way as a family home and similar to its last use, it is considered that no intervention (e.g. lifts) would be appropriate. The ground floor staff areas are considered to be suitable in terms of Policy CC7. Separate Building Regulations approval is likely to be required and an informative is recommended.
- 7.13 Officers have also considered to what extent adjusted or new emerging policies within the Partial Update of the Local Plan have relevance to this assessment and advise that the principal update in policy direction is proposed new Policy CC10: Health Impact Assessments (known as HIAs). This requires applications such as this, where accommodation for vulnerable groups is concerned, to look more widely at the health implications for the Borough. It should be noted that at the time of writing, HIAs are not a planning application validation requirement and officers are satisfied that the pertinent issues have been adequately addressed in the Appraisal above.

8. Equality implications

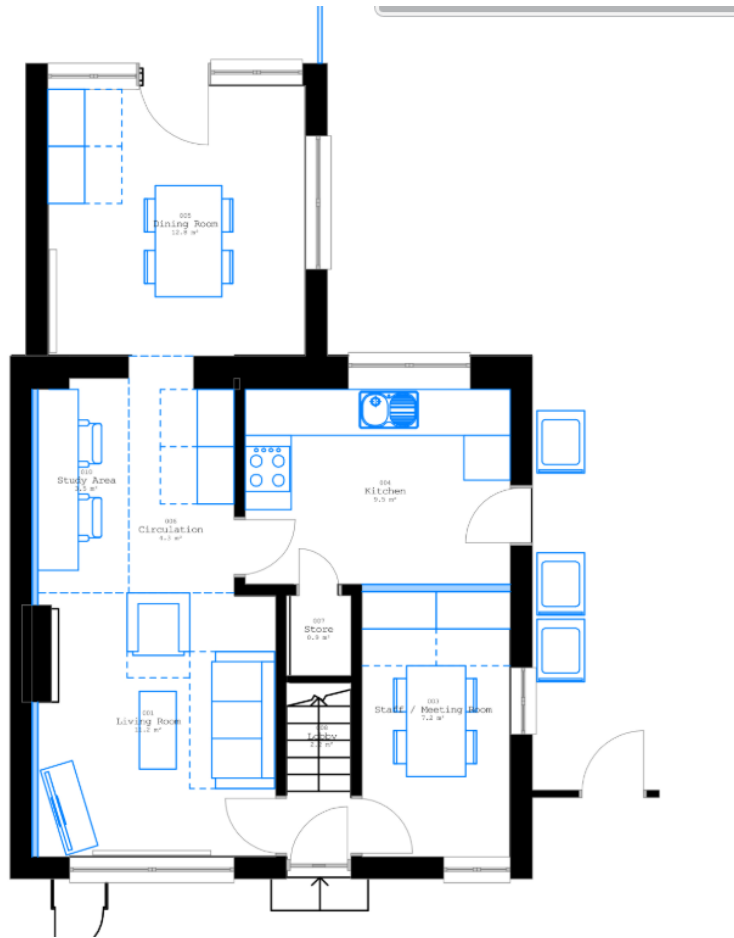
- 8.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 8.2. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation. It is considered that there is no indication or evidence that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular application. Furthermore, the proposal would proactively provide accommodation for vulnerable groups (children) and the issue regarding accessibility is discussed above.

9. Conclusion & planning balance

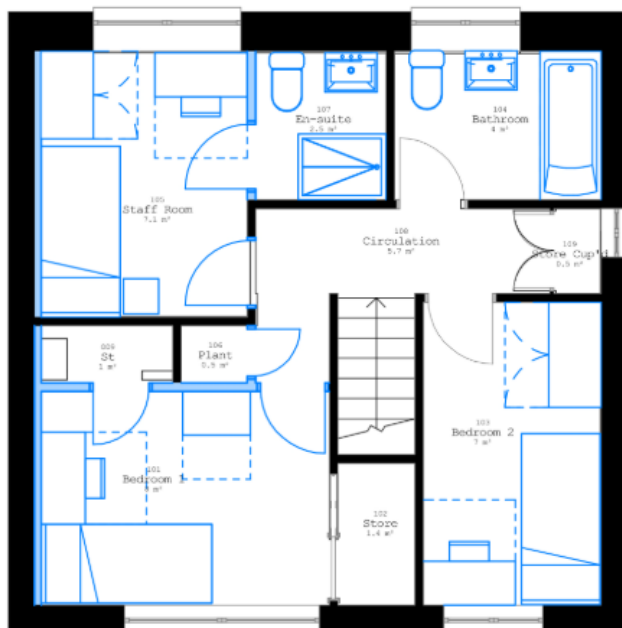
- 9.1 As with all applications considered by the Local Planning Authority, the application is required to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise, as per Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- 9.2 Any harmful impacts of the proposed development are required to be weighed against the benefits in the context of national and local planning policies, as detailed in the appraisal above. Having gone through this process officers consider that the limited opportunities for disturbance are outweighed by the public benefits of providing accommodation for vulnerable children and the use would provide a sympathetic re-use for the building.
- 9.3 It is considered that officers have applied a suitable planning balance when reaching this conclusion. As such, this application is recommended for approval.

Proposed plans

Ground floor



First Floor



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05 March 2025



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT
Ward	Redlands
Planning Application Reference:	PL/25/0159
Site Address:	35 Alexandra Road, Reading
Proposed Development	Use as Class C2 (Residential institution) including internal refurbishment and external landscape works
Report author	Richard Eatough
Applicant	Reading Borough Council
Deadline:	27 March 2025
Recommendations	Grant planning permission, subject to conditions as follows:
Conditions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. TL1 standard three years for implementation 2. AP1 approved plans 3. No other use other than as a C2 childrens' home 4. Maximum of four residents 5. Retention of front driveway for parking only 6. Provision and retention of cycle parking 7. No parking permits
Informatives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Terms and conditions 2. Positive and proactive 3. Building Regulations approval required 4. No parking permits 5. Environmental Protection Act 1990 requirements 6. Advice on maintaining features of the building within the Conservation Area.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1. This report concerns the re-use/change of use of this property, which is identified as a Building of Townscape Merit (BTM) within the Alexandra Road Conservation Area. There is a mix of uses in the area. The building has formerly been in use as a childrens' day nursery and most recently a home for Adults with Learning Difficulties (ALD). The application proposal is to change the use of the building to a childrens' home, to be operated by Brighter Futures for Children, which is part of the Council. The report explains that given the nature of the proposed use and the character of the area, the proposed use of the building and the site is considered to be acceptable and consequently, this report recommends the granting of planning permission.

2. Introduction and site description

- 2.1. This full planning application for a change of use is submitted by the Council and is therefore being reported to your meeting.
- 2.2. The application site features a Victorian detached double-fronted house and its garden, situated within the Alexandra Road Conservation Area. The building is largely original, except for a later small kitchen extension to the rear. There is a front drive area with two vehicular gateways and a central pedestrian gate set within wrought iron railings and a hedge behind. The site measures approximately 460 sq.m in area and is generally flat. Alexandra Road is notable for its avenue of street trees (Limes) and its Victorian buildings. The surrounding area of this part of Alexandra Road is predominantly residential, consisting of large houses, some flats including more modern flats at Marlow Court at the corner of Erleigh Road and the doctors' surgery at 31 Alexandra Road.
- 2.3. Below is the location plans and images of the application site and views from the road.



3. The proposal

- 3.1. This planning application seeks a change of use of the property to a childrens' home. Although the last use of the property appears to have been in a very similar use, the property has been vacant for almost two years and with the need for the applicant to gain a C2 planning permission (as explained in the Appraisal below), this application for planning permission has been considered necessary. With only very minor works, the application essentially consists of the change of use of the building only and no external works. The home would be used for four children, who would be supported at all times during the day and night by staff.
- 3.2. Documents submitted with the application include:
- Application forms
 - Planning statement
 - Existing and proposed floor plans and amended block plan
- 3.3. The proposals have been subject to pre-application advice with officers before submission. This type of use attracts a nil charge under the Council's adopted Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) system.

4. Planning history

13857 Nursery School GRANTED 5/8/1966

23640 Change of use of first floor from living accommodation to day nursery (full) GRANTED 18/10/1974

PL/12/0340 Change of use from Day Nursery (D1) to a Dwelling House (C3b) for up to six residents receiving care and associated internal alterations and external repairs. GRANTED 1/5/2012 with s106 agreement (unilateral undertaking).

5. Consultations

- 5.1. **RBC Transport Strategy** no objection, conditions recommended.
- 5.2. **RBC Environmental Protection** no objection.
- 5.3. Public consultation: site notices were displayed on site on Alexandra Road and Erleigh Road on 3 February 2025. No representations have been received at the time of writing but any which are received will be reported to your meeting.

6. Legal context

- 6.1. Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority in the exercise of its functions to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.
- 6.2. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. However, the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making (NPPF paragraph 12).
- 6.3. In this regard, the NPPF states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the Local Plan 2019 according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).

- 6.4. Accordingly, the latest NPPF and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024)

Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 policies:

CC1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
CC6 Accessibility and the Intensity of Development
CC7 Design and the Public Realm
CC8 Safeguarding Amenity
EN1 Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
H6 Accommodation for Vulnerable People
H7 Protecting the Existing Housing Stock
TR5 Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging
OU1 New and Existing Community Facilities

Supplementary Planning Documents and other guidance

SPD: Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)
Alexandra Road Conservation Area Appraisal (2005)

Local Plan Update

- 6.5 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.
- 6.6 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.
- 6.7 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’.

7. Appraisal

The main considerations are:

- **Principle of Development**
- **Impact on neighbour amenity (including disturbance and parking)**
- **Impact on heritage assets**

Principle of Development

- 7.1 The property is likely to have originally been constructed as a family house, but since the 1960s (first partially, and later, completely) until about 2013, the property was in use as a childrens' day nursery (a Class D1 use). Then with the granting of the planning permission in 2012, the property appears to have been in use in accordance with that planning permission, ie. as a C3(b) use, which is defined in the Use Classes Order as, "up to six people living together as a single household and receiving care". The 2012 PAC report for that application notes the then proposed use as constituting up to six residents with learning disabilities, with one support worker on site during the day, with occasional overnight support provided. The residents were described as living 'as a single household' and sharing the communal facilities.
- 7.2 The Applicant's planning statement explains the reason for the submission of a planning application. Following the vacancy period, the exact nature of the former use is/was not completely clear and moreover, Ofsted rules state that the Local Authority must apply for and secure a planning permission for it to be able to operate a C2 Childrens' Home use. Hence, the applicant's need to seek to formalise/regularise the operation with a change to a C2 use.
- 7.3 Officers advise that the proposed use would be broadly similar to the last use of the property, save that instead of adults being resident, it would be children. The applicant's planning statement explains that the current approach to providing childrens' homes is different to older examples and large, institutional type buildings are no longer used. Instead, the model is for normal family houses to be used as far as possible, with the presence of a 'family home' indistinguishable within a residential street.
- 7.4 The applicant advises that the former adult residents are rehoused in other family house situations within the Borough and they continue to receive daily care commensurate with their needs and in some cases, this will include overnight stays by staff. The applicant advises that there is sufficient accommodation, both Council-owned and in the private sector in the Borough, to provide this kind of care for these residents, meaning that this property is one which has been identified as surplus to Adult Care requirements.
- 7.5 The Local Plan contains policies to protect the existing dwelling stock (H7), provide accommodation for vulnerable groups (H11) and to protect or improve community facilities (OU1). Whilst the site has not been a family dwelling for very many years, its last use was a C3(b) use, ie. with an element of care. That planning permission did not prevent the site from potentially reverting to a C3 use. Both the last C3(b) use and the proposed use will provide an element of community use and provide residential accommodation and care for vulnerable groups. Overall, officers consider that in this instance, the technical loss of a dwelling is outweighed by the benefits of providing a childrens' home and is in principle accepted. The proposal will also provide employment through the various support staff required (see below), which is a further benefit of the proposals.

Impact on neighbour amenity (including disturbance and parking)

- 7.6 The applicant's planning statement provides a detailed description of the operation of the home. It would be a four bedroom children's home designed to provide stable long term homes (minimum usual length of stay would be nine months) for up to four children. It would be managed by a registered manager with support and other staff during the day resulting in there being three to four staff on site at any one time. The planning statement sets out a usual daily schedule for the children which is quite structured. As well as support for the children as required, in other respects the property would largely operate as a 'family-style' home. Usually there would be one or more adults sleeping overnight in the home and there would always be adults present. Shift patterns would not start before 7am or end after 10pm, which would minimise comings and goings at unsociable hours. There would be occasional visitors and use of the garden as there would be with any usual family setting. The garden is presently hardstanding and fully enclosed by Victorian walls of 1.8m-2.2m in height. This is proposed to be landscaped and the hard surface area reduced with lawn introduced. The area nearest the house is not proposed to be altered apart from a refurbished outside deck (approximately 7m x 5m). Overall, this would provide an improved area in a fairly usual domestic format and it would provide a suitable place for the residents and staff to enjoy.
- 7.7 The site is well located, being close to medical facilities and local shops nearby on Erleigh Road, as well as being close to the town centre. The site has space to park 2 vehicles in the front driveway and the Highway Authority considers that this would be sufficient for the use, however, the application proposal has not indicated cycle parking, which could be used by both staff and residents. This could be provided in the rear garden using the side access. In discussion with the applicant given the domestic setting and the Conservation Area location, it is agreed that the most appropriate solution would be a simple domestic garden shed, which should provide reasonable cycle security in the back garden, behind the side gate and details have been provided (see block plan below). The Highway Authority has also requested waste operations information, but as this would be acceptable just by moving bins from the back garden to present on the street on collection day, this is not considered to be necessary. Overall, in parking and transport terms, the use would be appropriate and acceptable in terms of policies CC6 and TR5 and the Council's parking standards.
- 7.8 On the basis of the above discussion, given that the disturbance attributable to the proposed use would be similar to a C3 family home and would also be similar to the last use of the site as a home for adults with learning difficulties, the use is considered to be suitable in terms of the character of the area and complies with Policy CC8.

Impact on heritage assets

- 7.9 The application property is a handsome, double-fronted, brick-built and slate-roofed detached Victorian villa, built sometime between 1880-1900 and is similar in appearance to No. 33 to the immediate north, although the patterned brick details are different. It is a 'Building of Townscape Merit' (BTM) within the Conservation Area, meaning that it is a relatively unaltered historic building whose style detail and building materials provides the streetscape with interest and variety and makes a positive contribution to the special interest of the conservation area, which is characterised by varying styles of Victorian houses, both detached and semi-detached. Although not likely to achieve a Grade II Listing, the BTM indication means that if this building were outside of the Conservation Area, it would usually otherwise have merited adding to the Council's Local List.
- 7.10 The property has been vacant since 2023 and requires refurbishment, which the proposed re-use will help to deliver. The original sliding sash windows require

maintenance and advice to the applicant is that these should be conserved and repaired and not replaced as their replacement is likely to be considered 'development' requiring planning permission. This planning application does not involve any external changes to the building itself. Although the internal compartmentation/layout of this building is not a material consideration to this planning application, it is pleasing to note that the proposed layout is broadly sympathetic to the original layout of the house.

- 7.11 In summary, the impact of the proposal on heritage assets (ie. the conservation area and the building itself) is considered to be neutral/positive and complies with policies EN1 and EN4. An informative is recommended to advise of care for heritage asset.

Other issues

- 7.12 Officers have considered the extent to which the building would be accessible to all. There is a step to the front door and only stair access to the first floor bedrooms. The main bathroom to the house is on a half-landing, but this is an original arrangement. Given that the use would function in much the same way as a family home and its similarity to its former uses, it is considered that no intervention (e.g. lifts) would be appropriate. The ground floor staff areas are considered to be suitable in terms of Policy CC7. Separate Building Regulations approval is likely to be required and an informative is recommended.
- 7.13 Officers have considered to what extent adjusted or new emerging policies within the Partial Update of the Local Plan have relevance to this assessment and advise that the principal update in policy direction is proposed new Policy CC10: Health Impact Assessments (known as HIAs). This requires applications such as this, where accommodation for vulnerable groups is concerned, to look more widely at the health implications for the Borough. It should be noted that at the time of writing, HIAs are not a planning application validation requirement and officers are satisfied that the pertinent issues have been adequately addressed in the Appraisal above.

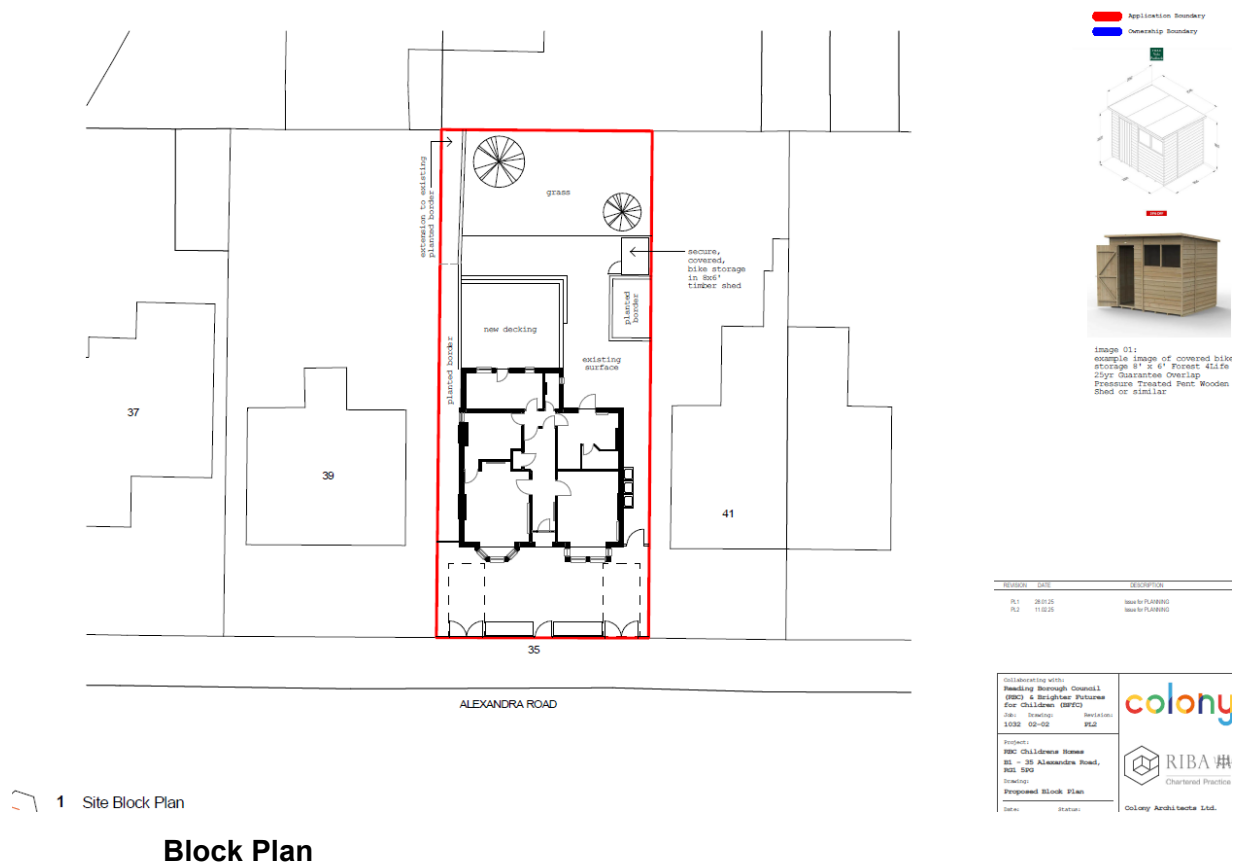
8. Equality implications

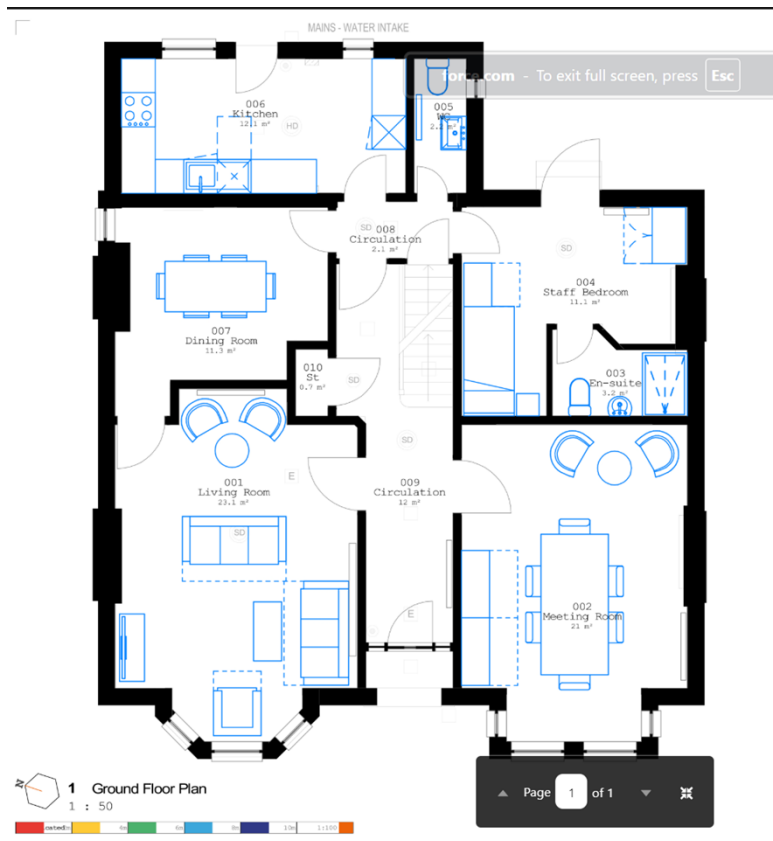
- 8.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—
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 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 8.2. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation. It is considered that there is no indication or evidence that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular application. Furthermore, the proposal would proactively provide accommodation for vulnerable groups (children) and the issue regarding accessibility has been discussed above.

9. Conclusion & planning balance

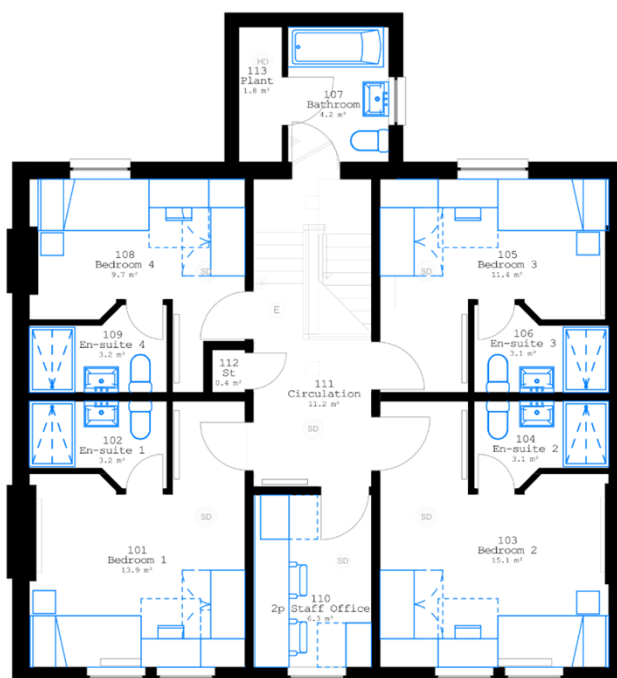
- 9.1 As with all applications considered by the Local Planning Authority, the application is required to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise, as per Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- 9.2 Any harmful impacts of the proposed development are required to be weighed against the benefits in the context of national and local planning policies, as detailed in the appraisal above. Having gone through this process officers consider that the limited potential for disturbance are outweighed by the public benefits of providing accommodation for vulnerable children, providing employment and the use would provide a sympathetic re-use for this historic building and prevent it falling into disrepair.
- 9.3 It is considered that officers have applied a suitable planning balance when reaching this conclusion. As such, this application is recommended for approval.

Proposed Plans





Ground floor



First floor

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