

06 December 2023



Reading
Borough Council
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Title	PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT
Ward	Abbey
Planning Application Reference:	221880FUL & 221881LBC
Site Address:	23-24 Market Place Reading
Proposed Development	<p>221880FUL - Change of use of first, second and third floors from Class E to 4 x 1 bed flats and 1 x 2 bed flats (C3 use)</p> <p>221881LBC - Internal and external alterations including new ventilation outlets to rear elevation associated with proposed change of use of first, second and third floors from Class E to 5 flats (C3 use) under planning application ref. 221880</p>
Applicant	Sykes Capital Ltd
Report author	Matt Burns - Principal Planning Officer
Deadline:	Originally 29 th March 2023, but an extension of time has been agreed with the applicant until 5 th January 2024
Recommendation	<p>221880FUL - 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 or (ii) to REFUSE permission should the Section 106 legal agreement not be completed by the 5th January 2024 (unless officers on behalf of the AD PTPPS agree to a later date for completion of the legal agreement).</p> <p>221881LBC – Grant Listed Building Consent subject to conditions and informatives.</p>
S106 Terms	<p>To include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To secure an affordable housing contribution (amount to be confirmed in an Update Report) towards the provision of Affordable Housing within the Borough of Reading. Payable prior to first occupation and index-

	<p>linked from the date of permission.</p> <p>2. To secure private waste collection arrangements for the development for all waste streams (general waste, recycling and food waste), including collection of waste directly from the communal bin store on a weekly basis and a stipulation that no bins are to be kept on the public highway at any time.</p> <p>In order for Officers to work efficiently and effectively, it is suggested that minor changes to the Heads of Terms and details of the legal agreement during the negotiations, where necessary, are delegated to officers.</p>
<p>Conditions</p>	<p>To include:</p> <p><u>221880FUL</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Time Limit – 3 years. 2. Approved plans. 3. Compliance condition – dwelling mix only as approved. 4. Pre-commencement submission and approval of a construction method statement 5. Standard hours of construction: 0800 to 1800hrs Monday to Friday, 0800 to 1300hrs Saturdays and no working on Sundays and Bank Holidays 6. No burning of waste on site 7. Pre-occupation provision of cycle storage 8. Pre-occupation provision of bin store 9. Compliance condition – management of bin store in accordance with waste management statement 10. Pre-occupation implementation of noise mitigation measures 11. Pre-commencement submission and approval of details of details of separating floor insulation between the first floor flat and existing ground floor commercial use 12. Pre-commencement submission and approval of design stage BREEAM as built certification for Very Good standard 13. Pre-occupation submission and approval of BREEAM as built certification 14. Parking permits – prohibition on entitlement to parking permits for occupiers of all residential units 15. Pre-commencement submission of details of louvre panel for bin store

	<p><u>221881LBC</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Time limit Listed Building Consent – standard 3 years 2. Approved Plans 3. Pre-commencement submission and approval of details of secondary glazing 4. Pre-commencement submission of material samples (including louvre panel to first floor bin store and new third floor level rear window) 5. Pre-commencement submission and approval of methodology for installation of insulation between ground and first floor level of the building 6. Retention of all other features of historic and architectural interest unless referred to on approved plans
<p>Informatives</p>	<p>To include:</p> <p><u>221880FUL</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Building Regulations approval required 2. Terms and conditions 3. Positive and Proactive Statement 4. Complaints about construction 5. Damage to the highway 6. Highways 7. Noise between residential properties – sound insulation of any building 8. Related section 106 Legal Agreement 9. Related listed building consent 10. Pre-commencement conditions 11. CIL 12. Parking permits <p><u>2218801LBC</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Terms and conditions 2. Positive and Proactive Statement 3. Related planning permission 4. Pre-commencement conditions

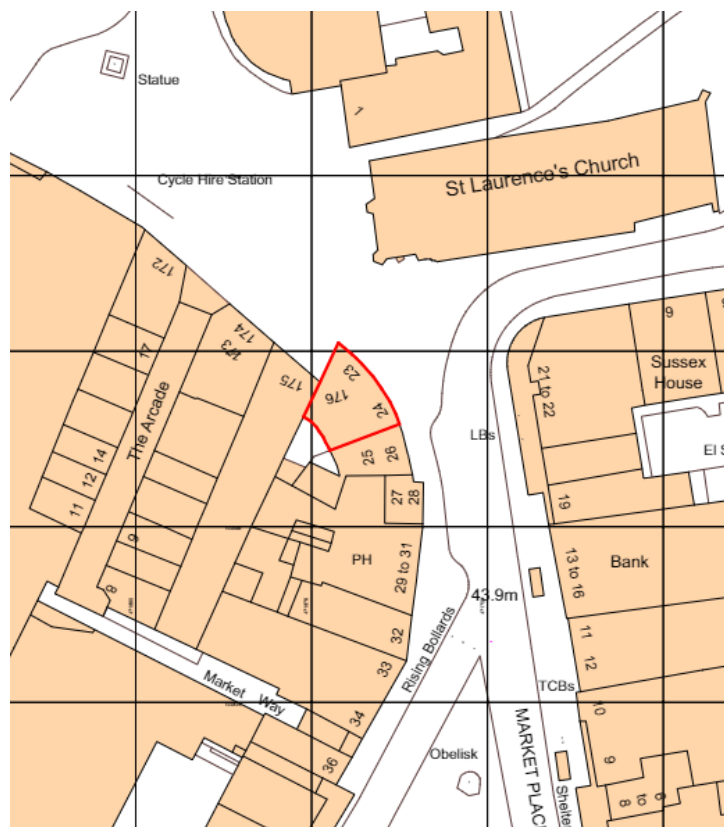
1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The proposal is recommended for approval subject to a legal agreement and conditions as set out above.

1.2 The proposals would see re-use and conversion of a vacant Grade II listed building to provide new residential accommodation in a sustainable town centre location, whilst contributing to meeting the Borough's identified housing need. The proposals would provide for an acceptable standard of accommodation for future occupiers and would not adversely impact on exiting surrounding occupiers. Notably the proposals would provide a policy compliant contribution towards affordable housing provision elsewhere with the Borough and it is considered that the application demonstrates that the proposed conversion works could be undertaken in a manner which would not materially impact upon the appearance or significance of the Listed Building, which would be preserved.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 The application site relates to a four-storey building with a curved façade, with basement, on the corner of Market Place and Friar Street, near Town Hall Square.



Site Location Plan

2.2 The basement and ground floor of the building is in use as a hot food takeaway premises (sui generis use), which was given planning permission in July 2022 (ref. 211961). The first, second and third floors of the building are in office use (Class E (g) (i) use).

- 2.3 The building is Grade II Listed, the listing notes a number of features to the building frontage including bath stone ashlar (now rendered) exterior, moulded coping to parapet, slate roof and Doric pilasters above ground floor level. The listing notes that the building has a more recent shopfront, but it has been undertaken in a sympathetic and high-quality style and has the appearance of ashlar surrounds and wooden window-framing.
- 2.4 The site is located within the Market Place / London Street Conservation Area and is sited opposite the Grade I Listed St Laurence's Church, Grade II and II* Listed Museum and Town Hall buildings as well as a series of other Grade II listed buildings within Market Place, including no.s 25-34 which adjoin the application building to the south. The adjoining building to the north of the application site at no. 175 Friar Street is identified as a building of townscape merit within the Market Place / London Street Conservation Area Appraisal.
- 2.5 Surrounding buildings are within a mix of commercial uses, a number of which are currently vacant. Nearby buildings have extant planning permission and prior approval for residential use. No.s 27-32 Market Place, which is next door but one to the site to south, have planning permission and listed building consent for conversion of the upper floors (ref. 220546FUL & 220547LBC) to 8 flats. No. s 173-174 and 175 Friar Street which directly adjoin the site to the north were granted prior approval for conversion to residential flats (ref. 220577 and 220579) in June 2022.
- 2.6 The application site is located within the Central area, Central Core, Office Core and Primary Shopping Area of the town centre as defined by Policy CR1 of the Reading Local Plan 2019. The building is also located within a Primary Frontage as designated by Policy CR7. The site is within an air quality management area (AQMA), an area of archaeological potential and within the Abbey Quarter area as defined by Policy CR15.



Photographs of the application site from Market Place and Town Hall Square

- 2.7 The applications have been called to Planning Applications Committee by Abbey Ward Councillor (and Mayor) Tony Page due to concerns regarding bin storage and collection arrangements.

3 PROPOSAL

- 3.1 Full planning permission is sought for change of use of the first, second and third floors of the building from Class E (offices) to 4 x 1 bed flats and 1 x 2 bed flats (C3 use) and Listed Building Consent for associated works.
- 3.2 The flats would be accessed via an existing ground floor entrance door to the east elevation of the building which leads directly to a staircase to the upper floors of the building. A communal bin store for the development is proposed at first floor level.
- 3.3 The application does not relate to or seek any change of use or physical alterations to the ground floor of the building which is currently in hot food takeaway use (sui generis use class).
- 3.4 The building is Grade II Listed and an application for listed building consent has also been submitted for minor internal and external alterations to the building to facilitate the proposed change of use.
- 3.5 The alterations proposed include:
- Strip out of the existing office fit out, soft furnishings and finishes throughout the first, second and third floors.

- Removal of the existing office air conditioning systems and suspended ceiling.
- New partition walls to create lobby areas at first, second and third floor level to create a hallway for the new flats.
- New compartment floors to replace the existing suspended ceilings with an independently framed fire and acoustic suspended ceiling system.
- New timber stud partitions to create room separation.
- New bathrooms and kitchens to each flat utilising existing drainage runs and with extract ventilation running through the suspended ceilings to exit on the rear elevation.
- New extract vents to external of rear elevation to serve the proposed ventilation system.
- Redecoration like for like of the existing windows
- Addition of secondary glazing internally to all existing windows.
- Removal of modern rear external staircase and doors and in filling with like for like brickwork and smaller sympathetic window openings

3.6 The proposals do not seek to make any external alterations or additions to the existing principal front elevation of the building which fronts on to Market Place.

3.7 Amended plans were submitted during the consideration of the application following officers' concerns raised regarding the proposed unit mix. The amendments changed the proposed unit mix from 6 x 1-bedroom units to the now proposed 4 x 1-bedroom units and 1 x 2-bedroom units.

3.8 Submitted Plans and Documentation:

- Drawing ref. PL-07 Rev E – Proposed Ground and First Floor Plans
- Drawing ref. PL-07 Rev C – Proposed Second and Third Floor Plans
Received by the Local Planning Authority on 13th October 2023
- Drawing ref. PL-13 Rev C – Proposed Rear Elevation
Received by the Local Planning Authority on 24th November 2023
- Drawing ref. PL-01 – Location Plan
- Drawing ref. PL-09 – Existing Front Elevation
- Drawing ref. PL-11 – Existing Side Elevation
- Drawing ref. PL-05 – Existing Ground and First Floor Plans
- Drawing ref. PL-06 – Existing Second and Third Floor Plans

- Drawing ref. PL-03 – Existing and Proposed Block Plan
- Drawing ref. PL-14 – Proposed Side Elevation
- Drawing ref. PL-17 – Proposed Floor and Wall Upgrades
- Rockwool Separating Floor specification
Received by the Local Planning Authority on 16th December 2022

- RF Environmental Air Quality Assessment ref. RFE-0480-22-01-02-AQ
- Jostec Noise Survey Report Including Assessment of Scheme of Noise Insulation Measures for Mixed Use Development at 23-24 Market Place, Reading ref. 2265102
Received by the Local Planning Authority on 11th January 2023

- Jostec BS4142:2014-A1:2019 and BS8233:2014 Noise Assessment of 23-24 Market Place, Reading ref. 22651
Received by the Local Planning Authority 13th October 2023

- Letter from Sykes Capital ref. Proposed Bin Store Management – 23-24 Market Place, Reading, RG1 2DE dated 8th November 2023
Received by the Local Planning Authority on 8th November 2023

- RF Environmental Odour Assessment ref. RFE-0515-23-01-02 AQ Final
Received by the Local Planning Authority on 26th July 2023

- Heritage Fusion Heritage Statement ref. 23-24 Market Place, Reading, RG1 2DE
- GypWall Quiet Twin frame high performance acoustic wall system specification
- Brink Excellent 180 – Heat Recovery Ventilation specification
Received by the Local Planning Authority on 16th December 2022

- The Keen Partnership Design & Access Statement
Received by the Local Planning Authority on 1st February 2023

3.9 Community Infrastructure levy (CIL):

Based upon the floor area of the proposed development the expected levy due would be £39,994, albeit this figure is possible this figure could decrease if the applicant can demonstrate that the existing building has

been use for a continuous period of 6 months within the last 3 years, in that case the levy would not apply to the development.

4 PLANNING HISTORY

Application Site

900802 - Front: fascia signs, box signs (window) and plaque (door)
Flank: logo, sign and plaque (door) – Application permitted on 14/02/1991

900803 – Signage on frontage and flank of premises – Application permitted on 14/02/1991

900941 - Internal alterations of a three-storey office block with basement – Application permitted on 14/02/1991

050125 - Changes to ground floor windows and doors, front and rear elevations; including replacement of rear basement fire exit door. Changes to floor levels, ground floor only, internal alterations. – Application permitted on 19/01/2006

050655 - Replace all windows on front elevation and enlarge ground floor windows. At the rear replace an existing window and enlarge the opening replace existing doors at ground and basement levels. – Application permitted on 19/01/2006

050978 - Temporary change of use to A1 (Charity Shop) whilst preserving existing A2 use (financial and professional services) – Application permitted on 12/08/2005

051250 - Halo illuminated fascia sign to ground floor level; 2 no. projecting signs to each side of fascia. – Application permitted on 22/02/2006

060137 - Additional signage to existing high-level sign and removal of existing light box and replace with name plate – Split decision 20/11/2006

060566 - Signs and advertisements on side elevation – Application refused on 02/05/2006

060591 - Signs and advertisements on side elevation – Split decision 02/05/2006

060692 - Additional signage to existing high-level sign and removal of existing light box and replace with name plate – Application withdrawn

071218 – Advertising to the street level office – Application permitted on 15/11/2007

071219 - Install two projecting and one fascia sign (divided into 3 no. groups of internally illuminated lettering) – Application permitted on 04/10/2007

211961 - Retrospective change of use of ground floor and basement from Class Ec (Professional Services) to Hot Food Takeaway (Sui Generis) and minor internal and external alterations associated with the change of use including new kitchen extract system and vent opening to rear door – Application permitted on 13/07/2022

211962 - Minor internal and external alterations associated with change of use from Class Ec (Professional Services) to Hot Food Takeaway (Sui Generis Use) including new kitchen extract system and air vent opening to rear door – Application permitted on 13/07/2022

221202 - Externally illuminated fascia sign, two externally illuminated projecting signs and 5 wall lights – Application permitted on 09/02/2023

221410 - Listed building consent for an externally illuminated fascia sign and two externally illuminated projecting signs. – Application permitted on 09/02/2023

5 CONSULTATIONS

- 5.1 RBC Transport – No objection subject to conditions to secure submission and approval of a construction method statement, provision of cycle storage arrangements as proposed and to advise future occupiers that they would not be automatically entitled to an on-street parking permit. A section 106 obligation is also required to secure private refuse collection arrangements for the development.
- 5.2 RBC Environmental Protection – No objection subject to conditions to secure implementation of the development in accordance with the noise mitigation measure set out within the submitted noise impact assessment report and limitation of construction hours to standard working hours (0800 to 1800 Monday to Friday, 0800 to 1300 Saturdays and no working on Sundays or Bank Holidays).

- 5.3 RBC Waste – Raise concern with the location of the bin store in terms of odour and management and indicate that the location of the proposed bin store at first floor level would not be suitable for Local Authority Waste collection arrangements.
- 5.4 RBC Conservation Officer – The proposals would result in minimal and negligible impact on the Listed Building and would cause no harm to the settings of other nearby Listed Buildings nor to the character and appearance of the Market Place / London Street Conservation Area. No objection subject to conditions to secure details of the proposed louvre panel to the rear elevation, details of replacement brickwork and full details of all secondary glazing
- 5.5 Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC) – Do not wish to comment.

Public

- 5.6 The following properties were notified of the applications by letter:
- No.s 173,175, 176 Friar Street
 - No. 25-26 Market Place
- 5.7 Site notices advertising the applications were also displayed at the application site on 3rd February 2023.
- 5.8 No letters of representation have been received in relation to either application.

6. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

- 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) which states at Paragraph 11 “Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development”.
- 6.2 Section 16(2) 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.

6.3 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.

6.4 The development plan for this Local Planning Authority is the Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019). The relevant policies are:

- 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
- EN2: Areas of Archaeological Significance
- EN3: Enhancement of Conservation Areas
- EN6: New Development in a Historic Context
- EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network
- EN15: Air Quality
- EN16: Pollution and Water Resources
- EN17: Noise Generating Equipment
- H1: Provision of Housing
- H2: Density and Mix
- H3: Affordable Housing
- H5: Standards for New Housing
- H10: Private and Communal Outdoor Space
- TR1: Achieving the Transport Strategy
- TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
- TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging
- CR1: Definition of Central Reading
- CR2: Design in Central Reading
- CR6: Living in Central Reading

6.5 Relevant Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) are:

- Affordable Housing SPD (2021)
- Employment Skills and Training SPD (2013)
- Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011)
- Planning Obligations under Section 106 SPD (2015)

6.6 Other Relevant Documentation:

- Market Place / London Street Conservation Area Appraisal (2007)
- Reading Biodiversity Action Plan (March 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)
- Conservation Principles Policies and Guidance (Historic England 2008)
- Guide to the Conservation of Historic Buildings (British Standards Pub. BS 7913:2013, 2015)

7 APPRAISAL

The main matters to be considered are:

- Land use principles
- Development density, unit mix and affordable housing
- Design considerations and effect on character and heritage
- Amenity Matters
- Transport
- Natural Environment
- Sustainability
- Other Matters

Land use principles

- 7.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (2023) encourages the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land) and seeks that all housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- 7.2 The existing upper floors of the building consist of vacant former office space. Loss of office accommodation must be considered against Policy EM3 (Loss of Employment Land) which states that in locations such as the application site, which are outside of the Core Employment Areas, loss of employment land will be assessed against a range of criteria including accessibility (including access to the strategic road network), viability of continued use as employment and impact on character and amenity of the area, surplus of similar accommodation elsewhere, need for other uses and whether or not the proposals would result in a

piecemeal loss of employment land where there is scope for a more comprehensive approach.

- 7.3 Whilst the site is located conveniently for access to public transport, it is clear that other larger purpose-built office sites outside of the town centre benefit from more convenient access to the strategic road network. In addition to this the office accommodation within the building has remained vacant for some time, whilst the small and convoluted nature of the accommodation is also not considered readily compatible with a modern office environment. Given the above and the availability of other larger purpose-built office sites elsewhere within the Borough the principle of the loss of the existing office use is considered to comply with Policy EM3.
- 7.4 In terms of the proposed residential use of the upper floors of the building; the accessibility of the site, located within the Reading Central Area as defined by the Reading Local Plan (2019), is considered acceptable for the proposed development in accordance with Policy CC6 (Accessibility and Intensity of Development) whilst the provision of new housing would align with the broad objectives of Policy H1 (Provision of Housing) in assisting in meeting the annual housing targets.

Unit mix and Affordable Housing

- 7.5 The five flats that are proposed would consists of 4 x 1-bedroom flats and 1 x 2-bedroom flat. Policy CR6 (Living in Central Reading) does not specify a specific mix criteria other than for larger town centre developments of 15 dwellings or more. More generally the policy requires that residential developments within the town centre contribute towards a mix of different sized units. Officers' view is that the small number of units proposed and lack of a specific mix requirement for this size of development is such that the unit mix proposed is considered to be satisfactory.
- 7.6 In terms of affordable housing, Policy H3 (Affordable Housing) states that development proposals of between 5 and 9 dwellings a financial contribution will be made that will enable the equivalent of 20% of the housing to be provided as affordable housing elsewhere within the Borough. The Applicant has agreed to provide a policy complaint contribution in this respect (amount to be confirmed in an Update Report) which would be secured by way of a section 106 legal agreement with the contribution payable in full prior to occupation of the first dwelling.

Design considerations and effect on character and heritage

- 7.7 Paragraph 199 of the NPPF states that “Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.”
- 7.8 Policy EN1 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment) states that heritage assets, including their settings will be protected and where possible enhanced. The policy goes on to state that proposals should seek to avoid harm to heritage assets in the first instance but that any harm identified would require clear and convincing justification, usually in the form of public benefits. The policy also states that in respect of listed buildings development proposals should not have an adverse impact on those elements which contribute to their special character or historical interest. Policy EN3 (Enhancement of Conservation Areas) seeks that the special interest and character of such areas is conserved and enhanced.
- 7.9 In terms of general design approach, Policies CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) and CR2 (Design in Central Reading) seek that all development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area within which it is located.
- 7.10 The application is accompanied by a heritage statement which identifies that the principal significance of the grade II listed building relates to the details and features found to its front elevation on to Market Place, primarily above first floor level, given the ground floor shopfront has been subject to a modern replacement, albeit one which is sympathetic in style.



Principal front elevation of the grade II listed building

7.11 Whilst displaying timber sash windows and some good quality brick detailing, the rear elevation of the building is of less significance and has an overall more utilitarian appearance with modern plant equipment and services in connection with the ground floor commercial use present, as well as a modern full height metal external spiral staircase. The rear elevations of neighbouring buildings either side display similar utilitarian and functional appearances with this area having a 'back of house' character.



Rear elevation of the building

- 7.12 Internally the building has over time previously been subject to substantial alterations which have largely stripped the building of any semblance of a historic compartmental layout or other features, aside from timber sash windows to the front and rear elevations. The current layout is of open plan office accommodation at first, second and third floor level with modern partitions, hanging ceilings and office fittings present.



Photographs of existing office layout of upper floor of the building

- 7.13 The proposals to convert the upper floors of the building to flats seek minimal external alterations to the listed building. Notably no changes to the principal front façade are proposed whilst the existing ground floor entrance door to the offices from the north elevation of the building would be retained and used as the access for the proposed flats. In this respect the principal feature of the listed building, in terms of its significance, would remain unaltered.
- 7.14 It is proposed to make minor openings in the less significant rear elevation of the building to provide outlets for the proposed mechanical ventilation and extract plant equipment for the proposed flats. Four small openings, each the size of a single brick, are proposed at first, second and third floor level in order to provide the necessary exit points for the ventilation. Given the small size of the intrusions proposed for ventilation purposes these are not considered to result in any material harm to the appearance or significance of the Listed Building.
- 7.15 A single existing modern rear door at first floor level, which currently provides access to the external spiral staircase at this level of the building, is also proposed to be replaced with a single louvre panel which would provide ventilation to the proposed bin store. A similar modern rear door is to be removed at second floor level and infilled with brickwork to match existing and a similar rear door at third floor level is to be removed and replaced with a timber sash window reflecting the style and proportion of existing windows to the rear of the building. The proposed replacement of these modern door openings to the rear

elevation with smaller openings and sympathetic materials is again not considered to materially impact on the significance of the listed building. Notably the applications also propose to remove the modern external spiral staircase from the rear elevation of the building which it is considered would result in minor enhancement to the appearance of the rear of the listed building. A condition is recommended to be attached to the permission and listed building consent to secure samples of all materials, which would ensure the replacement brickwork needed to infill the rear elevation, where the doors would be removed and new openings provided, would match existing and that details of the louvre window need to be submitted and approved.

- 7.16 Internally the proposals seek to form the flats by dividing up the existing open plan layouts of the upper floors of the building. The heritage statement sets out that the flats and circulation corridors/lobbies would be created using reversible partition wall structures to ensure there would be no permanent changes or fixtures to the remaining historic fabric of the listed building. It is also proposed to provide new reversible hanging ceilings to each floor. The existing hanging ceilings hide services routes which sit below the original ceilings. The proposed new hanging ceilings would allow new services required for the flats to follow existing routes and not require intrusion into original ceiling structures. A similar approach is also proposed for fire and sound upgrades to the floor and ceilings of the flats to create a sympathetic void to provide necessary insulation within harm to existing historic floors and ceilings. Full details of all partition walls and hanging ceilings and method of installation would be secured by way of condition.
- 7.17 It is also proposed to install internal secondary glazing to each of the timber sash windows in order to provide necessary thermal and sound insulation for the proposed flats whilst allowing retention of the existing timber sash windows. These timber windows were previously replaced in a sympathetic manner under listed building consent ref. 050655 granted in 2006. Full details of the proposed secondary glazing, including section drawings and method of installation would be secured by way of condition.
- 7.18 The existing interior of the Listed Building has been subject to previous alterations. It is considered that the proposals demonstrate that they would be carried out in a manner which would ensure minimal intrusion into remaining historic fabric is required and such significant installations such as new walls and ceilings would be reversible in nature. It is considered that, subject to the recommended conditions, the proposed conversion works would be carried out in a way which would preserve, and not materially impact on, the significance of the listed building.

Notably with no alterations to the building's principal front elevation proposed. The proposals are considered to comply with Policy EN1 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment).

- 7.19 The impact of the proposed development on the special interest, character and architecture of the surrounding Market Place / London Street Conservation Area must also be considered.
- 7.20 The London Street / Market Place Conservation Area Appraisal defines the features of the conservation area that contribute to its special interest. Those features relevant to the part of the conservation where the application site is located include, presence of one of Reading's three Medieval Churches (St Laurence's), 16th and 17th Century timber framed buildings to Market Place, 19th Century Municipal buildings to Blagrove Street including the Town Hall building and Museum, examples of red, blue and buff brick buildings reflecting Reading's extensive local brickworks and public open space and trees to Town Hall Square and Market Place. Those features found to have a negative impact on the conservation area include the presence modern architecture to Market Place, vacant commercial premises and loss of original architectural features.
- 7.21 As described above the proposals primarily relate to the internal conversion of the building and do not propose any works to the principal Market Place elevation of the building. This elevation of the building is prominent to views from Market Place and Town Hall Square and is considered to be the part of the building which contributes to the architectural interest character and setting of the conservation area. Whilst minor external alterations are proposed to the rear elevation of the building, this elevation of the building does not make a significant contribution to the character and architectural interest of the conservation area due to its more utilitarian character and limited visibility. In this respect, the proposals would not materially impact on the character and special interest of the conservation area, the setting of which would be preserved. The proposals are considered to comply with Policy EN1 and EN3.

Amenity Matters

- 7.22 Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) states that development should not adversely harm the living environments of existing or new residential properties, including privacy, outlook and daylighting. Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) seeks to create safe and accessible environments. Policy EN16 (Pollution and Water Resources) seeks to ensure development is not damaging to the environment and sensitive

receptors by way of pollution. Policy EN15 (Air Quality) specifically seeks to protect existing occupiers from poor quality and EN17 (Noise Generating Equipment) from noise associated with plant equipment. Policy CR6 (Living in Central Reading) requires new residential type development within the defined Reading Central Area to demonstrate how issue of noise and other disturbance from town centre uses have been considered and where necessary mitigated.

Standard of Accommodation

- 7.23 Policy H5 (Standards for New Housing) seeks that new housing outside of the town centre is designed to adhere to the nationally prescribed spaces standards. Whilst the site is located within the town centre, it is welcomed that the application proposes that all of the residential units would meet or exceed the national standards. The flats would have outlook to both the Market Place and the rear of the buildings thereby having dual aspects. All habitable rooms have at least one external window and are considered to be well served in terms of outlook and daylighting.
- 7.26 Policy H10 (Private and Communal Outdoor Space) sets standards for access to suitable private or communal outdoor space for new residential dwellings. The policy acknowledges that flats within central Reading are unlikely to be able to meet these standards in full. Due to the location of the proposed flats, to the upper floors of the building, these dwellings would not be served directly by private or communal amenity space. This situation is not uncommon for town centre developments with the flats being well served by leisure and recreation facilities within the town centre, with Forbury Gardens close by. Given the central location of the site Officers are satisfied that future occupiers of the five flats would be served by suitable access to outdoor space. Furthermore, the addition of balconies to provide amenity space to the flats would very likely involve harmful alterations and intrusion to the Listed Building which would not be supported.

Access

- 7.27 Access to the flats would be via the existing entrance door from the north elevation of the building from Market Place which is located well in terms of natural surveillance from public areas. The residential units to the upper floors would be accessed only via stairs and it is not proposed to provide lift access given this would necessitate significant intrusions in the building's historic fabric. Given the relatively small number of dwellings proposed and duty to preserve and enhance the

historic significance of the Listed Building, officers accept that fully accessible units cannot be provided to this part of the site.

Noise and Disturbance

- 7.28 The site is located within the town centre where there are a variety of potential sources of noise disturbance for future occupiers of the flats; including traffic noise from Market Place, Friar Street and The Forbury and that associated with surrounding commercial uses which form part of the night-time economy, including the permitted hot food takeaway use to the ground floor of the application building.
- 7.29 A noise assessment and mitigation scheme has been submitted with the application and a number of noise mitigation measures are proposed, including secondary glazing, mechanical ventilation and additional insulation between the floor of the proposed first floor flat and the existing ground floor hot food takeaway use below. RBC Environmental Protection Officers have reviewed the noise assessment and are satisfied that it has been carried out to an appropriate standard and that subject to implementation of the proposed mitigation measures would ensure that acceptable internal noise levels within the flats would be achieved. Implementation of the proposed noise mitigation measures would be secured by way of condition.
- 7.30 The town centre location of the site is such that even with the proposed noise mitigation measures, noise levels within the flats could exceed recommended levels when windows are open. However, the inclusion of mechanical ventilation would ensure that a fresh supply of air can be maintained even when windows are closed. This aligns with Policy CR6 (Living in Central Reading), the supporting text to which under paragraph 5.3.25 of the Local Plan, states that in some cases, in order for the internal noise levels to be reasonable and not adversely affect health it would be necessary to provide a system of ventilation that entirely removes the necessity to open windows, even in very hot weather.

Air Quality

- 7.31 The site is located within an air quality management area (AQMA) and an air quality assessment has been submitted with the application. The assessment demonstrates that pollutant levels at the façade of the development are not likely to exceed recommended levels and therefore specific mitigation is not required. RBC Environmental Protection Officers have reviewed the assessment and are satisfied that it has been carried out to an appropriate standard and that the conclusions are

sound. The Environmental Protection Officer notes that the proposed ventilation inlets would be located to the rear of the building, which is recommended, given pollutant levels are higher to the front façade of the building.

Odour

- 7.41 An odour assessment has also been submitted with the application which considers odours from the ground floor hot food takeaway use in the building. Odour mitigation measures were approved when planning permission for the hot food takeaway was granted last year. The odour assessment concludes that these measures are adequate to ensure future occupiers of the flats would not be unduly impacted by cooking odours. RBC Environmental Protection Officers concur with these findings and are satisfied that no further odour mitigation is required.

Waste Storage and Collection

- 7.42 In terms of waste storage arrangements, a communal bin-store room for all the flats is proposed at first floor level within the building and it is proposed that all waste from the flats would be collected directly from the store on a weekly basis by private refuse collector. The initial plans for the development which were for 6 x 1-bedroom flats, did not include a bin store, and proposed that waste would be stored within the flats or in small cupboard at first floor level, from where the management company for the flats would have collected all waste in sacks and then deposited this on the street for collection by RBC waste services once a week. That arrangement was considered to be unacceptable by Officers due to lack of dedicated bin store facilities for the development, contrary to Policy CC5 (Waste Minimisation and Storage), which requires that developments are provided with adequate, well-designed space to facilitate waste storage, reuse, recycling and composting. The arrangement would also not have provided facilities to allow different waste streams to be separated and would have necessitated waste sacks being left on the street for collection, resulting street-clutter to the detriment of the setting of the Listed Building and the quality of views in the conservation area.
- 7.43 Following submission of amended plans for the current scheme of 1 x 2-bedroom and 4 x 1-bedroom flats, a dedicated bin-store room was incorporated at first floor level within the building. RBC Waste Officers have advised that this store is of sufficient size to accommodate the necessary number of bins for all waste streams for each of the flats (general waste, recycling and food waste). To prevent waste sacks from being left on the street, the Applicant has proposed that all waste

streams would be collected on a weekly basis by private contractor who would collect the waste directly from the first-floor bin store. The first-floor location of the bin store means that this would not be suitable for Local Authority waste collection services. Private refuse collection arrangements for the development would be secured as part of the section 106 agreement, which would include stipulations that all waste is collected directly from the store and that no waste sacks or bins are to be deposited on the street outside the site.

- 7.45 Whilst Officers are satisfied with the size of the bin store and that suitable waste collection arrangements can be secured, the location of the store at first floor level is considered to be sub-optimal given the risk of odours. However, given the flats are accessed via a door which leads straight to a staircase, it would not be possible to provide a bin store at ground floor level without future residents having to enter the ground floor hot food takeaway premises, which would introduce a security and safety concern. Furthermore, significant intrusions into the building to provide a store at ground floor level would likely result in harm to the Listed Building. The small rear service yard, which serves the hot food takeaway use, is also not big enough to accommodate a residential bin store and again residents could not access this area without entering the ground floor hot food takeaway premises.
- 7.46 Given the concerns regarding the location of the store the Applicant has provided further information as to how this would be managed and maintained. This includes provision of a ventilation louvre to the window to this room to provide natural ventilation and assist with dispersing odours. The door to the bin store would also be fire door which would seal the store from the common areas when closed. This would assist with dispersion of any odours via the louvre window and away from the first-floor common area circulation corridor and stair core for the building.
- 7.47 A management statement for the store has also been provided which states that all waste would be collected weekly directly from the store by private refuse collections service. The weekly collection arrangements would ensure that waste is not left sitting in the store for long periods. The statement also sets out that all bins within the store would be lined with large sacks which would be removed and replaced weekly in line with collection arrangements to avoid large bins being brought up and down the staircase and to ensure the bin containers remain as clean as possible. It is proposed that the bin store, and all common areas within the development, would be cleaned on a weekly basis by private cleaning contractor for the building.

- 7.48 Given the constraints of the historic building, Officers are satisfied that, by agreeing to secure weekly private refuse collection arrangements by way of a section 106 obligation and ensuring management of the bin store is carried out in accordance with the measures set out in the submitted waste management statement by way of condition, this would provide adequate mitigation to ensure waste collection and management of the bin store would not result in any adverse impacts upon the amenity of future occupiers of the development.

Surrounding Occupiers

- 7.49 The proposals relate to conversion works and no extensions to the building are proposed and as such impacts on surrounding occupiers are limited. The application building sits within a terrace of properties and is adjoined by no. 25-26 Market Place to the south which is in use as an estate agents with offices above. No. 175 Friar Street adjoins the building to the north, of which the upper floors are office accommodation which has been long term vacant, whilst the ground floor formed part of the former Bristol and West shopping arcade which is has also been long term vacant. The upper floors of no. 175 Friar Street have obtained prior approval consent for change of use to 6 flats (ref. 220577).
- 7.50 The proposed conversion would be served by front windows above ground floor level looking out on to Market Place, and rear windows above ground floor level only looking out on to the existing rear service yard building and no direct or unacceptable relationships with nearby buildings are considered to result. The proposal seeks to provide five flats and does not raise any concerns in terms of the level of the use of the building that is proposed and undue disturbance that would occur from the use of the building as flats to nearby existing occupiers.
- 7.51 Conditions are also recommended to secure submission and approval of a construction method statement to ensure surrounding occupiers are not unduly impacted by noise (and dust) associated with construction works associated with the proposed development and compliance with the Councils standards hours for construction work (0800hrs to 1800hrs Mondays to Fridays, and 0800hrs to 1300hrs on Saturdays, and not at any time on Sundays and Bank or Statutory Holidays).

Transport

- 7.52 Policies TR3 (Access, Traffic and Highway related matters), TR1 (Achieving the Transport Strategy) and TR5 (Car and Cycle Parking and

Electric Vehicle Charging) seek to address access, traffic, highway and parking relates matters relating to development.

- 7.53 The site is located within the Reading Central Area and within Reading's primary shopping area. The site is located within Zone 1 of the adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD which is an area at the heart of the Borough, consisting primarily of retail and commercial office developments, with limited residential. This area is well served by rail and bus links and also contains the largest proportion of public car parking spaces. Market Place has vehicle access restricted to buses, taxis and permit holders between 07:00-11:00 and 16:00-19:00.
- 7.54 A car free development is proposed and given the extensive parking restrictions in place controlling unauthorised on street parking in the town centre and wide range of public transport options nearby, this is considered to be acceptable by RBC Transport Officers. A condition is recommended to ensure that future occupants of the proposed flats are made aware that they would not be automatically eligible for any resident or visitor parking permits.
- 7.55 In accordance with the Council's adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD, secure cycle parking should be provided for residential units. However, in this instance a dedicated communal cycle storage facility is not proposed and instead cupboard space has been provided in each flat to allow for storage of a folding cycle. Given the small number of flats proposed, which would be located at first floor level and above, and the lack of reasonably available or accessible space at ground floor to provide a communal store, RBC Transport Officer consider this arrangement to be acceptable.

Sustainability

- 7.56 Policy CC3 (Adaption to Climate Change) seeks that proposals should incorporate measures which take account of climate change. Policy CC2 (Sustainable Design and Construction) seeks that development proposals, including for redevelopment and refurbishment of existing building stock will be acceptable where the design and layouts use resources efficiently. In this respect the proposal, in converting the existing building is, considered to make good use of this existing resource. Notably the proposals seek to retain the existing characterful timber sash windows but proposed secondary glazing to ensure the thermal capabilities of the building are improved, whilst protecting the character of the listed building.

- 7.57 Policy CC2 also requires that the development to meet a BREEAM very Good Standard and details to confirm this would be secured by way of condition.

Natural Environment

- 7.58 Policies CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) and CR2 (Design in Central Reading) seeks to ensure that development is of high design quality and includes landscaping, whilst Policy EN12 (Biodiversity and the Green Network) seeks that all development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity and should, wherever possible, provide a net gain for biodiversity.
- 7.59 The application site is entirely covered in built form and does not contain any vegetation or landscaping. The proposals seek change of use of the upper floors of the building and do not seek any significant external alterations or any changes to the roof of the building. Therefore, it is considered that the proposals would not have an adverse impact upon or result in a loss of biodiversity.
- 7.60 Given the constraints of the site, no landscaping or biodiversity enhancements are proposed as part of the development. On constrained town centre sites, where obvious space for such enhancements is not always available, Officers will often seek inclusion of features such as green roofs or bird and bat boxes. However, in this instance, the building is Listed, and addition of such features could not be achieved without impacting, and likely harming, the fabric of the Listed Building. Given the site does not contain any existing landscaping or biodiversity value, Officers view is the benefit of retrofitting such features to this small building in the town centre would not outweigh the harm this would result in, to the historic appearance and fabric of the listed building.
- 7.61 It is considered that the best way for the proposals to present high quality design, as required by Policies CC7 and CR2, is through retention of the existing Listed Building, which contributes positively to the character of the conservation area. Therefore, in this instance, given the constraints of the site, your officers' view is that the absence of landscaping from the proposals is justified.

Other

Archaeology

7.62 Policy EN2 requires that developers should identify and evaluate sites of archaeological significance and that where remains are identified and cannot be preserved 'in situ' they should be properly excavated, investigated and recorded. Whilst there is known potential for below ground archaeological remains in this part of the town centre the proposals relate solely to the upper floors of the building and therefore there is not considered to be any archaeological impact as a result of the proposed development.

Equalities Impact

7.63 When determining an application for planning permission the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. Paragraph 7.27 of this report discusses the accessibility of the flats, noting that they can only be accessed via stairs. Notwithstanding this, there is no other indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups as identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this planning application. Therefore, in terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the proposed development.

8 CONCLUSION

8.1 The proposals would see re-use and conversion of the upper floors of a vacant Grade II Listed Building to provide new residential accommodation in a sustainable town centre location, whilst contributing to meeting the Borough's identified housing needs. The proposals would provide for an acceptable standard of accommodation for future occupiers and would not adversely impact on existing surrounding occupiers. Notably the proposals would provide a policy compliant contribution to affordable housing provision elsewhere with the Borough and it is considered that the application demonstrates that the proposed conversion works could be undertaken in a sympathetic manner which would not materially impact upon the appearance or significance of the Listed Building which would be preserved.

8.2 As set out within the report above it is considered that the proposals would comply with the relevant policies of the development plan and when taking into account all material considerations presented with the report the officer recommendation is:

- Grant full planning permission subject to the recommended conditions and completion of a section 106 legal agreement for the recommended obligations) and;

- Grant listed building consent (subject to the recommended conditions)

Case Officer: Mr Matt Burns

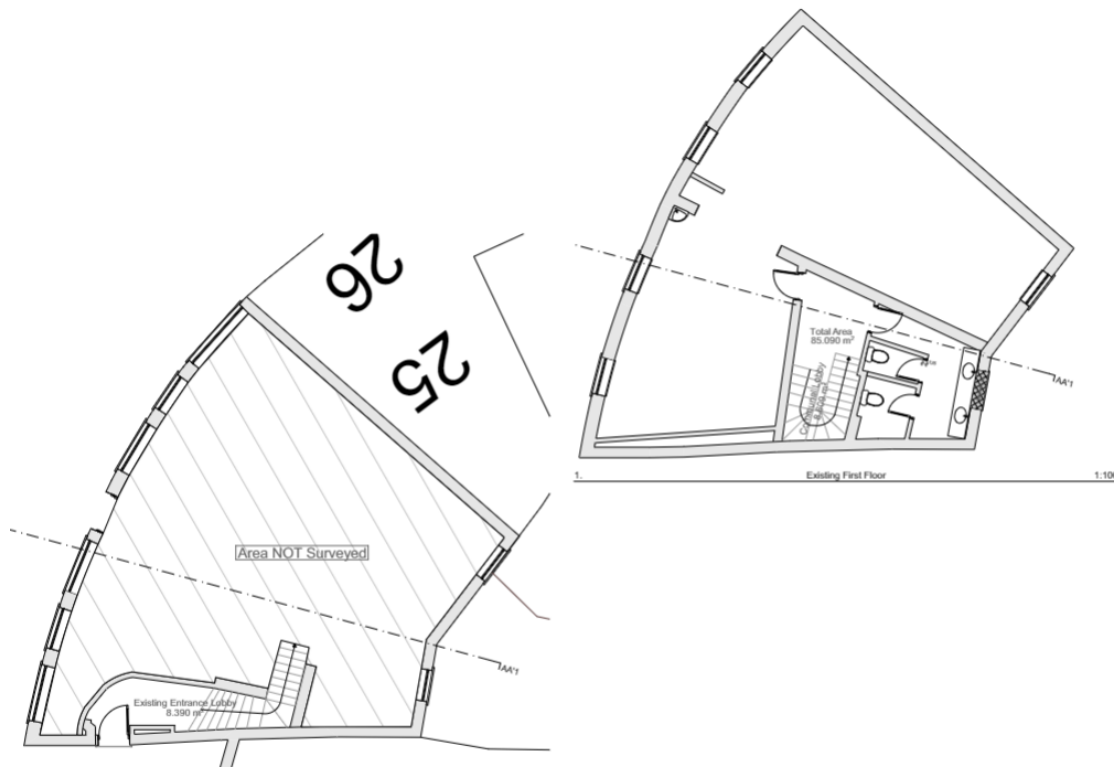
Selection of Proposed Plans shown below:

Full selection of plans and documents are viewable on the Council website using the application reference number via the following link:

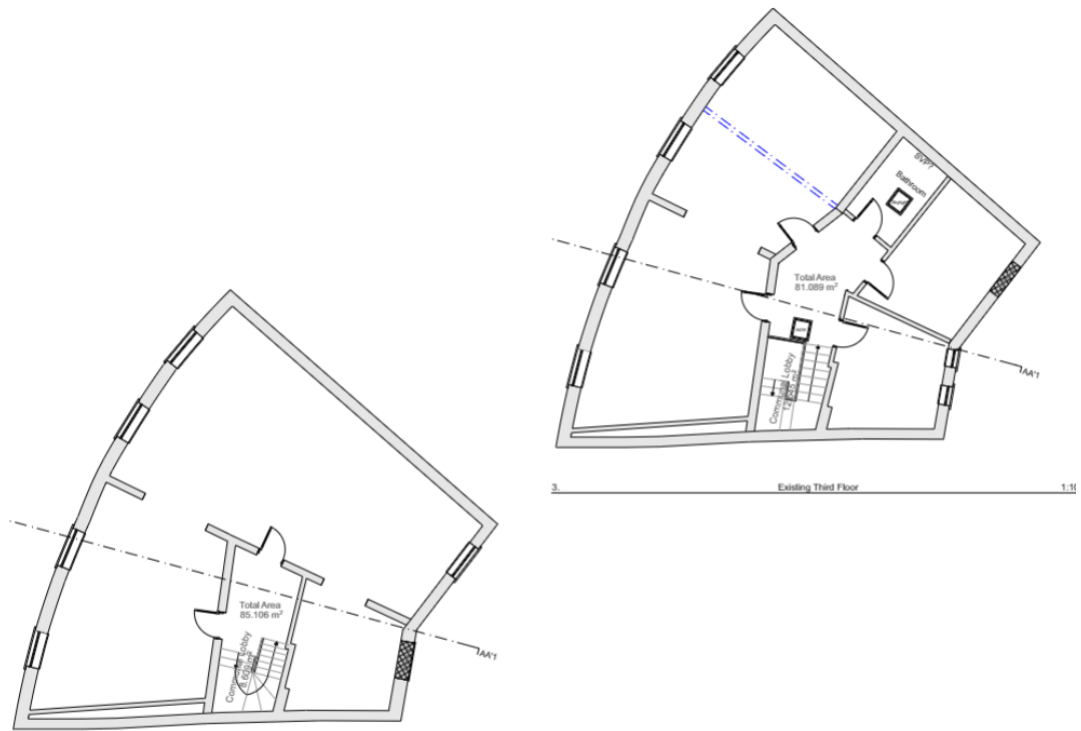
http://planning.reading.gov.uk/fastweb_PL/welcome.asp



Proposed Block Plan



Existing Ground and First Floor Plans



Existing First and Second Floor Plans



Existing Front Elevation



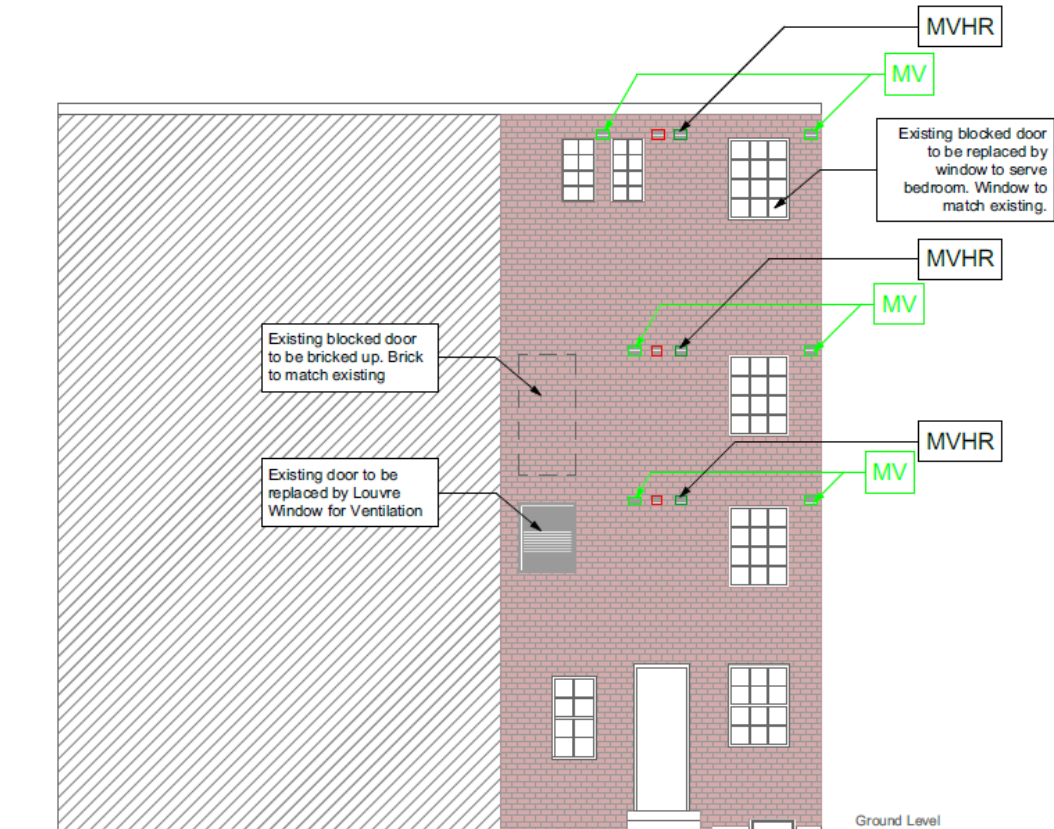
Existing Rear Elevation



Proposed Ground and First Floor Plans



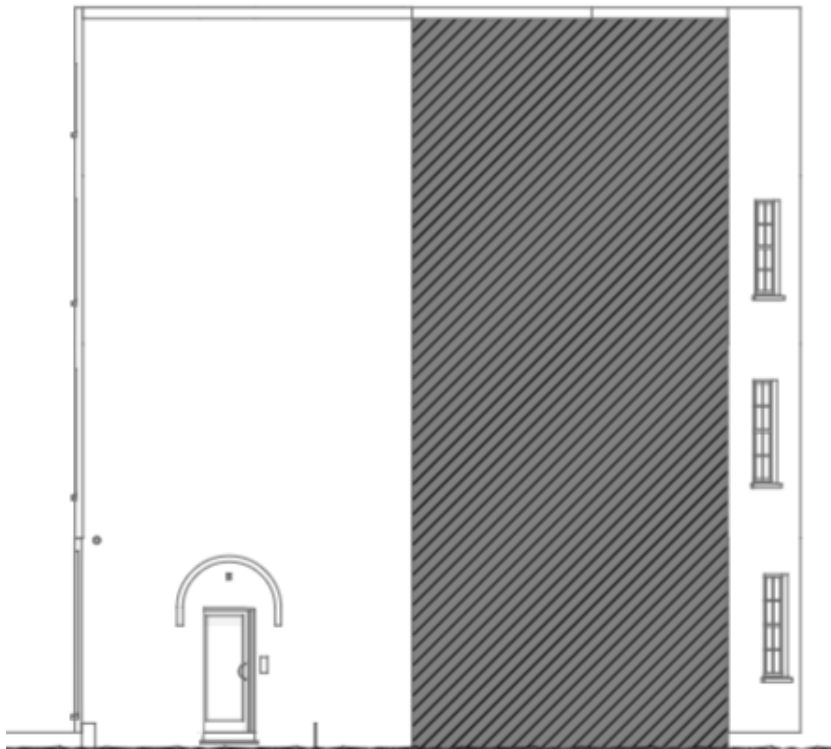
Proposed First and Second Floor Plans



Proposed Rear Elevation



Proposed Front Elevation



Proposed Side Elevation (West)