

PLANNING STATEMENT

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

PREMIER WINTER WONDERLAND EVENTS LIMITED

Application: Temporary erection of ice rink, marquee structure and ancillary side stalls in connection with Christmas festival, for a period of time not to be before 15 October 2023 and not to extend beyond 21 January 2024 for a period of 1 year



BLANDY & BLANDY
solicitors

Blandy & Blandy LLP
One Friar Street
Reading
Berkshire RG1 1DA
TEL: 0118 951 6800
REF: REA224/7

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Applicant, Premier Winter Wonderland Events Limited, intends for Reading Winter on Ice (also known as Reading Winter Wonderland) to present a fun and family friendly Christmas themed festival with an Ice Rink and ancillary side stalls (the “Event”) for local people and tourists alike.
- 1.2 Premier Winter Wonderland Events Limited carried out the same event, also located at Hills Meadow car park, over the Christmas period of 2021-January 2022 and over the Christmas period of 2022-January 2023. The event was run to great success with no formal complaints being filed or any police involvement.
- 1.3 A similar event at Forbury Gardens was run by Billy Williams & Son Ltd between 2015 and 2017 and again by Reading Winter on Ice Limited in 2018 and 2019.
- 1.4 It is intended that the Event will run between 11th November 2023 and 7th January 2024 and that all apparatus, structures and miscellaneous items relating to the Event will be removed by 21 January 2024. The opening hours of the Event are intended to be 11:00 to 22:00. The Applicant has already been granted Premises Licence Number LP1001192 for the Event under the Licensing Act 2003 (the “Premises Licence”).
- 1.5 The Applicant is applying for a temporary change of use to the Hills Meadow Car Park for use as an ice rink, with marquee structure housing skate hire and ancillary side stalls for a period of time not to be before 15 October 2023 and not to extend beyond 21 January 2024 for a period of 1 year.

2. The Site

- 2.1 Hills Meadow Car Park (“the Site”) is located in Caversham and by Reading Bridge. During the 2020 lockdown it is understood that the Site was used as a temporary travellers site, otherwise the Site is largely vacant and used for car-parking and ad-hoc events. A plan showing the Site as used for the Event is below.



3. Description of the Event

- 3.1 During the period that the Event is operating, the main structure on the Site will be the ice rink ("the Ice Rink") itself as this is the main attraction. In addition there will be a number of other smaller structures on site including a marquee on the Ice Rink itself for the 'Reading on Ice VIP' area.
- 3.2 There will only be 1 marquee which will be used for both the ice skate exchange and first aid room. There will also be a number of wooden 'chalets' that will be housing individual traders selling festive gifts and housing food and drink outlets. In addition, there will be a number of fairground rides.
- 3.3 The Ice Rink will have a maximum size of 30m x 15m and will have a capacity for 118 skaters per 45 minute session. There will also be a number of individuals waiting for the next session which could be up to 118 people. The number of customers for the Ice Rink that could be on site at any one time will be 236 people.
- 3.4 The maximum capacity at the Site is approximately 500 people.
- 3.5 The Applicant has prepared a detailed Event Safety Management Plan 2023/2024 which is aimed at ensuring that health and safety at the Event is of the highest standard. The Event Safety Management Plan is submitted with this application.

Planning Policy

4. Principle of the Development

- 4.1 The Council adopted its new Local Plan in November 2019 ("LP"). The LP provides that Reading Centre "...will continue as a regionally important shopping and business location, but its role will be widened as a place for culture, leisure and entertainment, as well as a place to live".
- 4.2 The supporting text for LP Policy RL2 provides that in terms of cultural, leisure and retail development in Central Reading it "should maintain and enhance the centres' vitality and viability. The centre of Reading is the most accessible location in the Borough, and is among the most accessible locations in the South East, and therefore represents the best location for major development of this type".
- 4.3 Further Policy CR3 encourages "Imaginative uses of open space and the public realm, which contribute to the offer of the centre". Policy CR4 provides that "Leisure, cultural and tourism uses that would attract a wide range of people into the centre will be encouraged" and further confirms that "The River Thames is a prime location for new or improved tourist attractions, and as such, this area is suitable for informal recreation and sporting uses and associated small-scale development, as well as improvements to management and access".
- 4.4 It is submitted that the provision of a festive and popular event during the Christmas period will help to achieve the aims identified by the Local Plan.
- 4.5 It is considered that the proposal will support and enhance Reading's 'Christmas feel' and the Event facilities will assist in widening the variety on offer in the centre of Reading, thereby helping to attract a greater range of people into the town during the key retail period. By enhancing the town vitality and viability by adding to the town's festive celebrations and encouraging visitors to shop and visit Reading during the festive period means that the proposal constitutes sustainable development for the purposes of the National Planning Policy Framework ("NPPF"), a presumption backed up by LP Policy CC1.

5. Transport and Accessibility

- 5.1 LP Policy CC6 requires development to be commensurate to the level of accessibility of the Site. Further Policy TR1 provides that "All development proposals should make appropriate provision for works and contributions to ensure an adequate level of accessibility and safety by all modes of transport from all parts of a development, particularly by public transport, walking and cycling". The Site is accessible by public transport and also by a short walk from Reading Town Centre and the excellent transport links that that location provides. The Applicant is promoting public transport and other sustainable modes of transport (such as walking) in its advertisements. As such it is considered that the proposal complies with the LP policies relating to transport and accessibility.

6. Impact on Residential Amenity

- 6.1 For a maximum of 1 hour each evening, there may be carol singers or local bands playing. However any noise emanated will be monitored to make sure it stays below 65Db, and will be covered by the Live Music Act 2012.
- 6.2 Recorded music will be played between the hours of 11:00 and 22:00 however it will generally be background/incidental in nature. Although it is not envisaged that the music will be licensable, the Applicant has been granted a Premises Licence allowing 'recorded music as a licensable activity' to be played.
- 6.3 The music is likely to be limited to background music to accompany live music (e.g. carol singers), music on the carousel, and some general background/ambience music for the market stalls.
- 6.4 LP Policy CC8 expects development to safeguard residential amenity. The Applicant is aware that some nearby residential occupiers may be concerned about the Event and the impacts that that might have. The Event will run from 11:00-22:00 and is subject to a Premises Licence which permits the playing of music from 11:00-22:00 and the sale of alcohol from 11:00-22:00.
- 6.5 A condition which states; "The licensee shall ensure that no noise as generated by recorded music shall emanate from the premises or vibration be transmitted through the structure of the premises which give rise to undue disturbance to local residents or businesses." is attached to the Premises License at Annex 2 & Annex 3 Condition 14.
- 6.6 A condition which states; "The premises licence holder shall ensure that the noise level measured at least 1m from the façade of the nearest and all other noise sensitive premises (being premises where occupants are likely to suffer from excessive noise) shall not exceed 63dBa over a 15-minute period (Laeq 15 min)." is attached to the Premises Licence at Annex 2 & Annex 3 Condition 18.
- 6.7 In addition, a clause in the lease contract provides; "The noise level for the event must not exceed 65dBA Laeq 15 minutes as measured 1m from the façade of any noise sensitive property throughout the duration of the activity or event." Daily noise levels were checked and recorded up to 5 times per day from numerous locations around the site and surrounding residential properties.
- 6.8 It is considered that the impact of the Event will be temporary (finishing on 7 January 2024) and that the Premises Licence ensures that the Event mitigates so far as possible the impact in terms of amenity on residential occupiers. As all the noise on site will be monitored and licensed it is not considered that this aspect should give rise to any planning concerns.
- 6.9 Very few noise complaints were received throughout the event last year, and no formal complaints were filed. However, the applicant provided his personal mobile number and was contactable, and on site, at all times. Residents freely contacted the Applicant directly and any noise issues were resolved without delay.

7. Air Quality

7.1 It is not considered that the Event will have any impact on air quality being temporary in nature and not contributing to air pollution.

8. Environmental Matters

8.1 LP Policy EN7 provides that “Proposals that would result in the loss of any of these areas of open space, erode their quality through insensitive adjacent development or jeopardise their use or enjoyment by the public, will not be permitted”.

8.2 Policy EN13 states that “Planning permission will not be granted for any development that would detract from the character or appearance of a Major Landscape Feature”.

8.3 As above the Event is temporary and the structures are not permanent, it is considered that the benefits of the Event (in terms of economic sustainability, COVID-19 recovery and driving footfall to Reading Town Centre during the festive season) outweigh any temporary harm to the Local Area of Open Space or Major Landscape Feature.

8.4 Policy CR3 further states that “Development proposals adjacent to or in close proximity to a watercourse will retain and not impede existing continuous public access to and along the watercourses, and will provide legible continuous public access to and along the watercourses where this does not currently exist”. The Event retains existing public access along the watercourse and does not prevent or impede access in any way.

8.5 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.” The Applicant confirms there will be no pruning or other interference with the trees.

8.6 In addition, the Applicant will be erecting close-boarded fencing around the Site which will be effective protective fencing for the trees to the south-east of the Site, as well as for security purposes. The fencing is approximately the same height as the Heras fencing used last year.

9. Flood Risk

- 9.1 The Site is situated primarily in Flood Zone 2 although there are limited areas within Flood Zone 3. The entrance to the site is across the wider car parking area near George Street, with only emergency exits located along and onto areas deemed Flood Zone 3.



- 9.2 LP Policy EN18 addresses flooding and sustainable drainage systems for development. It is not considered that the Event causes or contributes to any increased flood risk.
- 9.3 Each attraction at the Event is raised off the ground by up to 600mm from ground level, they are secured by 4-6 baring points. No fixing pins are driven into the surface material. The surface is covered by plastic rola-trac to ensure ease of access by both foot and wheelchairs and is carpeted. There are no excavations works associated with the application.
- 9.4 If flooding occurred during the event the Applicants will ensure all music and attractions are stopped and that customers are escorted safely via the main exit/entrance (away from Flood Zone 3), this leads directly into the car park. Once customers are safely out of the Event all staff will then leave.

10. Conclusion

- 10.1** The proposal is for a temporary period only and combined with the care that has been taken to design the application; the Event will not have any long-term adverse impact on residential amenity. The application complies with current planning policy and will make a significant and positive contribution towards Reading's festive celebrations enhancing the town's viability and visibility. The Applicant therefore requests that the application is recommended for approval.

Blandy & Blandy LLP

8th August 2023