



Over **30 years** of success and still planning

WALSINGHAM PLANNING

SPECIALIST PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANTS

Planning Statement

Sun Inn, 16 Castle Street, Reading,
RG1 7RD

JUNE 2023

Walsingham Planning

Bourne House
Cores End Road
Bourne End
Buckinghamshire
SL8 5AR

Telephone
01628 532244

bourne.end@walsingplan.co.uk
www.walsinghamplanning.co.uk



CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION.....	1
2	SITE & SURROUNDINGS	2
3	THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT	4
4	PLANNING POLICY	6
5	PLANNING ASSESSMENT	10
6	CONCLUSIONS	16

APPENDICES

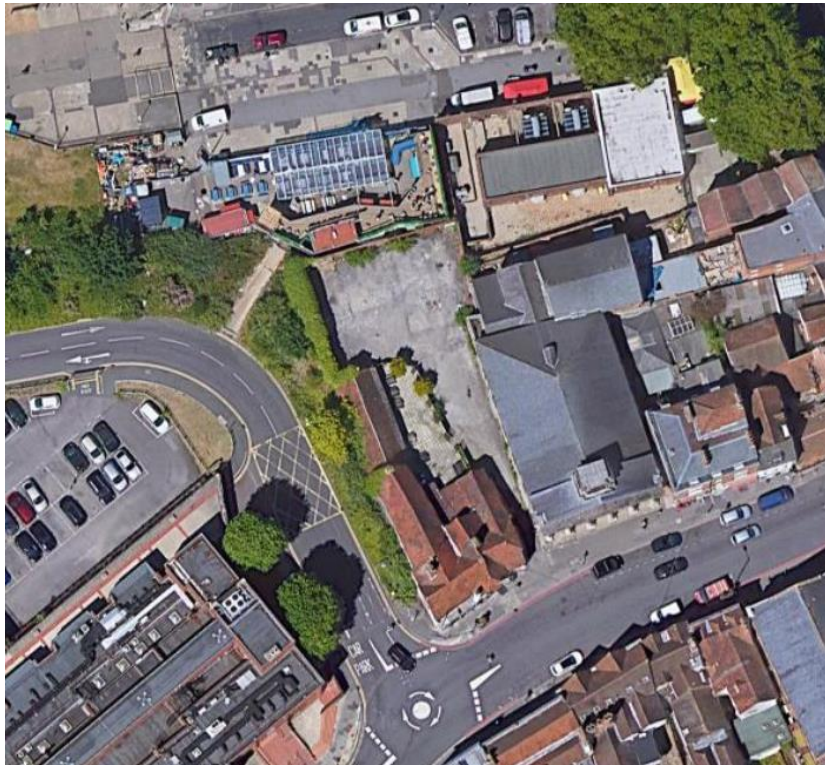
APPENDIX I – PHOTOGRAPHS OF SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

I INTRODUCTION

- I.1 This Planning and Heritage Statement is submitted in support of planning and listed building consent applications at The Sun Inn, 16 Castle Street in Reading town centre. The proposal is for a single storey rear extension with extract cowl to roof and improvements to the outdoor seating areas including a timber pergola and seating booths.
- I.2 In addition to this Planning & Heritage Statement, this application comprises the following documents:
- Site Location Plan 22.I23.BB.G 105
 - Block Plan 22.I23.BB.G 113A
 - Drawings 22.I23.BB.G 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 106A, 107A, 108A, 109A, 110B, 111, 112
 - Design & Access Statement including Sustainable Design & Construction Checklist
 - Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment and Historic Building Heritage Statement
 - Ecology Report
 - CIL form
- I.3 This statement will describe the site and surroundings, explain the proposals and assess the proposed development against relevant planning policy.
- I.4 It is concluded that the proposals constitute an excellent opportunity to bring a listed building in a sustainable town centre location back into gainful use and would accord with the Development Plan such that planning permission and listed building consent should be granted.

2 SITE & SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1 This application site has an area of approximately 0.1 hectare and lies on the north side of Castle Street in Reading town centre.



Aerial view of Sun Inn, Castle Street

- 2.2 The pub is a part two storey, part single storey building, which lies on the north side of Castle Street. There is a vehicular access to the right hand side of the building with timber gates. This leads to a hard surfaced area to the rear, which has previously been used for customer car parking. There is also a small beer garden to the rear of the pub. Photographs of the site and surroundings are included at Appendix I.
- 2.3 Internally, the main public part of the pub comprises four interconnected spaces with the bar serverly currently in the rear left hand corner. Toilets are located on the right hand side of the ground floor. The rear outrigger accommodates a storeroom, kitchen and further storage in the garages to the rear.
- 2.4 The public house was Grade II listed in 1957. The listing description is as follows:

C17 and older foundations and cellars, altered and modernized. 2 storeys and attic. Stucco over timber-framing. Tiled roof. A picturesque inn with half hipped gable to right of centre. 5 glazing bar sashes on 1st floor (2 in gable which has one small attic window). Ground floor has modern square bay bar window to left with balustraded balcony over; architrave surround and flat hood to plank door with wreath knocker, one 3-light window in gable and small door and 1 window to right (No 14). Two 2 storey extensions to rear. Interior: a considerable amount of exposed timber-framing. A small stone arch in yard called "Norman Arch" and cellars reputed to be remains of Reading Old Gaol.

- 2.5 The site forms part of St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area.
- 2.6 The site lies outside the floodplain and is not at elevated risk of surface water flooding.
- 2.7 Immediately to the west of the pub is an overgrown bank, beyond which is the access to a multistorey car park that sits to the rear of Reading Magistrates Court. To the north is Blue Collar Corner, a collection of street food vendors. To the east is St Mary's Church, a Grade II listed building. The area is generally characterised by small offices and other commercial activities in two and three storey terraced buildings.
- 2.8 The application site lies within Reading town centre so enjoys excellent access to public transport. This part of Castle Street is a Red Route with no stopping allowed. There are 11 pay and display parking spaces along Castle Street in the immediate vicinity of the site. Further car parking is available in the multistorey car park to the west.

Planning History

- 2.9 The site's more recent planning history is listed on the Council's website. The only application listed for the site (excluding advertisement consent) is that listed building consent was granted in 1993 for internal and external decoration (930585).

3 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1 The premises have been vacant for over a year and are very unlikely to become viable without significant financial investment. The premises have huge potential which is not currently being utilised and, as a listed building, it is crucial that it receives the investment it needs to bring it back into gainful use and ensure its longevity and usefulness, as well as providing the type of quality experience that customers expect.
- 3.2 The proposal is for the premises to reopen as a Brasserie Bar Co, which is known for a good quality food and drink offer, the professionalism of their teams and the loyalty of their customers. They are venues at the heart of the local community in which they are located, and their focus is excellent food in attractive, high quality and relaxed local settings.
- 3.3 This proposal is for a single storey rear extension with extract cowl to the roof and improvements to the outdoor seating areas. The proposals have been carefully designed, with input from a heritage specialist, to ensure they protect the architectural and historic interest of the pub.

Internal Alterations

- 3.4 The pub is in a poor state of repair. Various internal alterations are proposed to bring the building back up to a good standard. The modern bar servery will be cut back and refurbished and a new bar servery located in the front left hand side of the ground floor. New high shelving will be installed in the window to improve the pub's interaction with the street. All toilet facilities will be refurbished to a good standard. New floor finishes will be provided throughout the ground floor.
- 3.5 Two conservation roof lights will be installed in the rear right hand side of the ground floor to create a lighter and more appealing environment in this part of the customer area. The staircase to the first floor will be relocated to allow a more efficient use of space. This will require a new opening and the existing doorway to be blocked up and made good. A new accessible WC will be created.

Proposed Rear Extension

- 3.6 The proposed single storey rear extension is in three interconnected parts. Firstly, a single storey flat roof link extension would be positioned between the main pub building and the rear outrigger to widen this section, making it much more usable and creating a welcoming

entrance for customers. This will have glazed doors, chestnut feather edge cladding and a zinc effect flat roof.

- 3.7 Secondly, the main part of the extension involves widening the existing garage block to provide a new customer seating area. This will have three sets of glazed doors, chestnut feather edge cladding and a zinc effect flat roof.
- 3.8 Thirdly, the end section of the extension will be finished in painted brickwork with a gable end roof and timber door giving access to the new kitchen. Ventilation and extraction equipment will be housed in the roof void and an extract cowl installed on the west facing roofslope. An external cold room will be provided to the rear of the kitchen. Beyond that will be a fenced area for refuse/recycling storage.

Outdoor Seating Areas

- 3.9 Six timber booths are proposed for the rear part of the outdoor seating area, alongside the rear boundary. A large feature tree is proposed for the centre of the seating area.
- 3.10 In addition, a covered pergola is proposed on the eastern boundary of the site. The whole area will be repaved.

4 PLANNING POLICY

- 4.1 Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that “if regard is to be had to the development plan for the purposes of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts, the determination must be made in accordance with the plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise”. Any issue that relates to the use and development of land is capable of being a material planning consideration.

Development Plan

- 4.2 The Development Plan comprises the Reading Local Plan (2019). The site lies within the Central Core area of Central Reading, within an Air Quality Management Area, within St Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area and within an Area of Archaeological Potential. Relevant policies are summarised below.
- 4.3 Policy CC7 - All development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. Developments will also be assessed to ensure that they:
- Respond positively to their local context and create or reinforce local character and distinctiveness, including protecting and enhancing the historic environment of the Borough and providing value to the public realm;
 - Create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder or fear of crime does not undermine quality of life or community cohesion;
 - Address the needs of all in society and are accessible, usable and easy to understand by them, including providing suitable access to, into and within, its facilities, for all potential users, including disabled people, so that they can use them safely and easily;
 - Are visually attractive as a result of good high quality built forms and spaces, the inclusion of public art and appropriate materials and landscaping.
- 4.4 Policy EN1 – Historic features, areas of historic importance and other elements of the historic environment, including their settings, will be protected and where possible enhanced.
- 4.5 Policy EN2 – In Areas of Archaeological Significance, applicants should identify and evaluate sites of archaeological significance by consulting the Historic Environment Record. This will

require an assessment of the archaeological impacts of development proposals to be submitted before the planning application is determined.

- 4.6 Policy EN3 - The special interest, character and architecture of Conservation Areas will be conserved and enhanced. Development proposals within Conservation Areas must make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.
- 4.7 Policy EN12 – On all sites, development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity and should provide a net gain for biodiversity wherever possible.
- 4.8 Policy EN15 - Development should have regard to the need to improve air quality and reduce the effects of poor air quality.
- 4.9 Policy OUI – Proposals for new, extended or improved community facilities will be acceptable.
- 4.10 Policy CR2 – The architectural details and materials used in the central area should be high quality and respect the form and quality of the detailing and materials in area local to the development site.
- 4.11 Policy CR4 – The Central Core will be the prime focus for major leisure, cultural and tourism development. Leisure, cultural and tourism uses that would attract a wide range of people into the centre will be encouraged. Innovative solutions to leisure provision will be encouraged, particularly those that make best use of available (often limited) site area.
- 4.12 Policy CR5 - A range of complementary evening and night-time uses that appeal to all sections of Reading's society, and contribute to the 18-hour welcome, will be provided. Such uses should not give rise to adverse impacts on the amenity of nearby residents and other town centre users. Those uses that are likely to have an adverse impact on amenity or the character and/ or function of the Central area, will not be permitted.
- 4.13 Land to west and north of the application site forms part of West Side Major Opportunity Area (Policy CR12).
- 4.14 The Council adopted Parking Standards and Design Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) 2011. It confirms that drinking establishments within Zone 1 do not have standard requirement for car parking. The requirement for cycle parking is 1 space per 6 staff plus 1 space per 300m².

- 4.15 The Sustainable Design and Construction SPD was adopted in 2019.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.16 A revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in July 2021 and sets out the Government's aims for achieving sustainable development. Paragraph 8 explains that sustainable development comprises three overarching objectives:
- a) an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy;
 - b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities;
 - c) an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment.
- 4.17 Paragraph 11 explains that the presumption in favour of sustainable development means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay.
- 4.18 Section 8 relates to promoting healthy and safe communities. Paragraph 92 promotes social interaction as part of healthy, inclusive and safe places. Paragraph 93 continues that established shops, facilities and services should be able to develop and modernise for the benefit of the community.
- 4.19 Section 12 relates to achieving well-designed places. Paragraph 126 notes that the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Paragraph 130 states that planning decisions should ensure that developments:
- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area;
 - b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
 - c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting;

- d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
- e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development; and
- f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

4.20 Section 16 relates to conserving and enhancing the historic environment. Paragraph 197 states that in determining applications, local planning authorities should:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic viability;
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

4.21 Paragraph 202 states that where a development will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

4.22 Paragraph 203 states that, in weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm and the significance of the heritage asset.

5 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

Sustainable Development

- 5.1 The NPPF emphasises that the presumption in favour of sustainable development should be at the heart of plan-making and decision-taking. This means that planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the NPPF as a whole.
- 5.2 The premises have been vacant for over a year and are unlikely to be viable without significant financial investment. The premises have huge potential which is not currently being utilised and, as a listed building, it is crucial that it receives the investment it needs to bring it back into gainful use and ensure its longevity and usefulness, as well as providing the type of quality experience that customers expect.
- 5.3 The application proposals will support economic growth by making a significant financial investment to improve the customer offer at a long-established food and drink premises, thereby creating new employment opportunities. As well as providing local employment, the pub has the potential to provide a valued community meeting place, as protected by Policy OUI. The NPPF emphasises that significant weight should be placed on developments such as the application proposal and that economic development of this sort should only be resisted if there are overriding reasons against the proposal.
- 5.4 The proposals would improve an existing hospitality business for the benefit of local people and visitors alike, and create new jobs. As a listed building, it is even more important to secure suitable investment such as this to ensure the pub continues to make a positive contribution to the local area. The NPPF emphasises the need to ensure heritage assets are maintained in viable uses, ideally their original use, and the positive contribution that heritage assets when properly conserved and maintained can make to sustainable communities, including their economic contribution (Paragraph 197).
- 5.5 Policy CR4 sets out that the Central Core of Reading Town Centre will be the prime focus for major leisure, cultural and tourism development, which will be encouraged. The policy goes on to say that innovative solutions to leisure provision will be encouraged, particularly those that make best use of available (often limited) site area. The proposals would support the aims of this policy by bringing a long-established food and drink premises in a prime town centre location back into gainful use. Improving the outdoor seating areas for customers

makes more efficient use of the site as car parking is not necessary in this central area with excellent access by public transport, by bicycle and on foot.

Design & Heritage

- 5.6 The property is Grade II listed and forms part of a conservation area so it is imperative that investment is secured to restore the building to gainful use and ensure its continued contribution to the heritage assets of Reading town centre.
- 5.7 The proposals have been carefully designed to have a minimal impact on the special architectural and historic interest of the public house and its conservation area setting. A detailed Historic Building Heritage Statement accompanies the application.
- 5.8 The proposals for the premises itself and the outdoor seating areas represent important improvements which will help to secure the building's future by enhancing the useability and quality of the internal and external customer areas, and the back of house provisions. The proposals have been designed, with input from a heritage specialist, so that their scale, form and materials ensure they are read as subservient modern additions to the main building. The proposals would be high quality and respect the form, detailing and materials of the host building, in accordance with Policy CR2.
- 5.9 Considering the internal proposals, the alterations to the bar servery and the refurbishment of the toilets would not affect historic fabric. The insertion of two conservation rooflights and replacement of the staircase would only affect modern elements of the building. The alterations necessary to create the accessible toilet are sited within the late 19th century element and are by nature reversible so will not cause harm to the heritage asset.
- 5.10 An existing doorway from the bar servery into the entrance lobby is proposed to be blocked up and a new doorway formed. This will affect fabric which dates from the 18th or early 19th century but is a relatively small impact so not considered to represent harm to the significance of the listed building.
- 5.11 The rear extension will be in three interconnected parts. Firstly, a single storey flat roof link extension would be positioned between the main pub building and the rear outrigger to widen this section. This will require the removal of the north wall of the modern infill element with a mono-pitched roof which is not of interest. The new entrance area will require the partial blocking-up of the three-light window but this is a modern window so its removal will not result in harm to the listed building. The roof of the proposed entrance will follow the

approach of the dining room extension with a simple, shallow-pitched standing seam zinc roof with a largely glazed elevation.

- 5.12 The proposal will increase the width of this building from approximately 6m to 9m wide and the design approach would be for a shallow-pitch standing seam zinc roof to be tucked beneath the eaves of the late 19th century range. The addition will have a light-weight appearance, which will retain the existing character of the late 19th century range, ensuring the limited heritage value of this part of the building will be retained.

- 5.13 The new kitchen is to be located within a new building to the north of the late 19th century element of the rear range. The element generally largely follows the line of the late 19th century single-storey range and will incorporate a pitched clay tile roof with a return to the east presenting a gable to the east elevation. The proposed kitchen addition will not cause harm to the special architectural or historic interest of the listed building or the character and appearance of the conservation area. Ventilation and extraction equipment will be housed in the roof void and an extract cowl installed on the west facing roofslope. This is an essential element of the development as it will serve the new kitchen facilities which will allow the premises to be viable.

- 5.14 The external proposals would bring the previous car park into more effective use and would result in a positive change to an area that is presently neglected. The proposed booths and timber pergola are all reversible additions which will contribute to the viability of the business, thereby benefitting the listed building.

- 5.15 The proposals would almost exclusively focussed on the interior of the building or to the rear and so will have a very limited impact on the conservation area.

- 5.16 In accordance with Policy CC7, the proposals would be of a high standard of design and would retain and protect the intrinsic historic and architectural interest of the building and its setting.

- 5.17 The proposed extension and internal alterations are required to create the necessary space and facilities to support the long-term viability of the business. Therefore any perceived harm to the significance of the listed building as a consequence of the proposed alterations as a whole would be more than outweighed by the public benefits of supporting the long-term viability of the listed building and the socio-economic benefits in terms of job creation and third party supplier network.

- 5.18 The proposals would therefore comply with Policies CR2, EN1, EN3 and CC7, and the provisions of the NPPF.

Archaeology

- 5.19 The site lies within an Area of Archaeological Significance and the applications are therefore accompanied by an Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment.
- 5.20 The report explains that the pub is located on the periphery of the area of potential Saxon occupation and is within the area of the medieval borough, as evidenced by archaeological finds further along Castle Street. The report concludes that there is low to moderate potential for encountering Saxon archaeological deposits when the rear outrigger is extended and a high potential for encountering mediaeval archaeology. Therefore, it is considered that there is no requirement for pre-decision archaeological investigation to be undertaken. Instead, should planning permission be granted, the requirement for archaeological excavation and recording could be secured by condition.
- 5.21 The proposals would therefore comply with Policies EN1 and EN2 by suitably investigating the archaeological significance of the site.

Amenity

- 5.22 The whole of the site is authorised for use ancillary to the premises and therefore the application does not request planning permission for use of the former car park for outdoor seating as this does not constitute 'development'. The application simply seeks approval of the outdoor seating booths, timber pergola and new paving.
- 5.23 Ventilation and extraction equipment will be housed in the roof void of the kitchen extension and an extract cowl installed on the west facing roofslope. This is an essential element of the development as it will serve the new kitchen facilities which will allow the premises to be viable. A Noise Assessment has been prepared to accompany the application, which confirms that there would be no adverse impact from the relocated kitchen plant.
- 5.24 The kitchen extraction would include odour filtration equipment to ensure there is no odour nuisance to nearby properties. A Defra odour checklist is attached at Appendix 2 which confirms that only a low level of odour mitigation would be required in this instance due to the type of cooking proposed and the setting with few residential neighbours.

- 5.25 The premises lie within a town centre location dominated by commercial uses and the outdoor seating areas would be carefully managed to ensure there are no concerns regarding local amenity, in accordance with Policy CR5.

Parking and Air Quality

- 5.26 The application site lies within Reading town centre so enjoys excellent access to public transport. For those travelling by car, there are 11 pay and display parking spaces along Castle Street in the immediate vicinity of the site. Further car parking is available in the multistorey car park to the west as well as other town centre car parks.
- 5.27 As the car park is not needed in this location, the proposal includes the conversion of the former car park to enlarge the outdoor seating areas. This would reduce vehicular trips to the site to deliveries/servicing only. This would result minimise car trips by customers and staff, therefore improving local air quality which would be a planning benefit in this designated Air Quality Management Area in support of Policy EN15.
- 5.28 The Parking Standards and Design SPD does not set a standard requirement for car parking in the core central area for drinking establishments such as this. In such a central location with excellent access to public transport and a multistorey car park in very close proximity, the removal of on-site car parking to allow an extended outdoor seating area is considered to be a better use of the site.
- 5.29 The proposals include appropriate cycle parking to encourage this mode of transport.

Ecology

- 5.30 The application is accompanied by an Ecological Impact Assessment, which confirmed that no nearby statutory or non-statutory sites are expected to be affected during the works which will be relatively small-scale and contained within the site boundary.
- 5.31 The report identified the main pub as being of high suitability to support roosting bats but only two small area would be impact by the proposals, namely a flat roof extension and the installation of two conservation roof lights. The barn to the rear was identified as being of moderate suitability and would be extended.
- 5.32 The report therefore recommended a series of bat emergence surveys, which are currently being undertaken and will be reported separately.

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The proposals comprise a single storey rear extension to enlarge the customer seating area and improvements to the outdoor seatings areas including seating booths and a timber pergola.
- 6.2 The Sun Inn is a Grade II listed building and has been vacant for an extended period of time. It is essential to secure new investment to bring the property back into gainful use. The proposals have been carefully designed to have a minimal impact on the special architectural and historic interest of the public house. The courtyard extensions would be lightweight, high quality additions to the existing courtyard which would be read as a contemporary additions.
- 6.3 The Historic Building Heritage Statement which accompanies the application concludes that the proposed works could be accommodated without affecting the significance of the assets.
- 6.4 The proposals would reduce trip generation by private car and thereby improve local air quality.
- 6.5 The proposed development could be accommodated without any adverse impact on local amenity or ecology.
- 6.6 It is concluded that the proposals would accord with the Development Plan such that planning permission and listed building consent should be granted.