

New Building at Reading Link Retail Park, Rose Kiln Lane, Reading

Design, Access and Planning Statement

July 2023





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Section 1

Introduction

- 1.1. This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a full planning application at Reading Link Retail Park. The scheme proposes:

Erection of 1,780 sqm unit for use as gym with mezzanine level at Reading Link Retail Park, Rose Kiln Lane

- 1.2. The site is shown outlined in red in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Location Plan



- 1.3. The proposals will provide a gym facility in a new building within the existing curtilage of Reading Link Retail Park. This will be complimentary to the existing mix of uses currently on site and is entirely appropriate in this location.

- 1.4. A description of the application site and the surrounding area is given in Section 2; a description of the proposals can be found in Section 3, the planning policy context in Section 4, the key planning considerations are set out in Section 5; the conclusion and consideration of the planning balance is presented in Section 6.
- 1.5. This statement and application drawings should be read in conjunction with the following supporting documents:
- ▣ Retail Statement, prepared by Pegasus Group
 - ▣ Air Quality Assessment, prepared by Redmore Environmental
 - ▣ Archaeological Desk Based Assessment, prepared by Wardell Armstrong
 - ▣ Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy Report, prepared by Price & Myers
 - ▣ Transport Statement, prepared by Motion



Section 2

Site and Surrounding Area

- 2.1. Reading Link Retail Park is located off the A33 on Rose Kiln Lane, which leads onto Reading Town Centre when traveling north from the M4. There are a number of other businesses, retail and industrial parks on the A33, as well as new developments that are providing hotels, residential and retail/employment opportunities along the A33 corridor.
- 2.2. Adjacent, to the west, is an area of open space, to which there are two gates on the boundary between the retail park and the field.
- 2.3. To the north is a residential development. A footbridge provides access from the retail park, over the river, into the residential estate.
- 2.4. The eastern boundary abuts the Rose Kiln Lane section of the A33, whilst the southern boundary is the access road from the A33 into the retail park, with a shared access for the petrol station.
- 2.5. The retail park has a large area of parking to the front of the buildings together with an 'overflow' car park in the north eastern corner of the site and a small area behind the end unit. There is some planting within the car park areas.
- 2.6. An access road for delivery vehicles runs in front of the site and along the western boundary to a delivery area to the rear of the units.
- 2.7. The retail park is currently home to 6 retail units and a Starbucks drive-thru is under construction in the north-east corner of the car park. This development includes the construction of a new access on Rose Kiln Lane which will provide a secondary access to the retail park.
- 2.8. Taking into account the Starbucks unit under construction, the retail park has 311 car parking spaces (19 of which are disabled).

Planning Designations

- 2.9. The site is identified in the Council's proposals map as having the following designations:

-  Air Quality Management Area

- ▣ Adjacent to Flood Zone 2
- ▣ Adjacent to an Area of Archaeological Potential

2.10. An extract from the proposals map is provided below (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Extract from Proposals Map (site shown with red star)



Planning History

- 2.11. This application follows a number of recent applications that have sought to expand and diversify the uses within the retail park.
- 2.12. A Starbucks Drive-thru Coffee Shop was granted consent in July 2021 (201558) which has now been built and almost ready to start trading.
- 2.13. In addition to this, consent was granted for a S73 application in April 2022 (211418) to enable a 24hr gym to operate from an existing retail unit.
- 2.14. Planning consent was granted in 1988 by the Secretary of State for the Retail Park. This consent granted 6500sqm of retail floorspace and c.300 parking spaces. Over time, additional retail floorspace has been added to the site through the addition of mezzanine floor levels and the retail units themselves have been sub-divided or amalgamated to meet the changing needs of retailers.

- 2.15. Pursuant to a planning consent 01/00873/FUL, the total retail floorspace permitted at the site is 9,230sqm. Car parking provision at the site has not been amended at the site since the original grant of consent and provides approximately 300 spaces.
- 2.16. A number of consents have also been granted in recent years to extend the range of goods that can sold from the site within the existing retail units.



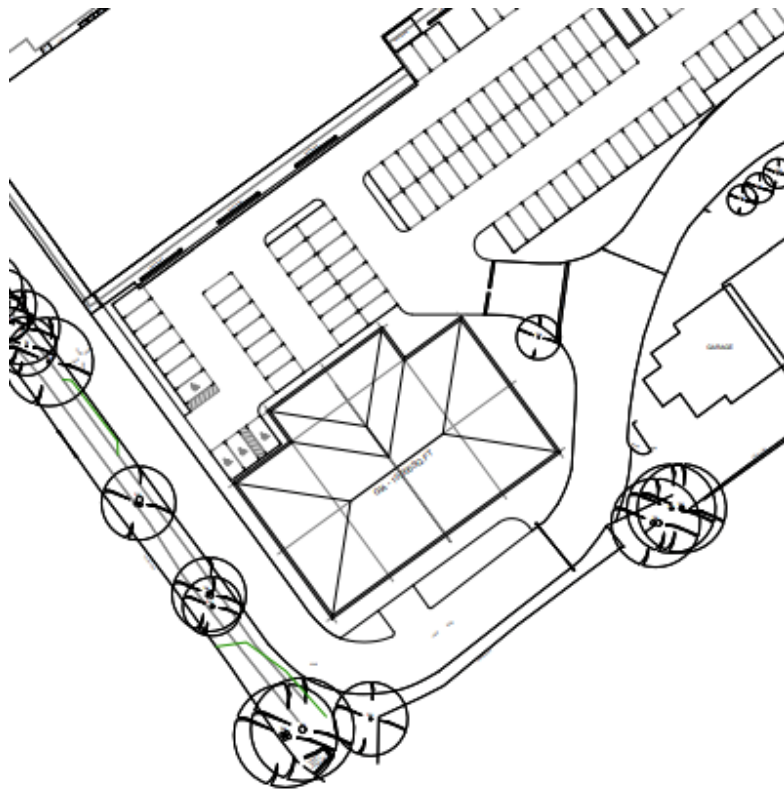
Section 3 Proposals

3.1. The proposals seek consent for:

Erection of 1,780 sqm unit for use as gym with mezzanine level at Reading Link Retail Park, Rose Kiln Lane

3.1. An extract from the site plan is provide below (Figure 3.).

**Figure 3:
Proposed
Site Plan**



3.2. The proposals consist of 1,780 sqm of gym floorspace with access provided from the existing roadway into the retail site. The proposed floorspace is split across the ground floor and a mezzanine level.

3.3. Parking from the existing retail car park will be utilised for the proposed unit.

3.4. Cycle parking will be provided in line with Council standards.

- 3.5. The gym will operate 24hours a day, 7 days a week. It will provide gym space for general use, as well as organised fitness classes. There will be 5 time full time and 12 part time employees working from the site. The principle of a 24 hour gym operating from the retail park was established with a S73 application granted consent in April 2022 (211418).
- 3.6. The design of the building is reflective of the other units within the retail park with a simple palette of materials utilising cladding.



Section 4

Planning Policy Context

- 4.1. This section considers the relevant planning policy context for the site as well as any relevant planning history for the site and its surrounding area.

National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

- 4.2. Paragraph 2 of the NPPF confirms that planning applications should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF must be taken into account in preparing the development plan and is a material consideration in planning decisions.
- 4.3. Section 7 considers the vitality of town centres and seeks to ensure that applications protect the uses and importance of town centres. When considering developments on out of centre sites, preference should be given to accessible sites.
- 4.4. Section 11 (Making efficient use of land) seeks to promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions (paragraph 119).
- 4.5. Section 12 (Achieving well-designed places), paragraph 126 states that:
- “the creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.”*
- 4.6. Paragraph 130 states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:
- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
- 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, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);

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 (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and

f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

Local Planning Policy

- 4.7. The Council's current planning policy context of relevance to this site is contained within the Reading Borough Local Plan (adopted November 2019). Relevant policies in this document are:

- ☐ CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- ☐ CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction
- ☐ CC3: Adaption to Climate Change
- ☐ CC6: Accessibility and the Intensity of Development
- ☐ CC7: Design and the Public Realm
- ☐ CC8: Safeguarding Amenity
- ☐ EN2: Areas of Archaeological Significance
- ☐ EN15: Air Quality
- ☐ EN18: Flooding and Drainage
- ☐ EM1: Provision of Employment
- ☐ EM2: Location of New Employment Development
- ☐ EM4: Maintaining a Variety of Premises
- ☐ TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging
- ☐ RL2: Scale and Location of Retail, Leisure and Culture Development



Section 5

Planning Considerations

- 5.1. This section considers the relevant planning issues in respect of the proposed development.

Principle of Development

- 5.2. The site is located within an established retail park containing a number of units with a mix of different operators within them. The principle of developing this site for commercial use has therefore already been established. The provision of a gym at this site will provide a complimentary service to the wider retail park.
- 5.3. However, owing to the fact that the unit will be over 1000sqm, the scheme is required, in accordance with the NPPF and Local Plan Policy RL5, to demonstrate that there will be no adverse impact on existing centres within Reading. Consequently, an impact assessment is required to be submitted for proposals of this nature.
- 5.4. The submitted Retail Impact Assessment confirms that there are no sequentially preferable locations which are suitable, available and capable of viable occupation for this use. Furthermore, the report confirms that the impact on defined centres will be limited and only impact upon larger gym facilities which are considered resilient to increased competition and do not significantly impact the vitality and viability of town centres. The proposals therefore comply with the NPPF and Policy RL5.
- 5.5. Notwithstanding this, Policy EM4 further states that a range of types and sizes of units should be provided in the Borough and proposals should maintain or enhance this range. The provision of a gym will assist in this aim and will help to diversify the retail park. Furthermore, the proposed gym use now falls within the same use class as retail due to the similarities in character of these uses and is, therefore, entirely appropriate in this location. It will also provide a valuable service to those working in the retail park, in addition to the local population.
- 5.6. The gym will operate 24hours a day, 7 days a week and the principle of a 24 hour gym operating from the retail park was established with a S73 application granted consent in April 2022 (211418).

Site Layout and Design

- 5.7. The unit is proposed to be located within an existing retail park, on an area of land which is currently used for parking. The location and orientation of the unit has been arrived at following an assessment of the access into the park, to ensure safety and functionality.
- 5.8. The design of the unit itself is reflective of the surrounding retail park and will be constructed of a simple palette of materials that are seen in the wider retail park.

Materials

- 5.9. The structural frame shall comprise steel portal legs and rafters, providing a clear span between walls of external envelope. The “above ground” wall construction to be formed using 600mm high Kingspan composite cladding panels or similar approved with 100mm core thickness, with folder/mitred corners, hidden fixings and small panel joints.
- 5.10. The roof will comprise a Composite Kingspan insulated roofing system, with integral gutter system to front and rear elevations. Roof penetrations are to be adequately trimmed and flashed.
- 5.11. All windows to be of proprietary manufactured thermally broken aluminium framing, all double glazed with minimum overall frame width 100mm with powder-coated finish. Glass to comply with BS 952 and BS 6262 *Glazing for buildings*. Powder coated entrance door, and frame, with 1000mm long nylon coated “D” handle. No letter box to be installed.
- 5.12. The proposals are therefore in line with Policy CC7 which expects developments to respond positively to their local context and reinforce the local character and distinctiveness.

Parking and Highways Impact

- 5.13. The proposed scheme will utilise the existing access into the retail park. The existing delivery access will also be used, and a loading bay will be provided to the rear of the unit where vehicles can achieve access without causing an obstruction. The Transport Statement confirms that there is sufficient capacity in the site to utilise these existing accesses and that there will be no negative impact on highways safety. The scheme therefore complies with Policy TR3 of the local plan.
- 5.14. Policy TR5 requires developments to provide car and cycle parking that is appropriate to the accessibility of the location. This is expanded upon in the Parking Standards and Design Supplementary Planning Document which requires 1 space per 35 sqm of floorspace for health clubs and gymnasiums in this location.

- 5.15. The proposal will share car parking with the wider retail estate which has 289 spaces. The development of the unit will result in the loss of car parking spaces but 242 spaces will remain. The submitted Transport Statement confirms that there is sufficient capacity within the existing provision to manage the loss of spaces and still provide adequate parking for all of the units. Four disabled bays in this area will be retained to service the new unit.
- 5.16. In terms of cycle parking, one space per 6 staff and 1 space per 40sqm of floorspace is also required. The proposals include cycle parking to the front of the property and there is also existing cycle parking provision elsewhere within the retail park.
- 5.17. With regards to electric vehicle charging, 5 spaces will be provided, which meets the requirements of Policy TR5 to provide a minimum of 10% of spaces with electric vehicle charging (based on a requirement of 51 spaces derived from the parking standard requirements for a unit of the size proposed).

Flooding and Drainage

- 5.18. The site is located in close proximity to Flood Zone 2 and accordingly a Flood Risk Assessment has been undertaken for the proposed scheme. This confirms that the site is at very low risk of surface water flooding, groundwater flooding and reservoir flooding. It further confirms that an attenuation tank is proposed which will sufficiently manage surface water from the development in the 1 in 100 year + 40% storm event.
- 5.19. The proposals therefore comply with Policy EN18 which expects development to be directed to the areas at lowest risk of flooding, and to incorporate sustainable drainage systems where possible.

Air Quality

- 5.20. The site lies within an Air Quality Management Area and consequently, in line with Policy EN15, the proposals have taken into consideration the need to improve air quality and reduce the effects of poor air quality. The policy states that proposals which would detrimentally affect air quality will not be permitted unless the effect is mitigated.
- 5.21. The submitted Air Quality Assessment confirms that during the construction phase there will not be significant impacts on air quality. During the operation phase the traffic generation will result in a negligible impact with residual impacts not being significant. Overall, air quality is not considered to be a constraint to development.

- 5.22. The site which is the subject of this application lies 40m to the south of an Area of Archaeological Significance. Policy EN2 confirms that, in such instances, an assessment of the archaeological impact of the proposals must be undertaken. Development proposals which will have an adverse effect on archaeological remains and their settings will not be allowed unless there is clear overriding public benefit.
- 5.23. Policy EN1 further expects the historic environment to be protected and enhanced, and for proposals to seek to avoid harm in the first instance.
- 5.24. The submitted Archaeological Desk Based Assessment confirms that the site does not include any designated or non-designated heritage assets. Nor does it include any archaeological sites or findspots. The report therefore concludes that the proposed development “*has a low potential to reveal, negatively impact and even destroy archaeological evidence within the site*”. As such, it is considered that the scheme complies with Policies EN1 and EN2.



Section 6

Conclusions

- 6.1. This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a full planning application for:

Erection of 1,780 sqm unit for use as gym with mezzanine level at Reading Link Retail Park, Rose Kiln Lane

- 6.2. The proposals present an opportunity to diversify the offer at the retail park by providing a complementary service.
- 6.3. The supporting documents submitted with the application confirm that the proposals will not have a detrimental impact on the vitality or viability of town centres within Reading. Nor will there be any negative impact on parking provision or highways safety.
- 6.4. Overall, we believe the proposals enhance the retail park and we would therefore respectfully request that planning permission is granted.

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