

DELEGATED PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Caversham

App Ref: 221300/FUL

Address: 51 Church Street, Caversham, Reading, RG4 8AY

Proposals: Facade alterations: New shop front windows and new door openings including the formation of a new entrance to the first floor sublet unit from the car park - also to include new rooftop plant. A new E- comm van parking/loading area and alterations to the existing car park, minor changes to the layout to regain the lost parking spaces and maintain and enhance special needs parking. This will also include new pedestrian walkways, new trolley parking corrals to the centre of the car park and new bollards.

Case Officer: Ryan Allen

Date received (valid from): 10 October 2022 Target Decision date: 5 December 2022

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is a large commercial unit with associated car parking at the rear. The local area is a mix of commercial and residential, located within Caversham's local centre on Church Street, with its frontage identified as a key frontage. The site is not a listed building, nor does it fall within a conservation area.

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Planning permission is sought for development throughout the site. Façade alteration to the shopfront are proposed, including new shop front windows and new door openings are proposed. This includes a new entrance to the sub-let unit situated above the property. New E-commm van parking and loading area is proposed to the rear of the property. This will necessitate minor changes to the car park layout to facilitate this. Further alterations to the car park include new pedestrian walk ways and new trolley parking corrals.

Plans considered

05/09/22

Design & Access Statement

Location Plan - Drawing No. 174-149-FCA-XX-XX-A-P01

Proposed Site Plan - Drawing No. 174-149-FCA-00-02-A-P12 rev. P1

Existing Site Plan - Drawing No. 174-149-FCA-00-00-A-P02 rev. P1

Proposed Roof Plan - Drawing No. 174-149-FCA-02-R1-A-P13 rev. P1

Proposed Trolley Shelter Details - Drawing No. 174-149-FCA-XX-XX-A-P15

Existing Roof Plan - Drawing No. 174-149-FCA-00-R1-A-P03

Existing External Elevations - Drawing No. 174-149-FCA-00-ZZ-A-P04 rev. P1

Proposed External Elevations - Drawing No. 174-149-FCA-02-ZZ-A-P14 rev. P1

10/10/22

Design & Access Statement rev. A

Plant Noise Impact Assessment

21/11/22

Background Noise Survey and Plant Noise Assessment

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

14/09/01 - 010078/ADV - Seasonal decorative banners from Waitrose mounted on existing lampposts - Permitted
25/03/04 - 040654/ADV - Signage for Waitrose foodstore and car park - Permitted
30/04/07 - 071204/FUL - New plants to existing flat roof - Permitted
17/08/07 - 070957/FUL - New plant units to existing flat roof, with handrails - Permitted
31/08/22 - 221289/ADV - 1 new set of building letters, 4 replacement sets of building letters with 1 new projecting signal and 1 new totem. 45 new and replacement low-level signs. 31 signs will be removed - Permitted

4. CONSULTATIONS

The following addresses were consulted by letter.

Reflex Health & Fitness, Archway Road, Caversham, Reading, RG4 8AN
Caversham Dental Clinic, Archway Road, Caversham, Reading, RG4 8AN
46 Church Street, Caversham, Reading, RG4 8AU
Flat 5, Archway House, 72a London Street, Reading, RG1 4SJ
Flat 2, Archway House, 72a London Street, Reading, RG1 4SJ
Flat 1, Archway House, 72a London Street, Reading, RG1 4SJ
Flat 3, Archway House, 72a London Street, Reading, RG1 4SJ
Flat 6, Archway House, 72a London Street, Reading, RG1 4SJ
Flat 4, Archway House, 72a London Street, Reading, RG1 4SJ
57 Church Street, Caversham, Reading, RG4 8AX

Letters of representation have been received as follows:
None.

Internal Consultations:

Transport

The application form states that the number of parking spaces will reduce from 130 spaces to 126 spaces resulting in a net loss of 4 spaces which is unlikely to result in a detrimental impact on highway safety on the surrounding highway network given the on-street parking controls in the area. The proposals include some minor reconfiguration of the car park layout including relocation of the disabled parking spaces, new parking corrals and a new bicycle shelter. The proposals also include new pedestrian walkways within the parking aisles. There are no transport objections to this application.

Environmental Protection

Colleagues in Environmental Protection commented on the Noise Impact Assessment submitted on 10/10/22 requesting further clarification on the background noise levels to assess whether or not the plant noise levels comply with local criterion. In the requested clarification's absence, the following condition was recommended:

➤ **N2 MECHANICAL PLANT (NOISE ASSESSMENT REQUIRED)**

No mechanical plant shall be installed until a noise assessment of the proposed mechanical plant has been submitted and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The assessment shall be carried out for in accordance with BS4142:2014+A1:2019 methodology. The predicted specific sound level (LAeq,TR) (with reference to BS:4142) as measured at a point 1 metre external to the nearest noise-sensitive facade shall be at least 10dB below the pre-existing background sound level, LA90,T when all plant/equipment (or any part of it) is in operation. The predicted rating level, LAr,Tr

(specific sound level plus any adjustment for the characteristic features of the sound) as measured at a point 1 metre external to the nearest noise-sensitive façade (habitable window of a dwelling) shall not exceed the pre-existing background sound level, LA90,T when all plant/equipment (or any part of it) is in operation. The plant shall thereafter only be installed in accordance with the assessment and shall thereafter be maintained so that it operates to the same standard. REASON: To safeguard the amenities of the adjoining premises and the area generally, in accordance with Policy CC8 and EN17 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

On 21/11/22 a Background Noise Survey and Plant Noise Assessment was submitted as per request and forwarded over to Environmental Protection for assessment. The following comments were then received: *'...the noise from the proposed plant will meet our criterion.'*

Ecology

'... Due to the location of the building and the extent of the works it is considered unlikely that the proposals will affect bats or other protected species. There are therefore no objections to this application on ecology grounds.'

Natural Environment

The site sits within the Air Quality Management Area hence improving greening on the site is of greater importance. Every development is expected to provide a net gain in trees or alternative greening if trees are proven not to be feasible, in line with Policy EN14 and aims of our adopted Tree Strategy. In addition, Waitrose and partners are a responsible supermarket promoting their green, ethical and welfare standards, hence I would hope that greening would form part of any of their applications.

Using Google Street view (comparing 2015 & 2022), I note the loss over recent years of at least 3 mature trees, 1 near the exit into Archway Road and 2 from the centre of the car park.

The proposed e-comm parking and loading bays eliminate the space on which a replacement near the exit could be planted and the proposed two covered trolley parks and two parking spaces in the centre of the car park remove an area of soft landscaping hence remove the possibility of replacement tree planting there. With no obvious alternative locations for new/replacement trees, the proposals fail to provide a net gain but instead ensure a long-term net loss. As such they do not meet policy requirements or aims of our Tree Strategy.

In addition to the above, some of the proposed works have the potential to cause harm, direct and/or indirect, to existing, retained trees.

A new bollard and new illuminated totem sign are proposed directly adjacent to the tree at the car park entrance, hence within its Root Protection Area

I don't know how tall this sign will be but in addition to the potential harm to roots from installation, and in this case a need to dig to install an electricity supply to the sign, there will be a need to ensure clearance from the sign afterwards, resulting in the need for pruning, the degree of which is uncertain given the lack of detail about the sign.

Similarly, a new bollard is proposed adjacent to the tree in the south-east corner of the car park (tree to the rear in the photo above) - installation of bollards adjacent to both trees will require excavations hence potential root damage.

I note the proposed bike shelter (I can't find details of this) in the location of the trolley park on the west side of the car park, adjacent to a row of existing Birch. Whilst the Birch are in a raised kerb area, it is entirely possible that roots could be under the adjacent trolley park, hence potentially impacted by the construction of the bike store:

No, Arboricultural Impact Assessment has been provided to demonstrate how the works could be carried out within harm to the above trees. This is disappointing and unacceptable.

In conclusion, the application does not consider necessary tree or landscaping matters hence is unacceptable and contrary to EN14 and aims of our adopted Tree Strategy.

5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. The following local and national planning policy and guidance is relevant to this application:

National Policy and Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework

National Planning Practice Guidance

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC2: SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

CC7: DESIGN AND THE PUBLIC REALM

CC8: SAFEGUARDING AMENITY

EN14: TREES, HEDGES AND WOODLAND

EN17: NOISE GENERATING EQUIPMENT

TR3: ACCESS, TRAFFIC AND HIGHWAY-RELATED MATTERS

TR5: CAR AND CYCLE PARKING AND ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING

RL2: SCALE AND LOCATION OF RETAIL, LEISURE AND CULTURE DEVELOPMENT

RL3: VITALITY AND VIABILITY OF SMALLER CENTRES

OU5: SHOPFRONTS AND CASH MACHINES

Equality Act 2010:

In determining this application the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. However, there is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular 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 development.

APPRAISAL

Façade Alterations

Marrying with the separate advertisement consent approved (221289/ADV), the facade alterations included in the proposal are considered a complementary update to existing building and the surrounding smaller local centre. All changes to the shopfront propose to make good the existing prior to installation and the updates are considered to increase and uphold the vitality and viability of the host building and local area, thus complying with policy RL3 of the Reading Borough Council Local Plan (2019). The impact of removal of a shop entrance/exit to the west elevation is considered negligible as this access to the property has not been in use for some time. The access is to be replaced with an extended stall riser and new aluminium shop front installed, all to match existing. The current exit door to the west elevation is to remain, ensuring sufficient customer access to the store is retained with the removal of the aforementioned access. Further access works are proposed to the west elevation in the form of a new entrance to the sub-let unit that's situated above the store. These works will restore access to the sub-unit that's considered necessary and the design of which is considered in keeping with the property as a whole.

E-comm Van Parking/Loading Area

The proposed new e-commerce van parking and loading area will necessitate the removal of 4 existing parking spaces in the car park to the rear of the property. This will reduce the car parking spaces from 130 to 126. It is considered that this overall loss of parking spaces is considered negligible and not likely to result in a detrimental impact on highway safety on the surrounding highway network given the on-street parking controls in the area, as per Transport comments. The relocation of disabled parking in the vicinity is also considered favourable, maintaining necessary disabled access to the property. Overall the proposal is considered compliant with policies TR3 & TR5 of the Reading Borough Council Local Plan (2019).

Rooftop Plant

A new dry air cooler unit is proposed to be installed on the roof of the property. The placement of the new unit is similar to that of the existing unit which is to be removed upon the installation of the new unit. A noise assessment and background noise assessment has been deemed compliant with local criterion by colleagues in Environmental Protection, thus complying with policy EN17 of the Reading Borough Council Local Plan (2019).

Trees

Natural Environment comments voice concerns with the overall proposal and the impact on trees within the area; existing and future. However, no trees within the vicinity of development are subject to TPOs. It is noted that the development proposed is relatively minor in scale. New landscaping is beyond the scope of the proposal and there is no requirement for replanting to occur, it is also unlikely to occur apart from a more comprehensive redevelopment. Whilst trees are generally desirable, in this instance the proposal cannot be considered to cause harm to the visual amenity, character of the area, or the wider aims of securing tree planting through development. If more comprehensive works to the area in question were proposed, further details in relation to replanting and retention would be required. However, this is not to say the protection of existing trees within the area aren't considered important. No AIA has been submitted to demonstrate how existing trees will be protected upon commencement of development. Given the aforementioned considerations, condition L7 is recommended to secure the protection of existing trees within the area.

RECOMMENDATION

GRANT

Subject to the following conditions:

TL1

AP1

M3

N10

L7