

Proposed Kiosk, The Oracle Shopping Centre, Reading RG1 2AG

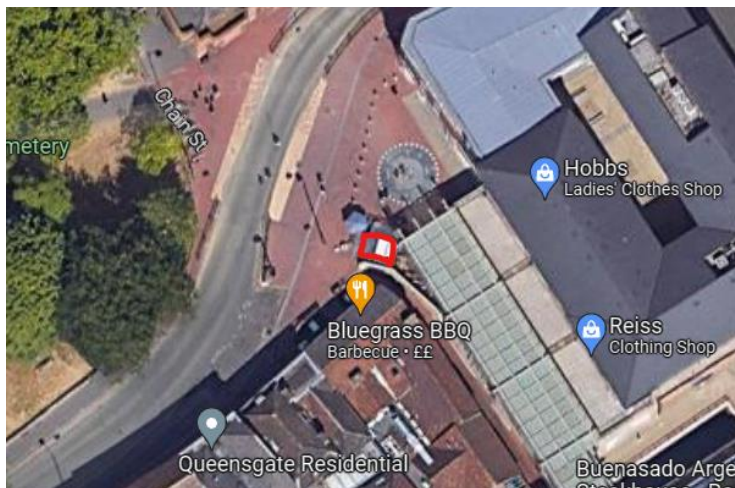
Planning & Heritage Statement

This Planning & Heritage Statement has been prepared by Simply Planning Limited (SPL) on behalf of our client, Coffee Avenue, in support of a full planning application for a new kiosk (coffee shop) close to the Gun Street entrance of The Oracle Shopping Centre. The description of development is as follows: *'Erection of a food and drink takeaway kiosk (sui generis)'*

In addition to the planning application and CIL form, the planning application submission comprises the following:

- Location Plan – drawing ref. G170744-K18-01.
- Block Plan – drawing ref. G170744-K18-03.
- Proposed General Arrangement Plan – drawing ref. J002007-A2-00-C.
- Proposed External Elevations – drawing ref. J002007-A4-00-D.
- Noise & Odour Statement (tenant).

The application site comprises an existing area of paving located close to the Gun Street entrance of The Oracle Shopping Centre opposite the former Lakeland retail unit. As you will be aware, in January 2016, planning permission was granted for a very similar operation (then a Class A kiosk) in the same location (RBC ref. 152021). That kiosk was run by Tamp Culture as a coffee shop, but ceased operation in September 2021.



The proposed kiosk would be a former shipping container measuring 3.03m x 2.44m in size (footprint of only 7.4sqm). The kiosk would be sited adjacent to an existing 2.02m brick boundary wall that separates the demise of The Oracle Shopping Centre with No.15 Gun Street. The height of the container would be 2.588m, so just above this wall. The container would have a painted finish (RAL 7021); see image below.



EXTERIOR METAL

SPEC: RAL 7021
 SIZE:
 SUPPLIER:
 TEL:
 PRICE:
 LOCATION: Exterior metal container.

As shown on the Google image below (from October 2020), the proposed kiosk would be sited in the same location as the Tamp Culture kiosk.



The proposed kiosk would be operated by Coffee Avenue, for the sale of hot drinks, cakes and crepes. There would be no external lighting, mechanical plant or ventilation (flue), with only electrical appliances are proposed to be used (please see Noise and Odour Impact Statement, prepared Coffee Avenue). There is sufficient space within the kiosk for bin storage, but waste and recycling would be taken daily to The Oracle's central service area.

Assessment against Planning Policy

The Reading Borough Local Plan was adopted in November 2019 (LP). Reading is designated as a Regional Centre and Central Reading identified as the place that will see the greatest level of development and change (LP Policy RL1). The Oracle forms part of Reading's Primary Shopping Frontage and therefore a coffee shop (a 'Centre Use') within the demise of The Oracle is acceptable in principle (LP Policy CR7).

Although utilising a shipping container, the proposed kiosk would have a simple, painted appearance with a central serving opening and would be viewed in the context of the existing boundary wall and glazed canopy of The Oracle. Consistent with LP Policy CR2 it would be of high quality that respects the form of surrounding development. It would further add activity to this part of the public realm, currently underutilised save as a route between The Oracle and Broad Street.

To the east of the application site, at the upper levels of Minster Court (above the ground floor retail units) is an apart hotel. Given the scale and nature of the coffee shop operation (very limited cooking on site) and the proposed hours of opening (9am-5pm Monday to Saturday and 10am to 5pm Sunday), there would be no harm to the amenity of the users of the apart hotel, in terms of noise and disturbance, smell or artificial lighting (LP Policy CC8).

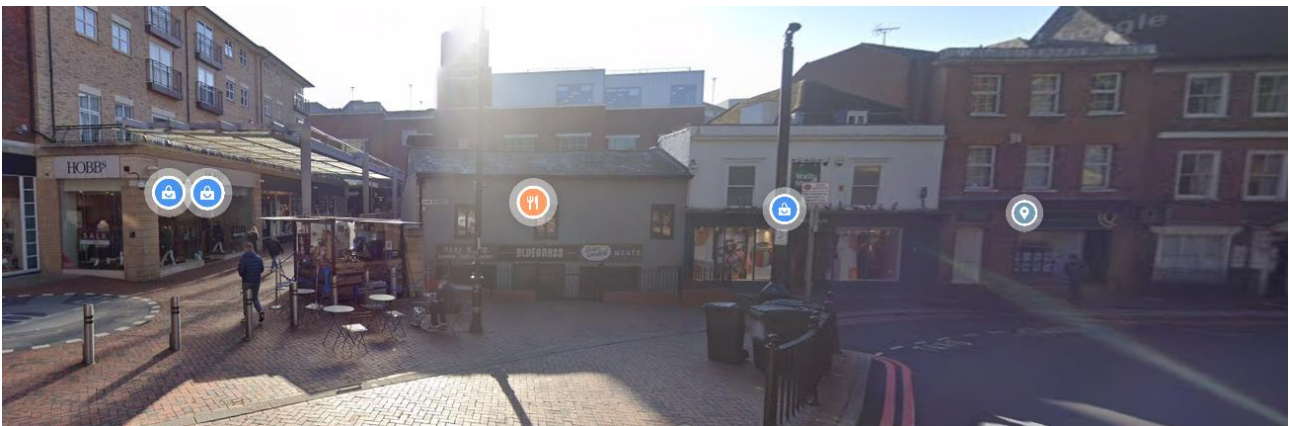
Heritage Statement

LP Policy EN1 requires all proposals to protect and where possible enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings, the historic character and local distinctiveness of the area in which they are located. The application site is within the St Marys Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area (CA) and within the setting of the terrace of listed buildings (Grade II) at 7 to 15 Gun Street and St Mary's Church (Grade I).

This Statement therefore assesses the impact of the proposed kiosk on these designated heritage assets. In undertaking this, we have been mindful of the guidance at paragraph 194 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021) that in describing the significance of any heritage assets affected, the level of detail should be proportionate and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.

The significance of the CA is described in the Conservation Area Appraisal (2008) as being its position at the Saxon Centre of Reading with its architectural interest derived from the streetscene comprised of two and three storey largely brick built buildings dating mainly from the C16th and C18th.

The buildings at 7 to 15 Gun Street vary in age, form and architectural style and reflect the evolved medieval townscape. They are located immediately to the north west of the main Oracle Shopping Centre building and are predominantly two-storey set close to the back edge of the pavement. Their primary significance is architectural and historical, demonstrated by their street frontage and townscape which gives a group value. The experience of buildings on Gun Street is in transient views along Gun Street and travelling south (past the St Mary's Church) on Chain Street. As the image below shows, the proposed kiosk would be seen against the backdrop of The Oracle boundary wall and canopy. It would therefore cause no harm to the architectural or historic value of the listed group.



The St Mary's Church (Grade I) is considered an important Reading landmark, located to the north-west of the application site. It is primarily experienced in the setting of its churchyard, which is well screened (particularly in the summer months). There is little intervisibility between the application site and the Church and no harm would therefore be caused to its setting.

The proposed kiosk would result in very minor change to the area that would not cause harm to the character and appearance of the CA, or the setting of the listed buildings identified. There would therefore be no conflict with LP Policy EN1 or the statutory duties of s72 and s66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Summary

As set out above, this is an acceptable town centre use in a location where a similar kiosk was granted planning permission in 2016. Although the LP has since been adopted, the relevant policy context has not substantively changed. A simple, quality kiosk is now proposed to allow a new, local tenant, to operate from the same location. In the absence of any conflict with the LP, we trust that the application will be considered favourably.