

Tuesday, 18 May 2021

Planning Statement

Rear of no.1 The Triangle, Tilehurst, RG30 4RW

Partial change of use from vacant bank (former use class A2, now use class E, to a high security safety deposit store, use class B8).

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Introduction

This planning statement addresses a proposal for the change of use of the rear section of no.1 The Triangle, Tilehurst, from a vacant bank (former use class A2, now use class E, to a high security safety deposit store, use class B8).



The Site

No.1 The Triangle features a commercial unit that fronts The Triangle itself, but with a large extension to the rear (as pictured above) that backs onto a car park, accessed from Walnut Way.

The building was formerly a bank and has been closed since May 29th, 2020. Previously use class A2, this now sits under the new commercial use class, E. The rear extension part of the building to which this application relates was formerly used as vaults to serve the bank (Barclays). It is intended that the front section of the building will be used as a Costa Coffee shop (not requiring a change of use as this is use class E), and separate planning applications have been made for a new shopfront and signage in order to facilitate this use to the front of the unit (planning application reference 210681 and 210682).

This proposal for the rear of the building to be used for the rental of safe deposit boxes is in essence no change to the former use as vaults for the bank. Formerly, the bank's predominant use class was A2, with the storage vaults supplementary to this. As this proposal now seeks to split the unit with class E to the front and B8 to the rear, this means that the vaults will now become the predominant use within the smaller split unit at the rear, and hence the requirement for this new planning application to change the use.

Use

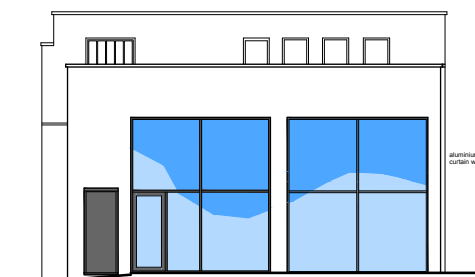
The proposed planning use class, B8, covers storage and distribution. Generally such usage is normally seen within industrial parks and/or out of town centre locations due to the ease of transportation required for this use. However, what is proposed here is a much smaller scale rental of safe deposit boxes. There will be no storage of any items that are larger than that which is able to be carried by hand and we are happy for a planning approval to be issued within conditions that reflect this specific use within class B8.

It is understood that B8 uses can present problems in predominantly residential or retail areas, however the small nature of the items being stored within this proposed use, together with the self storage nature of the use will mean that this proposal will have a negligible impact upon its surroundings. The location of this unit fronting to a rear car park further makes this an ideal solution for future users of this facility.

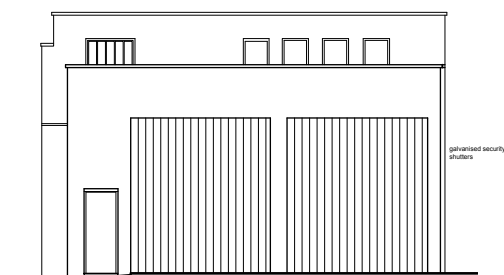
The business of safe deposit boxes is as mentioned, small scale. The boxes themselves range from 2" x 5" x 24" to 11"x 16" x 24". Typically facilities are expected to grow to about 1,000 customers after 5 years. Average visits per customer is 3.6 per annum. Average number of customers per day is then 10 with an individual dwell time of 15-20 minutes. Staff at any one time will be 2, occasionally 3. The store will also operate by appointment only so visits are spread out.

As the former use of the bank was class A2, no usable retail space is being lost as part of this proposal.

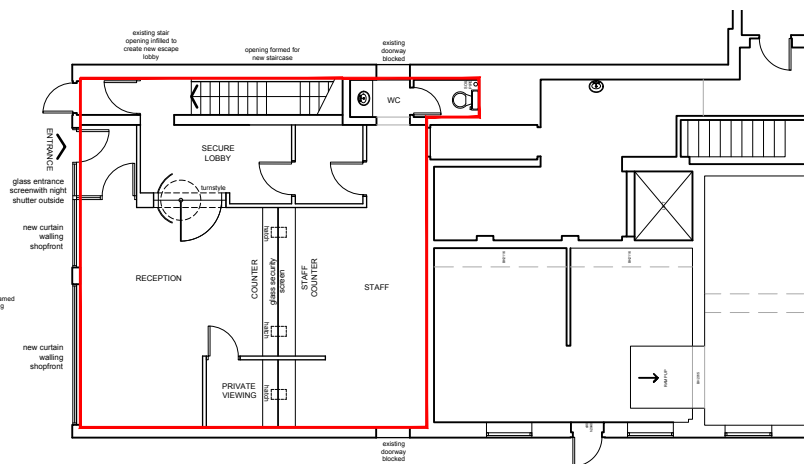
The proposal:



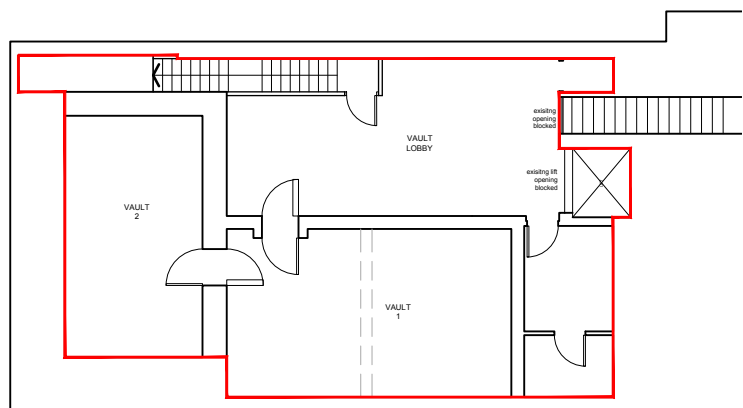
REAR ELEVATION AS PROPOSED



REAR ELEVATION AS EXISTING



GROUND FLOOR PLAN



BASEMENT FLOOR PLAN

Planning Policy

The following planning policies from the Reading Borough Council Local Plan, Adopted November 2019, are relevant:

RL1: Network and Hierarchy of centres

The following network of centres are identified and defined on the Proposals Map:

<i>Regional Centre:</i>	<i>Reading</i>
<i>District Centres:</i>	<i>Caversham, Cemetery Junction, Emmer Green, Meadway, Oxford Road West, Shinfield Road, Tilehurst Triangle, Whitley</i>
<i>Major Local Centres:</i>	<i>Whitley Street, Wokingham Road</i>
<i>Local Centres:</i>	<i>Basingstoke Road North, Christchurch Road, Coronation Square, Erleigh Road, Dee Park, Northumberland Avenue North, Wensley Road, Whitley Wood</i>

The vitality and viability of these centres should be maintained and enhanced. Some centres are based around a small area of green, and where this is an important part of the layout and function of the centre, it will be retained and where possible enhanced. The following improvements will be acceptable in all centres:

- Accessibility and transport improvements;*
- Broadening range of facilities;*
- Residential use of upper floors; and*
- Environmental enhancements.*

According to the Reading local plan, Tilehurst falls under the category of a 'District Centre'. District centres are being designated to more areas in outer Reading to encourage an increase in the range of local facilities, enabling the District Centres to act as alternatives to the Regional Centre for local residents. The proposed use for this unit is not currently available in Tilehurst, meaning the development satisfies the expansion in range of facilities, enhanced further through the proposal of a new coffee shop to the front section of the unit (covered by separate applications).

RL3: Vitality and viability of smaller centres

- a) *Within the Key Frontages (identified on the Proposals Map), development involving a net loss of A1 retail or A2 financial and professional to other 'centre uses' will only be permitted where:*

- There would be no more than 3 consecutive units which are not in A1 or A2 retail use; and*
- The proportion of the total length of the Key Frontage within the centre that is in A1 or A2 use would exceed the relevant proportion below:*

Caversham, Cemetery Junction, Tilehurst Triangle and Whitley District Centres; Christchurch Road, Coronation Square, Wensley Road and Whitley Wood Local Centres
60%

No key frontages are affected by this proposal as the frontage facing The Triangle will retain a class E commercial usage. The building affected is indicated in orange below (extract taken from the Local Plan map). The purple line indicates a Key Frontage in the Local Plan; the blue line indicates the frontage affected by this change of use application. The Key frontage of this building is being used for a Costa Coffee store, ensuring there is no loss to A1 or A2 retail use as detailed above.



- b) *Within district, major local and local centres, development will be permitted provided that:*
- There would be no more than 2 consecutive A5 takeaways, and no more than 30% of the length of the Key Frontage would be in takeaway use; and*
 - There would be no net loss of 'centre uses' for 'non-centre uses' at the ground floor (apart from entrances to upper floors) except in exceptional circumstances. On upper floors, other uses including residential ('living over the shops') will be acceptable.*

The development does not contain any units intended for takeaway use. Although the change of use application does incur a net loss of 'centre uses' for 'non-centre uses', the section of the building being changed to B8 use class was previously used as storage and vaults for its previous use as a bank. The day to day functionality of this part of the building will remain, thus we are not losing floor area on the main 'front of house' part of the space.

- c) *Within and adjacent to district, major local and local centres, all new development should provide some 'centre uses' at the ground floor, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that this would not be possible or appropriate.*

Although this application does not provide 'centre uses' as detailed in the local plan, the main part of the space (not applicable to this change of use application) will be retained as use class E (formerly A2).

- d) *Where the Key Frontages within a centre as identified on the Proposals Map are proposed to significantly change, or have already significantly changed, as a result of redevelopment, meaning that criteria a) and b) cannot be applied, proposals should ensure that a strong retail character is retained within the ground floor of the centre, and that ground floor concentrations of consecutive units not in A1 or A2 use, in particular A5 takeaways, are avoided.*

This change of use application does not involve the Key frontage as addressed in part a) above.

EM4: Maintaining a variety of premises

A range of types and sizes of units should be present in the Borough, and proposals should maintain or enhance this range. In particular, the overall level of start-up and grow-on space should be maintained and, where possible, increased, and any loss of small units should be offset by new provision. Proposals should maintain the overall level of storage and distribution uses in the South of Basingstoke Road (EM2c). Subject to these considerations, proposals for redevelopment of older industrial units for more flexible employment premises will be acceptable.

This proposal creates an increase in range of premises, in providing a new type of premises not already available in Tilehurst. The business has 5 facilities operating in the UK with 2 more outside Reading to come on stream this year, so is a relatively small company in its growth phase. There will be no loss of small units; the proposal actually creates a new small unit, by using part of a building that would otherwise sit vacant and unused.

Summary

The proposal is acceptable in the context of local planning policy. This store will create local facilities for Tilehurst; a district outside of Central Reading. The development has no impact on any Key frontages in the area and will have negligible impact to the surrounding environment. The new proposed treatment to the elevations will provide aesthetic improvements to the area, and so coupled with the positive influence to the local variety of premises it will contribute to a wider array of premises types and as such we believe should receive the full support of the Council.