

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Application No: 201095/FUL

Address: 1 The Micro Centre, Gillette Way

Proposal: Change of Use from B1(c) to D2 (Yoga Studio), external alterations, cycle storage and the creation of a new footpath (amended)

Target Date: 25/09/20

Case Officer: Connie Davis

Site Description and Surrounding Area:

The application site lies within the Micro Centre on the eastern side of Gillette Way and sits adjacent to the road on the northern side of the Micro Centre. The property consists of a single storey industrial unit constructed mainly of brick with parking for two vehicles to the frontage. The site is on the edge of the Whitley District Centre.

The surrounding area predominately comprises of B1(c) light industrial units. The application site is not listed, nor in a conservation area.

Proposal:

Planning Permission is sought for the proposed change of use from B1(c) (light industrial) to D2 space (yoga studio). Internally, a new WC and changing facilities would be installed.

The proposal also seeks to create a new entrance to the unit on the western elevation joining Gillette Way. As such, a new footpath is proposed which will require the removal of some low-level hedges. In addition, cycle provision is proposed in the form of 6 cycle spaces next to the foot path.

Plans/ Documents considered:

MA124-01 - Existing Plans and Elevations

MA124-02

MA124-03 - Proposed Landscaping

Planning Statement

Received 3rd August 2020

Relevant Planning History:

None found on this specific site.

Consultation Responses:

Internal Consultees

Transport: No response received.

Natural Environment: No objections subject to pre-commencement conditions relating to landscaping and an arboricultural method statement being submitted.

External consultation:

The following addresses were formally consulted via letter on 13/08/20:

2 The Micro Centre

In addition, a site notice was displayed between 26/08/20 - 16/09/20.

No responses have been received.

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.

Relevant Planning Policy and Guidance

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'. However the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making (NPPF paragraph 12).

In this regard, the NPPF states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the Local Development Framework (LDF) (Reading Borough Local Plan) according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).

Accordingly, the National Planning Policy Framework and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

- CR1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- CC7 Design and the Public Realm
- CC8 Safeguarding Amenity
- EM1 Provision of Employment
- EM2 Location of New Employment Development

- EM3 Loss of Employment Land
- RL1 Network and Hierarchy of Centres
- RL2 Scale and Location of Leisure Facilities and Public Houses
- TR3 Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
- TR5 Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging
- SR2 Land North of Manor Farm Road Major Opportunity Area

Revised Parking Standards SPD

Appraisal

Principle of change of use

The application site is a light industrial unit. Whilst the site lies within SR2 of the Proposals Map, this policy does not restrict changes of use in the same way as core employment areas.

With regard to Policy SR2, it states that the following matters will be considered when assessing proposals: -

Redevelopment of the Manor Farm Road site will primarily be for housing (between 6801,020 dwellings), an extension to the Whitley District Centre, school provision and open space and public realm improvements, but also include small employment units to replace the Micro Centre, community uses, in addition to a limited amount of employment uses.

Development will:

- i. Not be piecemeal in nature but will only be in appropriately sized/arranged sites that will promote the integration of Kennet Island with the established areas of Whitley to the east. Proposals should be designed in the context of a wider development of the area;

Although the proposed use is only part of the Micro Centre and could be considered piecemeal it is acknowledged that full-scale redevelopment would be difficult in the short-term due to different users with varying length leases. The re-development of the Micro Centre is also not proposed at present, and as such, it is considered that ensuring units are occupied would allow this area to be economically sustainable, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The agent has also stated in their Planning Statement that the redevelopment of the Micro Centre longer term would still be possible in line with the Council's aspirations as the Applicant does not have a long-term lease of the unit.

- ii. Incorporate measures to facilitate improved pedestrian and cycle permeability, in particular east/west links across Basingstoke Road and through to Kennet Island

Cycle provision is proposed which may encourage more suitable modes of transport to the site.

- iii. Enhance the Basingstoke Road frontage to reflect the scale and character of existing residential development to the east;

The site does not face Basingstoke Road.

- iv. In meeting the Council's sustainability requirements, secure energy from a decentralised energy source

Not applicable to the change of use.

- v. Include transitional non-residential uses along the frontage of Manor Farm Road to reflect the commercial nature of land to the south and to avoid introducing new homes into an area where existing commercial activities could detract from the amenities of future residential occupants;

Not relevant to this proposal.

- vi. Maintain and enhance the vitality and viability of the Whitley District Centre through the provision of additional complementary community facilities and smaller retail units, but not retail warehousing, to serve the local community

The proposal would provide a leisure provision, which would extend the range of facilities for the community near to the Whitley District Centre.

- vii. Make relevant and necessary contributions to enhance and improve the existing community facilities in the wider Whitley area;

Not applicable.

- viii. Take account of potential surface water flooding, and potentially contaminated land, and ensure that there is no adverse effect on water quality;

Not applicable for this change of use application.

- ix. Take account of the potential impact on water and wastewater infrastructure in conjunction with Thames Water, and make provision for upgrades where required; and

The existing infrastructure will be used.

- x. Take account of potential archaeological significance.

Not applicable and the site is not located within an area of archaeological significance.

Overall it is considered that the proposal use would support the objectives of the 2019 NPPF in placing significant weight on the need to support economic growth through the planning system, and the need to support healthy communities. The principle of development is therefore accepted.

On balance, the proposed change of use is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policies SR2 and RL2 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

It should also be noted that on 1st September 2020, the use class order was amended. The revised Use Classes Order provides for new use classes: Class E (commercial, business and service) which subsumes previous use classes: A1 (shops), A2 (financial and professional services), A3 (restaurants and cafes), B1 (business). Classes F.1 and F.2 subsume some of the previous use classes which were specified as D1 (non-residential institutions) and class D2 (assembly and leisure).

In this respect, the application site will have a future permitted development right to change from B1(c) to D2 and back again without the need for planning permission. As such, this permitted development right is also taken into consideration as the proposal could be implemented without planning permission.

It should be noted that the old use class order has been referred to in the description of development and report as the application was submitted prior to 1st September 2020 and so is assessed under the previous legislation.

Impact on character of the surrounding area

The proposal seeks modest alterations to the external appearance of the building, namely an additional entrance door to the western side elevation (with a footpath leading from the door to the pavement, across a small grass area). However, this is not considered to result in any harm to the visual amenities of the surrounding area in accordance with Policy CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

Separate advertisement consent will be required for any proposed signage, or it may be able to be displayed under deemed consent. However, signage is not approved as part of this planning application.

Impact on neighbouring amenity

It is not considered that the proposed change of use would result in a harmful level of noise or disturbance to neighbouring units which are in commercial use. The applicant has provided suggested opening hours which are considered acceptable and can be secured via condition:

Monday - Friday: 07:00 - 22:00

Saturday - Sunday: 09:00 - 18:00

Transport

Although RBC Transport did not provide formal comment on the application, the case officer has reviewed the Revised Parking Standards SPD and notes the comments made in the Planning Statement with regard to parking and cycle provision.

The Parking Standards and Design SPD confirms that the site is within the 'Secondary Core Area' (Zone 3) In respect of D2 uses (for health club and gym use), the parking standards require a **maximum** of 1 space per 30m². The unit is approximately 110 m² and as such should be provided with a maximum of 3.5 parking spaces. The unit has two parking spaces, so does fall short.

In addition, the minimum cycle parking requirement for the proposed use would be 1 space per 6 staff & 1 space per 40 m². There will be only 1 Instructor for each class and therefore based on the floorspace there is only a requirement for at least 4 cycle parking spaces. However, 6 cycle spaces are proposed, surpassing this requirement.

Given the location of the site (close to bus links) it is considered that the shortfall of 1 parking space is acceptable, and the proposal of more cycle provision than required is a sustainable element of the proposal. However, further detail will need to be provided on the type of cycle provision (RBC Transport only accept Sheffield cycle stands which must be lockable), plus details of the proposed cycle storage cover as this has not been shown on the plans submitted. This will be secured via a condition. Vehicle parking spaces specified will also be secured via condition.

As such, the proposal is considered acceptable in relation to Policies TR3 and TR5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

Natural Environment

The Natural Environment Officer requested that a landscaping plan and arboricultural assessment be carried out (as pre-commencement conditions) due to noting that two trees are in close proximity to the proposed footpath. However, given the existing site is a small grass area with a low hedge of no particular high quality, it is not considered reasonable for a landscaping plan to be undertaken. Furthermore, the creation of the footpath will only be done at ground level (rather than going beneath ground to conflict with tree roots), and as such, again, it is not considered reasonable for an Arboricultural statement to be provided given the extent of the proposal.

As such, the proposal is not considered to conflict with Policy EN14 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) without pre-commencement conditions in this instance.

Conclusion

It is considered that the proposal is acceptable for the reasons set out in this report.

RECOMMENDATION:

GRANT Planning Permission subject to conditions.

- 1) TL1
- 2) Approved Plans
- 3) Hours of operation
- 4) Vehicle parking as specified
- 5) Cycle parking details to be submitted

Informatives

- 1) Terms
- 2) Building Control
- 3) Complaints about Construction
- 4) Encroachment
- 5) Separate advertisement consent may be required if not deemed consent
- 6) Highways
- 7) Positive and Proactive