

133 Friar Street

Reading

Berkshire

RG1 1EP

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

Change of Use A1 (Retail) to Sui-Generis (Tattoo Studio)



PREPARED BY

Change the Use

FOR

Mystic Lounge Tattoo LTD

INTRODUCTION

This planning statement has been prepared by Change the Use in support of an application for Full Planning Permission for a change of use at 133 Friar Street, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 1EP.

The planning application seeks a change of use from A1 (Retail) to Sui-Generis (Tattoo Studio).

SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

The application site is located on the corner of Friar and Union Street within a prominent parade of shops and services. Falling under the jurisdiction of the Reading Borough Council, the site is designated within the Central Reading Proposed Primary Frontage, policy area.

The site is a currently vacant retail unit fronting onto Friar and Union Street, providing accommodation spread across four storeys including at basement level. The unit has been vacant approximately 6 months having most recently been occupied by "SCUK Co Bikes" as a bicycle retail outlet under an A1 use, operating there for several years.

The site benefits from being located within a highly accessible area. Being positioned in the centre of Reading, pedestrian and public transport accessibility to the site is very strong. Additionally, a cycle lane on Friar Street and cycle parking located directly opposite the unit provides the opportunity for alternative transport options.

PLANNING HISTORY

The site benefits from no relevant planning history.

THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The planning application seeks a change of use from A1 (Retail) to Sui-Generis (Tattoo Studio) occupying the ground floor and first floor retail unit at 133 Friar Street.

The applicant will make use of the unit's four storeys providing a reception and seating area at the ground floor level, tattooing space at the first and second floor levels and will reserve the basement for storage. Details of this can be seen in the attached proposed floor plans (1159 – 03).

As accompanying drawings identify, minor alterations will be introduced to the premises including signage changes as highlighted in the attached plans.

SCALE

The proposed application will not alter the scale of the unit which is approximately 214 m² across the four storeys.

Basement – 27.22 m²

Ground floor – 50.77 m²

First floor – 66.40 m²

Second floor – 69.38 m²

LANDSCAPING

The application site topography will remain unchanged. The ground is generally level throughout the site and there are no trees or other vegetation to be affected by the proposed development.

APPEARANCE

The geometry and layout of the present building will be retained. Changes to signage will be shown in the attached documents and will maintain local character.

ACCESS

Access to the site will be unaltered, with frontal access for the general public and staff.

OPENING HOURS

Monday – Friday: 09:00 – 18:00

Saturday: 09:00 – 18:00

Sunday: 10:00 – 18:00

NATIONAL AND LOCAL PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the statutory development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

National Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) came into effect on 19 February 2019. The document effectively condenses previous planning policy guidance into one document (with the exception of certain Planning Policy Statements).

At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development as stated in Section 2's Achieving sustainable Development. Paragraph 7 states:

'The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'

The NPPF explains in paragraph 8 that achieving sustainable development is possible through three overarching objectives:

- *'An economic objective - to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy*

- *A social objective - to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities*
- *An environmental objective - to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment'*

Section 12 on achieving well-designed places states that in determining applications, local planning authorities should ensure that developments:

- *'will function well and add to the overall quality of the area*
- *are sympathetic to local character and history*
- *establish or maintain a strong sense of place*
- *optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development*
- *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'*

Local Planning Policies

The Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) sets out the local planning authority's policies regarding planning and building developments.

The following relevant policies apply to the proposed development:

- Policy CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- Policy CC6: Accessibility and the Intensity of Development
- Policy CC7: Design and the Public Realm
- Policy EN2: Area of Archaeological Significance
- Policy TR4: Cycle Routes and Facilities
- Policy CR7: Primary Frontages in Central Reading

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

The NPPF emphasises that the presumption in favour of sustainable development should be at the heart of plan-making and decision-taking which means that planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the NPPF as a whole. Significant weight should be placed on developments such as this which bring economic investment and regeneration.

The proposed change of use would wholly support the aims of the NPPF by investing in the local economy, bringing a vacant retail unit into gainful use, creating employment opportunities and improving the well-being of the area's community.

The favour of sustainable development sought by the NPPF is matched through local policy CC1 with the Council stating that their approach shares the same principles and will maintain a positive approach to development.

The application site is designated by the Reading Borough Council as being within two key policy areas:

- Area of archaeological potential (policy EN2)
- Designated primary frontage in Central Reading (proposed) (policy CR7)

Policy EN2 states that applicants should identify and evaluate sites of archaeological significance by consulting the Historic Environment Record. An assessment must be taken of the archaeological impacts of any proposals which may cause harm to these sites.

Whilst Friar Street features several buildings of a listed status, the application site is not a building of this nature. It is acknowledged that the premises and area hold architectural merit and that any changes should respect the character and heritage of these features.

It is deemed that in the instance of these proposals that less than substantial harm will be brought to the area or the premises as no significant external alterations are proposed. Changes to signage have been drafted with due regard to maintaining high-quality design and upholding the character of the area, in line with Policies EN2 and CC7.

Policy CR7 outlines the uses appropriate within Reading's primary frontage and includes related sui generis uses. In keeping with the policy, a high-quality "building frontage with a display window or glazed frontage at ground floor level" will be maintained and actively used.

With the proposal resulting in a loss of an A1 unit, the Council stipulate that within primary frontage streets such as Friar and Union Street, A1 and A2 use does not fall below 50%, unless the proposals will make a positive contribution to the overall diversity of the centre. In the instance of Friar and Union Street (the two streets the unit fronts onto) the current proportion of A1/A2 units is approximately 55% (56 A1/A2 units out of 102).

The proposals are also seen to meet the demands of providing a positive contribution to the high street, making use of a vacant unit and increasing diversity of uses within the centre.

The accessibility of the site and proximity to a cycle lane and parking facilities is seen to satisfy Policies CC6 and TR4 ensuring developments make use of sustainable transport options.

CONCLUSION

With the above & accompanying information, it is respectfully requested that this application for a change of use from A1 (Retail) to Sui-Generis (Tattoo Studio) occupying the four storeys at 133 Friar Street, be approved.

It is deemed that this change of use does not affect the surrounding area adversely, and should be viewed as a positive development for the local community.

The proposals are in line with the NPPF and local policy. Therefore, we look forward to validation of the application and approval from the council.