

Planning Statement

May 21

2020

Proposed Change Of Use and amalgamation of 29 Queen Victoria Street (Class A5) and 31 (Class A2) Queen Victoria Street, Reading to a Restaurant (Class A3)

Prepared on
behalf of Axa
Insurance UK PLC
+Axa PPP
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Contents

1. Introduction
2. Site
3. Planning History
4. National Planning Policy Framework
5. Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)
6. Conclusion

1. Introduction

This Planning Statement is provided in support of an application for the Proposed Change of Use and amalgamation of 29 (Class A5 - trading as Kokoro) and 31 (Class A2 - vacant Betting shop) Queen Victoria Street, Reading to a Restaurant (Class A3). Kokoro will extend into the amalgamated unit.

The purpose of this statement is to outline the key planning policies and considerations at National and Local level in relation to the current proposals. Short dialogue is provided where appropriate to demonstrate consideration and compliance with these policies. The commentary within this document is intended as a summary explanation and is expanded upon within the Design and Access Statement which accompanies the application.

Planning guidance and policy is provided at National level (NPPF) and Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).



2. The site

29 and 31 Queen Victoria Street are two separate retail units located in the Primary Shopping Area of Reading town centre. 29 is the former William Hill Bookmakers unit and 31 is Kokoro, a sushi restaurant.

The Kokoro unit A5 use was implemented under 161971/FUL and 161972/LBC.. The shopfronts to both 31 and 29 QVS are retained with a new fascia board to the William Hill unit. Advertisement Consent is sought for a revised signage proposal. No alterations to the rear of the building are proposed as part of this application.

1-32 Queen Victoria Street are classified as Grade II Listed buildings. These buildings were Listed in December 1978 with the following accompanying description:

“A circa 1894 commercial street with returns to Broad and Friar Streets. Probably by Joseph Morris. Dutch gabled free Baroque style. 3 1/2 storeys, yellow brick and terracotta with dividing Ionic pilasters. Dentil cornice. Pilasters to dormers, broken pediments above. An elongated pattern of shallow bays to 1st and 2nd floors. Mullion and transom window to bays, sashes with architraves (and pediments on 1st floor) to rest. Modern shopfronts, retaining cornice to fascia and scroll brackets to pilasters, only one shop retains prewar shopfront. Large returns to Broad Street. The return to east (No 28 Broad Street) supported by No 26 (dated 1894, grey brick with red terracotta dressings) and by No 24 (an early C20 Bank with -large shaped pediment doorway on corner to Cross Street; red brick with stone dressings and stone fret patterns to gables)”.

The listing focuses on the exterior of the buildings with no specific reference to the interior. 29 and 31 have been altered over time with varied levels of fit out as occupiers have changed. There are no visible interior features of heritage significance in either 29 or 31 QVS.



3. Planning History

29 Queen Victoria Street Reading

App. No.: 130983 Site Address: 29 Queen Victoria Street

Description: Change of use from Class A3 to Class A5

Decision Date: 23/08/2013

App. No.: 162334 Site Address: 29 Queen Victoria Street

Description: Change of use from A3 to A5

Decision Date: 13/02/2017

App. No.: 161972 Site Address: 29 Queen Victoria Street

Description: Internal refurbishment of existing cafe takeaway, installation of a new kitchen extract duct and air conditioning condenser unit to the rear of the building, new rear storage shed extension, painting of shop front and fitting of new signage to the shop front fascia

Decision Date: 23/12/2016

App. No.: 960402 Site Address: 29 Queen Victoria Street

Description: Internal alterations to basement, ground and first floors plus new shopfront.
(Application for listed building consent)

Decision Date: 23/10/1996

31 Queen Victoria Street Reading

App. No.: 140737 Site Address: 31 Queen Victoria Street

Description: Change of use of ground floor from A1 to A2, installation of new shopfront and, erection of satellite dishes and air conditioning units to rear.

Decision Date: 10/09/2014

Planning Statement

App. No.: 140735 Site Address: 31 Queen Victoria Street

Description: One externally illuminated fascia sign and one externally illuminated projecting sign

Decision Date: 06/10/2014

App. No.: 140736 Site Address: 31 Queen Victoria Street

Description: Listed building consent for new shopfront, advertisements, internal alterations, removal of existing air conditioning unit to rear of property and installation of three air conditioning units, and erection of two satellite dishes to rear elevation.

Decision Date: 06/10/2014

App. No.: 181966 Site Address: Outside 31 Queen Victoria Street

Description: Double-sided freestanding forum structure, featuring 2 x Digital 86" screen positioned back to back. The Digital screen is capable of displaying illuminated, sequential content, supplied via secure remote connection.

Decision Date: 05/06/2019



4. National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (the “NPPF”) was updated on 19 February 2019. The NPPF sets out the Government’s approach to planning matters, and is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. The revised framework places greater emphasis on the presumption in favour of sustainable development, increases emphasis on securing high-quality design and place making, and recognises the role of planning in creating healthy and safe communities.

Paragraph 8 states that there are 3 dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. Development which helps to build a strong, responsive and competitive economy whilst supporting vibrant and healthy communities, all to be achieved in a manner which protects the natural, built and historic environment.

Paragraph 11 states that at the heart of the document is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision taking this means approving development proposals which accord with the development plan without delay and local planning authorities should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of the area. The presumption in favour of sustainable development is reiterated at Paragraph 49.

At paragraph 85 the NPPF recognises the importance of town centres. Policies and development which promote competitive town centres and support viability and vitality are desirable.

Paragraph 184 requires that heritage assets are conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. Local Authorities are encouraged to take into account the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to the local character and distinctiveness.

The NPPF directive for Main town centre uses is : Retail development (including warehouse clubs and factory outlet centres); leisure, entertainment and more intensive sport and recreation uses (including cinemas, restaurants, drive-through restaurants, bars and pubs, nightclubs, casinos, health and fitness centres, indoor bowling centres and bingo halls); offices; and arts, culture and tourism development (including theatres, museums, galleries and concert halls, hotels and conference facilities).

Summary

Within the context of National Planning Policy the proposed Change of Use is broadly supported. The location of the site within a well established town centre location is in accordance with the aspirations of policy. The proposal will add vitality to the town centre location.

The proposed use provided in such a central location will also be beneficial in terms of emissions and congestion. Patrons will have good access to transport links and local services.

5. Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

The Local Plan for Reading is the document that contains the policies for how Reading will develop up to 2036. The plan has ‘development plan’ status. This means that, legally, it is the main consideration in deciding planning applications in Reading.

The local plan replaces the Core Strategy (adopted 2008, amended 2015), Reading Central Area Action Plan (adopted 2009) and Sites and Detailed Policies Document (adopted 2012, amended 2015).

Policy CC1: Presumption in favour of sustainable development

A positive approach to considering development proposals will be taken that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Where appropriate, the Council will work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible.

Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Planning applications that accord with the policies in the development plan (including, where relevant, with policies in neighbourhood plans) will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Proposed development that conflicts with the development plan will be refused, unless other material considerations indicate otherwise.

Where there are no policies relevant to the application or the policies which are most important to determining the application are out of date at the time of making the decision then permission will be granted unless material considerations indicate otherwise – taking into account whether:

The application of policies in the NPPF that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or
Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole.

Policy CR1: Definition of Central Reading

The Central Area boundary as shown on the Proposals Map will mark the edge of the town centre other than where specified. However, for the purposes of application of the sequential test for main town centre uses, the following definitions as defined on the Proposals Map are used:

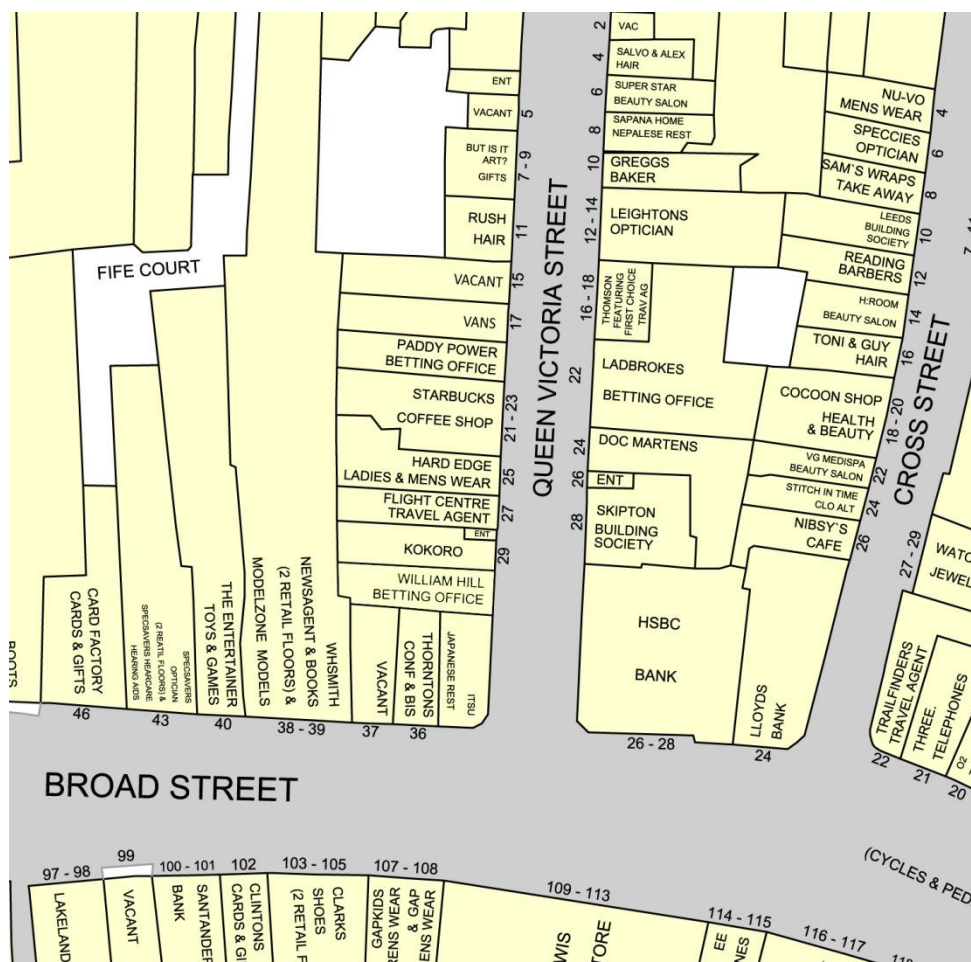
- Retail development will take place in the Primary Shopping Area;
- Major office development of over 1,000 sq m will take place in the Office Core; and
- Other main town centre uses will take place in the Central Core.

Policy CR7: Primary Frontages in Central Reading

Uses on the ground floor along the designated primary frontages as shown on the Proposals Map will be within one of the following use classes: A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, C1, D1, D2 or related sui generis uses, unless it would be an entrance to upper floors. New developments (or alterations to existing uses) that front onto any of the designated primary frontages will provide an active building frontage with a display window or glazed frontage at ground floor level, in order to contribute to the vibrancy of the town centre, and provide visual interest.

Frontages should be of a high visual quality. Any frontages that have the potential to hinder movement or cause unnecessary safety risk will not be permitted.

Proposals that would result in the loss of A1 or A2 use such that the proportion of the length of frontage within the street in A1 or A2 use falls below 50% will not be permitted, unless the proposal introduces a use that makes a positive contribution to the overall diversity of the centre. 50% of new primary frontages as shown on the Proposals Map should be in A1/A2 use.



Policy CR8: Small Shop Units In Central Reading

Small shop units make an important contribution to the diversity of the centre. Some areas of the centre are particularly characterised by small units, of less than 75 sq m. These include the arcades, Cross Street, Queen Victoria Street, Union Street, and any other areas designated in the future.

Within the areas characterised by small shop units, the amalgamation of individual shop fronts will not be permitted.

Policy RL1: Network And Hierarchy Of Centres

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.

Central Reading will see the greatest levels of development and change. Development and change, including intensification of town centre uses, will also take place within smaller centres in line with the role of the centre in the network. The smaller centres which are expected to be the main focus for intensification, change and additional community facilities will be The Meadway and Whitley District Centres.

Policy OU5: Shopfronts And Cash Machines

Shopfronts, individual features of shopfronts and cash machines will respect the character of the building on which they are located and their surroundings, as well as the wider street, in terms of design, colours, materials, lighting, and location. Features that positively contribute to the character of the building and street will be retained and, where possible, restored. Safety and security will be maintained and enhanced.

For shopfronts, the following criteria will be fulfilled:

- a) New shopfronts on listed buildings or in Conservation Areas will respect or enhance the building or area, and will respect the key features of the special historic interest;
- b) Where a shop occupies multiple units, shopfronts will not run in a continuous horizontal line across the different unit façades. The fascia and the shop windows should be broken up to ensure the features of each unit are not lost;
- c) Fascia boards should be lower than any first floor windows, and reflect the predominant height of historic fascia boards on surrounding buildings;

- d) Canopies and blinds over windows and entrances should be for the shading of the shop and should be retractable; and
- e) Shopfronts should present an active frontage to the street at all times. Where security is essential, security features will be internal, such as internal open mesh grilles. Opaque coverings on shop windows, such as paint and films, will be minimised and will not obscure the window.

Summary

From the number of units and length of the frontage calculated in A1/A2 use, the proposed change of use will not cause the A1/A2 use in the street frontage to fall below 50%.

Address	Trading name	Use
148 Friar St (Corner unit)	Cafe Nero	A1/A3
5 Queen Victoria Street	Vacant	A1
7-9 Queen Victoria Street	But is it Art?	A1
11-13 Queen Victoria Street	Rush Hair	A1
15 Queen Victoria Street	Vacant	A1
17 Queen Victoria Street	Vans	A1
19 Queen Victoria Street	Paddy power	A2
21-23 Queen Victoria Street	Starbucks	A1/A3
25 Queen Victoria Street	Hard edge	A1
27 Queen Victoria Street	Flight Center	A1
29 Queen Victoria Street	Kokoro	A5
31 Queen Victoria Street	Vacant	A2
35 Broad Street (Corner unit)	Itsu	A1/A3

With regard to the policies of the Local Plan, the proposed development offers a Town Centre use that is viewed as being favourable. The amalgamation of the units will extend Kokoro and utilise a vacant unit. The proposed A3 use will add to the life and vitality of the Town Centre.

The proposal respects the established character of the area and looks to work with this. There are minor alterations to the existing building to link the adjoining units. The existing shopfronts are retained and painted. The granite clad pilasters located between units are retained.

The premises will be serviced off the pedestrianised Queen Victoria Street with the existing arrangement of waste storage to the rear of the property.

6. Conclusion

The existing units at 29 and 31 Queen Victoria Street are located in the Primary Shopping Area of Reading town centre and are part of a Grade II Listed buildings.

29 Queen Victoria Street has been successfully trading as Kokoro since 2017. William Hill Bookmakers have vacated the adjoining 31 Queen Victoria Street and Kokoro now wish to expand their existing unit to provide an extended unit to its established customer base in Reading.

The development proposed is a suitable form of development situated in a location made sustainable by its strategic position in the heart of the City Centre, within walking/cycling distance to services and facilities.

For a City Centre to evolve and thrive it must have investment to be able to change and attract Business. The proposal provides an extended unit to an existing and successful use in a prime Town centre location.

The proposal is for the sensitive redevelopment of Queen Victoria Street Retail units that respects their importance within Reading Town Centre. The proposal will bring a vacant unit into use and enhance the character of the host Listed building. We believe it will be a positive improvement that will enhance the vitality of this part of the Town Centre.

We encourage the Council's support for this application.