

Introduction

This statement has been prepared by Bluebird Engineering to support a planning application at 76 Christchurch Road, Reading, for the change of use of the vacant former bank (A2) on the ground floor to a takeaway (A5). Changes to the shop front kitchen extract equipment on rear.



Image 1 Frontage to 76 Christchurch Road

This statement considers the site, surroundings, and the sites planning history, assesses the proposal against the relevant local and the national planning policy frameworks.

The proposal considers objective of local and national policies with emphasis on the function of the Christchurch road as local centre by sustaining and enhancing its viability and sustainability.

Site and Surroundings

The application property is a part three storey terrace building almost on the middle of Christchurch road (A327). The ground floor of the building was previously used as a bank (A2 class) but has been vacant since May/June 2018. The upper floors previously used as offices by the bank and under the proposal to be converted to residential (C3 class).

The property is located within Christchurch Road local centre, a small single line local centre comprising a mixture of 15 commercial shops on the centre of Christchurch road. The centre is approximately 1km southeast of Reading Town Centre. The Reading University and its associated buildings are approximately 200m on the opposite side of the road from application site.

Short stay on street parking is available along Christchurch road in front of the commercial units and nearby side streets also serve the centre.

The property is not listed and does not lie within a conservation area. It is not located within a flood risk zone.

Relevant Planning History

Change of use of first and second floor residential C3 to office A2 (ref 880340).planning was refused.

Change of use of first floor and second floor from residential to class A2 office ancillary to ground floor use with new shop frontage (ref 910094) planning was permitted.

The proposal (Design & Access)

Under this planning application it is proposed to change the use of the existing ground floor unit, from A2 (class) to A5 (class). The unit would sell hot and cold food take away, with offer of food delivery on bikes.

The proposed takeaway would benefit from a new shop front as shown on the proposed elevations a new kitchen (cooking facility) with WC

Part of the existing rear ground floor will be demolished (see proposed floor plans).

New mechanical Services equipment (ducts) will be required to support the class A5 and its proposed exhaust air location will be to the rear wall on the ground floor as shown on proposed ground floor plan.

Demolition of part of the rear of ground floor is proposed. The proposed depth of the ground floor takeaway is 23.510 metres making the ground floor total area 126 sqm , and existing ground floor area is 191 sqm .

The reduced amount of floor space on the ground floor will create additional parking spaces.

Previous car park was serving the entire A2 (class) building

The unit's town centre location ensures easy access for a wide customer base by foot, by bicycle and public transport. There is short stay car parking, including dedicated disabled bays and a bus stop located to the right of the unit, to the east of the unit.

Access to the unit will remain unchanged from a well maintained walkway. The takeaways layout will be carefully considered in order to the needs of those who have physical impairment, with a level entrance etc.

The application includes demolition of a modest 10.1 m part of the rear of the existing ground floor to provide additional car parking space. Neighbouring properties either side have amenity space ,the demolition of the rear will not affect neighbours.

Planning Policy and Government Guidance

The development plan

The planning application will consider national and local planning guide lines.

Section 38(6) of planning act 2004 states those applications for planning permission should be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations (including the NPPF) indicate otherwise.

In this case, Reading Borough Council's development plan comprises the Core Strategy (2008), Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012) and Central Area Action Plan. The council is at advanced submission stage in producing a new local plan which will replace these documents. The plan has been submitted for examination with hearings commencing on 25 September 2018.

The unit forms part of a key frontage of the Christchurch road local centre. This remains unchanged in the emerging local plan. Relevant policies are :

Policy CS5 promotes accessible buildings to all potential users.

Policy CS7 requires development to maintain and enhance the character and appearance of the area in which it is located.

Policy CS24 states that maximum parking standards will be applied in relation to the accessibility of locations to sustainable transport facilities particularly public transport.

Policy CS26 aims to maintain and enhance the vitality and viability of local centres. This including widening the range of uses.

Policy CS27 seeks to maintain a strong retail character in the centres. Significant groupings of non-retail uses in one part of a centre will not be allowed. The policy acknowledges that other uses play a valuable role. It targets 50% of A1, A2, A3, A4 , A5 and sui generis units within each centre to be in A1 use.

Policy SD1 places an assumption in favour of sustainable development. It states that development which conflicts with the development plan will be refused, unless other material considerations indicate otherwise.

Policy DM 12 requires development to take into account traffic generation, highway safety and accessibility.

Policy DM13 seeks to ensure that a diverse range of services are available within each centre, but that a strong retail element is maintained. Within the Christchurch Road key frontage loss of A2 office will only be permitted where:

- There would be no more the 2 consecutive A5 takeaways and no more than 30 % of the length of the key frontage would be in takeaway use.
- There would be no net loss of centre uses for non-centre uses at the ground floor
- There would be no more than 3 consecutive units which are not in A1 or A2 retail use.
- The proportion of the total length of the key frontage within the centre that is A5 use would not exceed 30%

National Planning Policy Framework

The national planning policy framework (NPPF) was first published in March 2012 with the aim of making the planning system less complex and more accessible. A revised version of the NPPF was published in July 2018.

Part 7 requires planning policies and decisions to a positive approach to town centre and local centres growth, management and adaptation in order to ensure their vitality. They should be allowed to diversity with a suitable mix of uses, in a way that can respond to rapid changes in the retail and leisure industries. Residential development is also encouraged as it is judged to play important role in ensuring the vitality of centres.

The NPPF states that local planning authorities should approach decision taking working proactively with applicants looking for solutions rather than problems and seeking to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

Planning Assessment

Change of Use on the ground floor

It is proposed to change the use of the vacant ground floor of 76 Christchurch Road from A2(class) s A5 (class) takeaway. The national planning policy framework promotes sustainable economic development through focussing a mix of main town centre uses in existing centres. The document places substantial weight on reusing sustainably located building and land, securing economic growth and creating jobs and prosperity through the planning system. The proposed development would support these aims to Christchurch Road Local Centre and providing local employment, given that the unit has been empty for well over a year . This is exactly the type of development that the council should be supporting in light of the NPPF and policy SD1.

As the unit is located with Christchurch Road Local Centre Key frontage and a change of use to take away from class A2 to A5 is proposed, the tests with emerging Policy RL3 apply. Even though this is yet to be adopted, the new local plan is at an advanced submission stage and Policy RL3 is up to date with national objectives and can be afforded great weight in contrast adopted policies DM13 and CS27 (which are to be replaced by RL3) are not consistent with national objectives and can only be afforded limited weight.

The proposed change of use is fully compliant with policy RL3.

Address	Description	Authorised Use Class	Length of Frontage
56 Christchurch Road	Red serve Heating	A1	7.2m
60 Christchurch Road	Laundry	A1	4.9m
62 Christchurch Road	Sizzling Spice	A3	5.4m
64 Christchurch Road	Dominos	A5	5.2m
66 Christchurch Road	Adams	A2	5.2m
68 Christchurch Road	Lloyds Pharmacy	A1	5.1m
70 Christchurch Road	Costcutter	A1	5.3m
72-74 Christchurch Road	Today's local	A1	12.4m
76 Christchurch Road	Natwest (application site)	A2	6.1m
78 Christchurch Road	Cintra Estates	A2	5.9m
80 Christchurch Road	Café Metro	A3	6m
82 Christchurch Road	Greggs	A1	3.9m
84 Christchurch Road	Barbers	A1	3.8m
Total length of frontage			76.4m
Existing A5 Units		1 out of 14	5.2m
Proposed A5 units		2 out of 14	11.3
Existing A5/A3 units		3 out of 14	16.6m
Proposed A3/A5 units		4 out of 14	22.7m

In terms of assessing the proposal against adopted policies DM13 and CS27, the first two test are the same and so the proposed change of use continues to meet these. Either in terms of number of units or length of frontage, (72 and 74 Christchurch Road, have separate address, and separate council tax)

Operational Considerations

The units local centre location ensures easy access on, by cycle and on public transport for both staff and customers in accordance with Policy, the takeaway will offer home delivery . Access is via an existing front entrance. There are 2 allocated parking's associated with the site and existing parking arrangements will change with the demolition of part of the rear. There are on street car parking within walking distance of the unit. Beyond this the surrounding road network has extensive parking restrictions preventing illegal parking. Both cycle and bin stores are proposed to the rear of the property

The proposed opening hours are **5pm to 10pm**, consistent with opening hours of existing neighbouring ground floor uses. Refuse and recycling will be stored at the rear of the building. The refuse collection will be either by local authority / or private company from the rear of property .The proposed use would have no adverse impact on the safety and convenience of the highway and makes adequate provision for waste in accordance with policies CS5 CS24 and DM12.

New ventilation and extract equipment will be required to support the new use and acoustic assessment has therefore been carried out to measure its impact. The assessment confirms that providing its recommendations are followed, the equipment can accord with the requirements of Reading Borough Council and it will not be detrimental to the amenity of nearby noise sensitive properties in accordance with Policy DM4. The equipment will be sensitively located to the rear of the wall facing away from the building. It would not be visible from the street scene.

Conclusion

Planning permission is sought for the change of use of a vacant class A2 unit to provide a Class A5 takeaway, demolition of part of the ground floor at the rear and a new shop front.

The proposed change of use on the first and second floor is residential C3 and had C3 usage previously

It is intended to bring the vacant commercial unit back into use, and freshen up the frontage within a local centre fully in accordance with the aims of the government, the NPPF and the Councils emerging and up to date policies. It provides employment opportunities for local people. The use would have no adverse impact on neighbouring uses.

The proposals comply with the appropriate provisions of the Development plan and NPPF and a recommendation for approval is therefore appropriate.