
August 2019



Outline planning application (with all matters reserved except for means of access) for the partial re-development of the Meadway Centre, Tilehurst, Reading

**In accordance with Option 2 of The Meadway Centre Planning Brief
Supplementary Planning Document (adopted November 2013)**

Planning Policy Statement

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of Chillingham Ltd to support an outline planning application with all matters reserved except for means of access, for the partial re-development of The Meadway Centre, in Tilehurst, Reading.
- 1.2 The proposal seeks to respond to the Option 2 development aspirations set out within Reading Borough Council's adopted Meadway Centre Planning Brief (2013) and builds upon the planning consent granted in 2017 for the precinct (Ref: 15/0945) which sought to expand the retail offering of the centre.
- 1.3 This Statement describes the application site and proposed development before identifying and examining planning and wider policy issues relevant to the application.
- 1.4 A Statement of Community Involvement has been undertaken separately which details the community engagement works that have been undertaken prior to the submission of this application.
- 1.5 In formulating this Statement and assessing the planning merits of the proposal, the starting point has been an assessment against the Development Plan and National Planning Policy before taking account of relevant material planning considerations.
- 1.6 Key considerations include the requirements of the third edition of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF3) (February 2019) and associated guidance contained in the National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG). Specific regard has also been had to the Supplementary Planning Document, The Meadway Centre, Planning Brief adopted in 2013.
- 1.7 This report proceeds as follows: -
 - Section 2 describes the site and planning history;
 - Section 3 provides more detail about the proposed development;
 - Section 4 provides an overview of relevant planning policy;
 - Section 5 provides an overall assessment of planning merits;
 - Section 6 addresses the requirements of The Meadway Centre Planning Brief; and
 - Section 7 sets out our conclusions

2.0 Site Description and Planning History

Site Description

- 2.1 The Meadway Centre is an established District Centre located on Honey End Lane approximately 3km west of the centre of Reading and 3km from Junction 12 of the M4.
- 2.2 The centre serves a local catchment and comprises two areas. Firstly, and the area which is the subject of this planning application, the northern part of the Meadway Centre comprises a shopping precinct which has a central, linear, pedestrianised courtyard running east-west with approximately 30 retail units framing the courtyard north and south with a larger “bookend” unit at the western extent of the precinct which is currently occupied by Boots and a gymnasium. Above the retail units forming the precinct are a number of residential properties and there is car parking to the side and rear.
- 2.3 The second part of the Meadway Centre which does not form part of this application proposal is home to an Asda superstore with its own dedicated car parking to the rear. As highlighted, both these areas are in separate ownerships and this application solely centres on the Meadway Precinct north of the existing Asda store.
- 2.4 The centre is primarily retail currently and is a typical shopping parade scheme of its time, tired and in need of upgrading.
- 2.5 There are existing public toilets owned by Reading Borough Council which are located fronting Honey Pot Lane between the precinct and Asda.
- 2.6 All approaches to the precinct are via Honey End Lane which runs in a north/south direction to the east of the Meadway Centre.
- 2.7 It is recognised the precinct, which was opened in 1967, has become dated and is in a very poor condition due, in part, to the number of vacant units within the precinct itself. There are long term aspirations for the centre to be modernised.
- 2.8 To the west of the site forming the western boundary is an area of woodland with residential properties beyond on Stoneham Close.

Planning History

- 2.9 The Meadway Precinct was opened in 1967 and since that time the precinct itself has only been the subject of planning applications since 2000. The Meadway Centre Planning Brief (2013) identifies that in 2000 and 2001 a number of applications were submitted for a new retail unit on the rear car park site comprising a food retail store of between 1,000 and 1,500m². These applications are referenced 00/00241/FUL; 01/00097/FUL; 01/00101/OUT; and 01/00270/FUL. All of these applications were either withdrawn or subject to appeal against non-determination but with the appeals subsequently withdrawn.
- 2.10 In 2005, planning application reference 05/01183/FUL was submitted for an additional 1,500m² of retail and 39 additional residential units alongside the refurbishment of the existing precinct. This application was refused on the grounds of it being a poorly designed solution that did not enhance the existing precinct. A subsequent appeal was withdrawn. In 2007, planning application 07/00044/FUL was

submitted for an additional 1,385m² of retail and 34 flats. Again, this application was withdrawn.

- 2.11 It is evident since 2000, a number of applications have sought to improve the retail offer of the Meadway Precinct and improve the precinct from a visual perspective but none appear to have been viable or deliverable.
- 2.12 In 2015, a planning application was submitted by Chillingham Limited (Ref: 15/0945/FUL) who are the landowners for the northern part of the centre. The application sought to re-develop the Meadway precinct including partial demolition, refurbishment of existing retail units including creation of additional floor space through extending existing premises, new shop fronts to extended units, extension to existing precinct to create new retail units within use classes A1, A2, A3, A4 and A5, laying out of new car park, new servicing arrangements, bin stores, engineering operations including re-profiling of rear of the site and landscaping, re-location of public toilets to within the precinct. The application was approved on the 29th June 2017.
- 2.13 The application did not include the Asda Superstore and associated land to the south which is under a different land ownership.
- 2.14 Since the 2017 approval, Chillingham Limited have been in further discussions with the Council to consider additional residential flats above the retail shops to create a more cohesive district centre serving this part of Tilehurst which is the subject of this outline planning application which seeks to deliver a high-quality mixed-use scheme. The current proposals seek to build upon the 2017 permission which sought to improve the retail offer in this part of the centre.
- 2.15 Section 3 of this Report now details the proposed development.

3.0 The Proposed Development

- 3.1 The proposals seek to re-develop the northern precinct of the Meadway Centre through the refurbishment and re-development of the centre to create a more cohesive community district centre within Tilehurst. The development would not include any works to the Asda superstore or associated parking but would be designed in a way which flowed between the two sites.
- 3.2 The proposed development seeks outline planning permission to bring forward the aspirations (Option 2) of the Meadway Centre Planning Brief, adopted by Reading Borough Council (RBC) in 2013.
- 3.3 Due to the application being in outline, the principle of development alongside access arrangements is sought to be agreed with the Council with a view that a future reserved matters application would agree the design in more detail alongside appearance, landscaping, layout and scale.
- 3.4 Outline planning permission was approved in 2017 (Ref: 15/0945) which sought to retain key retailers and consolidate the retail offer within the centre via an expanded retail consent. Ongoing consultation between the landowner and the Council's Planning Officers since 2017 has been undertaken to secure the future and viability of the centre in advance of the collation of this planning application.
- 3.5 The current proposals seek to build upon the 2017 permission, strengthening and consolidating the retail offer in an open courtyard format. It also increases the residential offering within a hub location, arranged over the shops and in an open, and raised amenity courtyard configuration.
- 3.6 The proposed re-development of the precinct will provide a high-quality, thriving and inclusive district centre providing a widened range of services and facilities for the local community. It will act as a much-needed community hub for the local area, providing somewhere that local residents can meet, and serving all residents of all ages. It will be a desirable place for people, including families, to live and it will be easy and safe to move around for pedestrians connecting well to the surrounding areas by all modes of transport. The re-development of the centre will be designed and laid out in a way that attracts visitors, connects well to its surroundings, provides high-quality public realm and is sustainable and durable.
- 3.7 Key retailers such as Boots will be retained and additional shops will be provided leading to and from Asda. A wide range of community uses and services will be on offer including useable public amenity space. Existing housing within the scheme will be relocated and provision will be made for an additional 239 new flats and houses to breathe life into the precinct, making a total of 266 new dwellings.
- 3.8 The landowner is working collaboratively with the Council Officers, Councillors and the local community to meet the aspirations of the Meadway Centre Planning Brief (2013). Within the Brief, the Council confirm that they will agree to work positively and proactively with any landowner or developer seeking to progress a proposal that will improve the way that this site serves its local community and which fulfils the vision and principles for the site.
- 3.9 Section 4 of this Report now provides an overview of relevant planning policy.

4.0 Planning Policy Review

- 4.1 Planning law requires that applications for planning permission should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.2 The Statutory Development Plan for Reading comprises the Core Strategy which was adopted in 2008 and the Sites and Detailed Policies document adopted in 2012 and updated in January 2015.
- 4.3 In addition to the Development Plan, planning applications are also governed by National planning policy set out by the Government. The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It provides a framework within which locally-prepared plans for housing and other development can be produced.

National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework Volume 3 (NPPF3)

- 4.4 The National Planning Policy Framework Volume 3 ("NPPF3") was published in February 2019 and supersedes the previous 2012 and 2018 versions published by the Government. The purpose of the NPPF is to provide clear, concise planning policy guidance to guide local development plans and maintain a presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- 4.5 Paragraphs 7 and 8 of the NPPF3 highlight that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):
- ***an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;***
 - ***a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and***
 - ***an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.***

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- 4.6 At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11), which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking. For decision taking this means:

“approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or

where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or

ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.”

- 4.7 Paragraph 38 confirms that Local Planning Authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available, including brownfield registers and permission in principle, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.
- 4.8 Paragraph 59 confirms that Local Planning Authorities should support the Government’s objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes and that it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay.
- 4.9 Paragraph 80 confirms the Government’s commitment to securing economic growth in order to create jobs and prosperity.
- 4.10 Paragraph 81 sets out the key principles for supporting economic growth stating that planning policies should:

a) set out a clear economic vision and strategy which positively and proactively encourages sustainable economic growth, having regard to Local Industrial Strategies and other local policies for economic development and regeneration;

b) set criteria, or identify strategic sites, for local and inward investment to match the strategy and to meet anticipated needs over the plan period;

c) seek to address potential barriers to investment, such as inadequate infrastructure, services or housing, or a poor environment; and

d) be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan, allow for new and flexible working practices (such as live-work accommodation), and to enable a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances

- 4.11 Paragraph 86 states that a sequential test should be applied to planning applications for main town centre uses which are neither in an existing centre nor in accordance with an up-to-date plan. Main town centre uses should be located in town centres, then in edge of centre locations; and only if suitable sites are not available (or expected to become available within a reasonable period) should out of centre sites be considered.

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- 4.12 Under paragraph 86, impact assessments are required for retail development outside town centres which are not in accordance with an up to date Local Plan and for developments over a threshold of 2,500m² unless there is a locally set threshold. In this instance there is no local threshold set out in local planning policy.
- 4.13 Paragraph 87 confirms that when considering edge of centre and out of centre proposals, preference should be given to accessible sites which are well connected to the town centre. Applicants and local planning authorities should demonstrate flexibility on issues such as format and scale, so that opportunities to utilise suitable town centre or edge of centre sites are fully explored.
- 4.14 The NPPF sets out the requirements for impact assessments which should include an assessment of:
- a) the impact of the proposal on existing, committed and planned public and private investment in a centre or centres in the catchment area of the proposal; and***
- b) the impact of the proposal on town centre vitality and viability, including local consumer choice and trade in the town centre and the wider retail catchment (as applicable to the scale and nature of the scheme).***
- 4.15 Paragraph 90 states that where an application fails to satisfy the sequential test or is likely to have significant adverse impact on one or more of the factors in paragraph 89, it should be refused.
- 4.16 Paragraph 91 confirms that planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places.
- 4.17 Paragraph 93 also confirms that planning policies and decisions should consider the social, economic and environmental benefits of estate regeneration. Local planning authorities should use their planning powers to help deliver estate regeneration to a high standard.
- 4.18 Paragraphs 102 – 111 provides guidance on sustainable transport options for new developments. Paragraph 109 makes clear that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.
- 4.19 Paragraph 117 sets out policies on making effective use of land confirming that planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions. Strategic policies should set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously-developed land.
- 4.20 Paragraph 122 sets out guidance on achieving appropriate densities within new development confirming that Planning policies and decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land.
- 4.21 The NPPF also considers design matters and confirms that the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment (paragraphs 124 and 127).
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Pre-application Discussions

- 4.22 Paragraphs 39-46 of the NPPF3 sets out the importance of pre-application engagement to discuss any potential issues and agree how these can be overcome to deliver sustainable development. Paragraph 39 confirms:

“Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality preapplication discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community.”

- 4.23 Significant pre-application discussions have been undertaken with Planning Officers and Councillors to shape the current proposals for the re-development of the Meadway Centre. Full details of pre-application discussions and community engagement undertaken are set out within the Statement of Community Involvement submitted as part of the suite of planning application documents.

5.0 Planning Policy Assessment

5.1 Planning law requires that applications for planning permission should be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Statutory Development Plan for Reading comprises the Core Strategy which was adopted in 2008 and the Sites and Detailed Policies document adopted in 2012 and altered in January 2015.

5.2 The relevant Core Strategy policies, (as set out in The Meadway Centre Planning Brief) includes the following: -

- CS1: Sustainable Design and Construction
- CS3: Social Inclusion and Diversity
- CS4: Accessibility and the Intensity of Development
- CS7: Design and the Public Realm
- CS9: Infrastructure, services, resources and amenities
- CS15: Location, Accessibility, Density and Housing Mix
- CS16: Affordable Housing
- CS17: Protecting the Existing Housing Stock
- CS22: Transport Assessments
- CS23: Sustainable Travel and Travel Plans
- CS24: Car/Cycle Parking
- CS26: Network and Hierarchy of Centres
- CS27: Retail Character of Centres
- CS31: Additional and Existing Community Facilities
- CS34: Pollution and Water Resources
- CS36: Biodiversity and Geology
- CS37: Major Landscape Features and Strategic Open Space
- CS38: Trees, Hedges and Woodland

5.3 Insofar as the Sites and Detailed Policies document is concerned, the following policies, as highlighted in the Planning Brief, are relevant: -

- DM1: Adaptation to Climate Change
- DM2: Decentralised Energy
- DM3: Infrastructure
- DM4: Safeguarding Amenity
- DM5: Housing Mix
- DM12: Access, Transport and Highways Related Matters
- DM13: Vitality and Viability of Smaller Centres
- DM15: Protection of Leisure Facilities and Public Houses
- DM17: Green Network
- DM18: Tree Planting
- DM19: Air Quality
- SA14: Cycle Routes
- SA15: District and Local Centres

5.4 The Development Plan for Reading comprises of: -

- The Reading Core Strategy adopted 2008
- The Reading Sites and Detailed Policies Document adopted 2012 and updated in 2015

Core Strategy Policies

- 5.5 In relation to the land use allocation of the Meadway Centre, the application site is identified in the adopted Core Strategy as being one of only eight District Centres which sit below the Regional Centre of Reading. Policy CS26 is of particular relevance and will be referred to later in this statement.
- 5.6 Policy CS1 deals with sustainable design and construction and stipulates development should be sustainable in nature, use resources efficiently, and meet a number of more specific requirements. The redevelopment of the precinct site is sustainable, having due regard to the parameters of the NPPF, in that it is a brownfield site where the focus for retail and mixed-use re-development should be centred.
- 5.7 Policy CS3 requires social inclusion and diversity. Clearly the recognition the Meadway Centre performs a District Centre role being in a sustainable location accessible by public transport ensures social inclusion. The fact the precinct will deliver a diverse range of retail outlets through a choice and mix of size of retail units to attract national multiples would also mean the aspirations of social inclusion will be delivered through this project. The development proposals advocate further non-retail uses including housing proportionate to the scale of retail development being proposed and therefore the range and offer of uses appropriate to the District Centre status are inclusive and diverse.
- 5.8 In relation to Policy CS4 in relation to the accessibility and the intensity of development, it is maintained the District Centre by virtue of its central location within the core residential area of West Reading provides a sustainable location accessible by a choice and means of transport. A full Transport Assessment has been submitted with the application which should be read in conjunction with this Planning Statement.
- 5.9 Policy CS7 on Design and the Public Realm requires a quality of design that reflects principles such as high-quality public realm, permeability and safe environments. It is clear from the application drawings the development is looking to significantly improve the quality of the public realm and ensure a safe environment by creating better permeability and spaces throughout the precinct that will encourage vitality and vibrancy. These in itself will act to promote a safe environment. This issue is reflected in the Design and Access Statement which accompanies the application. It is also the case that by introducing residential development into the proposals, there will be 24-hour use of the site thus supporting a safer environment.
- 5.10 Insofar as Policy CS9 on Infrastructure, Services, Resources and Amenities is concerned, this development seeks to build upon existing infrastructure and services, utilising existing access and egress points and reconfiguring car parking arrangements.
- 5.11 Policy CS17 seeks to protect the existing housing stock. This policy is acknowledged and there is no loss of housing as a result of this development proposal but net gains will be made through the provision of high-quality homes.

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- 5.12 CS22 requires Transport Assessments to be submitted to ensure an adequate level of accessibility and safety. The submitted Transport Assessment has been scoped with senior highways officers at Reading Council and concludes highway safety and accessibility is not compromised by this development proposal.
- 5.13 Policy CS23 encourages sustainable travel and Travel Plans and due regard has to be had to the Transport Assessment and the sustainable location within which the District Centre is located.
- 5.14 Policy CS24 addresses car and cycle parking. The proposal includes dedicated parking spaces for the retail and residential aspects of the site including electric vehicle charging points and motorcycle bays. The level of cycle parking provision demonstrably seeks to encourage alternative means of transport to and from the District Centre by cycle.
- 5.15 Policy CS26, referred to earlier in this statement, is the principal policy pursuant to the Meadway Centre.
- 5.16 This policy states: -

“Network and Hierarch of Centres

The following network of centres is identified: -

Regional Centre: Reading Centre

District Centres: Caversham, Cemetery Junction, Emmer Green, Meadway, Oxford Road West, Shinfield Road, Tilehurst Triangle, Whitley Street, Wokingham Road

Local Centres: Basingstoke Road North, Christchurch Road, Coronation Square, Erleigh Road, Dee Park, Northumberland Avenue North, Wensley Road, Whitley Wood

The vitality and viability of these centres should be maintained and enhanced. This will include widening the range of uses, environmental enhancements and improvements to access. Development for main town centre uses in or adjoining these centres should be of an appropriate scale. Where proposed levels of development would be of a greater scale, it should be clearly demonstrated that the catchment of the development will serve is in keeping with the role of the centre.”

- 5.17 Clearly the re-development proposals will enhance the vitality and viability of the Meadway Centre. It will include a wider range of uses, new homes, environmental enhancements and improvements to access. Therefore, in all respects, the development proposal is compliant with the aims and aspirations of Policy CS26.
- 5.18 Policy CS27 seeks to maintain the retail character of centres and it will be noted that the majority of units being applied for are within Use Class A1, albeit to enhance and broaden the variety of uses, some other uses are being applied for which include A2, A3, A4 and A5.
- 5.19 Policy CS34 relates to pollution and water resources. A Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy accompanies this application and confirms there will be no pollution or impact on the water resources such that development cannot take place.

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- 5.20 Policy CS36 seeks to protect sites with biodiversity or geological value including local wildlife sites. As part of this comprehensive planning submission, an Ecology Report is submitted and which confirms there is negligible to low impact on the majority of species surveyed. This is all set out in the conclusions and recommendations section of the report.
- 5.21 Policies CS37 and CS38 seek to maintain major landscape features, trees, hedges and woodland. It is acknowledged a number of trees need to be removed as part of this application proposal but these are at the bottom end of a steep embankment and do not encroach into the wildlife corridor. The area is currently unkempt, is overgrown and does not provide an attractive woodland corridor within the vicinity of the application site. The Arboricultural Assessment notes a number of trees are to be retained at the upper levels of the bank but in order to facilitate the quantum of development that will ensure this scheme remains viable and attractive to inward investors, it is necessary to remove some Category B trees, although the character of the woodland will be maintained within the wildlife site.

Site and Detailed Policies Document Adopted 2012 and updated in 2015

- 5.22 Policies DM1 and DM2 deal with issues surrounding climate change and decentralised energy. Consideration will be given during the application process in respect of renewable initiatives.
- 5.23 Policy DM3 deals with infrastructure and in particular a requirement to source funding from the Community Infrastructure Levy which will be discussed with the Planning Authority.
- 5.24 Policy DM4 seeks to safeguard residential amenity. The car park and new servicing arrangements will not have a detrimental impact on existing or proposed new residents.
- 5.25 Policy DM12 relates to access, transport and highways related matters. This planning application is accompanied by a Transport Assessment which concludes that both on and offsite, highway safety will not be compromised as a result of this development proposal.
- 5.26 Policy DM13 considers vitality and viability of smaller centres and advises that no less than 50% of any given frontage will be an A1 use. It is clear from the application drawings the intention is to maximise the amount of retail floor space within Use Class A1 whilst paying due regard to the fact a choice and mix of uses also contributes to the vitality and viability of a District Centre. To that end, the aims and aspirations of Policy DM13 are met by this development proposal.
- 5.27 Policy DM17 on Green Networks seeks to retain existing and potential areas of biodiversity significance and in this regard, it is recognised in the Ecology Report the main area of ecological significance is towards the upper ends of the embankment to the west and north of the site. This area will not be impacted upon by the development proposal and there is still a large swathe of green network within the vicinity of the application site.
- 5.28 Policy DM18 requires development to increase tree planting in the area. Although a number of trees need to be removed to facilitate the development, it is maintained further tree planting could be delivered through the implementation of a tree planting and management plan to be agreed with the Council as part of any proposed planning conditions.

5.29 Policy DM19 deals with air quality. It is evident from the Planning Brief for the Meadway Centre, the area that is to be the subject of the redevelopment proposals principally falls outwith the air quality management area corridor which centres along the Meadway in an east-west direction. It is therefore maintained there is no requirement to mitigate in respect of this development proposal.

5.30 Policy SA14 relates to cycle routes and the desire to protect these routes when considering planning applications. The routes identified from the Planning Brief will not be impacted upon by this development proposal.

5.31 Policy SA15 centres on District and Local Centres and states the following: -

“SA15: District and Local Centres

The following District, Major Local and Local Centres, as identified in the Core Strategy, are defined on the Proposals Map:.....District Centres:.....Meadway,

Although some intensification of town centre uses within all centres will be acceptable, the centres which will be the main focus for intensification, change and additional community facilities will be the Meadway and Whitley District Centres, and Dee Park Local Centre.

The following improvements will be acceptable in all centres:

- **Accessibility and transport improvements;**
- **Broadening range of facilities; and**
- **Environmental enhancements”**

5.32 Having due regard to the Site and Detailed Policies document, it is maintained the development proposals meet the broad requirements to improve the retail offer at the Meadway Centre to bring about additional vitality and viability to an ageing precinct. The inclusion of additional residential provides a more mixed-use development that accords with the aspirations of the Meadway Planning Brief SPD (2013) to provide a cohesive and thriving community district centre.

5.33 In order to crystallise the aspirations of the Council as regards the re-development of the Meadway Centre, the Council adopted a Supplementary Planning Document in November 2013 entitled “The Meadway Centre Planning Brief” which sets out the overall vision for re-development of the centre. The Meadway Centre Planning Brief was adopted by Reading Borough Council on the 20th November 2013. It highlights the fact the District Centre location for the local area is important and the brief therefore sets down broad principles for the form that such development should take. The Brief provides guidance which supplements policies in the Core Strategy and the Sites and Details Policies document.

5.34 This document is considered in the next section of this report.

6.0 The Meadway Centre Planning Brief (2013)

- 6.1 The Meadway Centre Planning Brief, adopted by the Council in November 2013, provides detailed guidance as to the aims and aspirations of the Council as regards enhancing the retail offer, viability and vibrancy of the centre, given the importance of the District Centre location for the local area.
- 6.2 The brief was prepared in response to interest in the full or partial re-development of the Meadway Precinct which is highlighted in the Planning History section of this supporting document.
- 6.3 Following approval of planning permission in 2017 which sought to expand the retail offer of the centre (Ref: 15/0945), the landowners have been in consultation with the Council to consider how the precinct could be re-developed to provide a viable and deliverable solution that provides a mixed-use community centre. Following much discussion, it has been agreed that Option 2 of the Planning Brief will be pursued which seeks to re-develop the precinct area which is under a single land ownership by the applicants. The separate Asda with associated parking is under a different land ownership and its not included as part of this planning application.
- 6.4 It has been agreed to follow a more mixed-use approach which includes new retail and residential in order to make the scheme viable and deliverable that will build upon the 2017 planning permission.
- 6.5 Section 3 of the Meadway Planning Brief sets the policy context and highlights relevant policies which are summarised in the previous section of this supporting document. The table highlights key principles in relation to land use, layout and design, transport and movement, natural environment and community.
- 6.6 In relation to land use, bullet points 1 and 2 suggest that development should result in an expanded, rather than contracted, offer of centre uses such as retail, leisure and community uses, retaining a strong retail character. The response of this application is to respond to bullet point 1, the development proposals retaining a strong retail character whilst expanding the centre such that the vibrancy and vitality can be brought back, centring around national multiple occupiers through a viable redevelopment of the precinct. In relation to bullet point 2, it is maintained there will be no loss of housing as all of the flats will be retained.
- 6.7 In relation to layout and design, bullet point 4 requires a high-quality design which considers and emphasises safety, quality public realm and permeability as well as protecting existing and residential amenity. The Design and Access Statement is comprehensive and highlights the design process that has evolved to ensure the precinct offers the highest quality of environment both in terms of public realm, permeability, but importantly, customer safety. Sharp ninety-degree corners have been removed where possible to allow the precinct to flow in a more open and customer friendly environment. This is evident from the application drawings that accompany the application.
- 6.8 Bullet point 5 requires the intensity of development to reflect accessibility and character meaning that a District Centre location could be developed relatively intensely. The development seeks to maximise the quantum and size of retail units such that they prove attractive to national multiples of whom several have expressed interest in the site. All of the operators who are considering leasing retail units are

ones that customers would expect to be associated and representative in District Centres, widening the retail choice.

- 6.9 In relation to transport and movement, existing access points will be utilised off Honey End Lane, sustainable modes of transport will be encouraged, particularly as the District Centre is accessible to a wide residential area and is close to existing bus stops. Cycle bays are provided to encourage sustainable transport options.
- 6.10 In relation to adequate levels of car parking, the Transport Assessment which accompanies this application highlights the spaces required for the residential properties and retail customers is sufficient and would not compromise highway safety.
- 6.11 As regards the natural environment, it is the case a number of trees need to be removed to facilitate the development proposals. The Meadway Precinct has been the subject of planning applications which have not progressed, principally due to viability issues and the lack of providing a range and choice of retail unit size to cater for national multiple interest. The area of woodland to the north of the precinct remains relatively untouched and as part of the tree removal programme, a scheme for an improved woodland management could be prepared as part of this application. The areas within the woodland are unkempt and have been the subject of fly tipping and litter accumulates in significant areas. The area is unattractive and unappealing and could be significantly enhanced off the back of this development proposal.
- 6.12 In relation to community, it is recognised the development will trigger a Community Infrastructure Levy payment which is to be agreed with the Council as the application progresses.
- 6.13 Section 4 in the draft Planning Brief sets the vision for the Meadway Centre and in the context of this supporting statement, it is considered appropriate to cite this vision in full such that it is clear the application proposals meet that vision in all respects.
- 6.14 The vision states: -

“The Meadway Centre will be developed to provide a high quality, thriving and inclusive District Centre for this part of West Reading. It will serve a number of vital different, but complementary roles:

- It will provide a widened range of services and facilities for the local community;
- It will act as a much-needed community hub for the local area, providing somewhere that local residents can meet, and serving all residents of all ages;
- It will be a desirable place for people, including families, to live;
- It will be easy and safe to move around for pedestrians, including people with disabilities, and will connect well to the surrounding areas by all modes of transport, including foot, cycle and public transport;
- It will be designed and laid out in a way that attracts visitors, connects well to its surroundings, provides high quality public realm and is sustainable and durable; and
- It will take any opportunities to help address deprivation issues within the local area.

Redevelopment and regeneration of the Meadway Centre is an important objective for the local community and for the Council. To that end, the Council will work positively and proactively with any landowner or developer seeking to progress a proposal that will improve the way that this site serves its local community and which fulfils the vision and principles for the site.”

6.15 Having due regard to the six bullet points, it is clear: -

- The development proposal does provide a wider range of potential services and facilities for the local community given the range of size of units being proposed of which three of the new units could be A1, A2, A3, A4 or A5;
- The reconfigured precinct allows for much more user-friendly external meeting/seating areas which will encourage coffee shop owners and retailers to take advantage of the pedestrian friendly environment such that local residents can view the Meadway Centre as a community hub which will prove attractive to all ages;
- The scheme retains residential on site and provides 239 new homes which will assist in providing a high quality, mixed use scheme that assists in increasing the desirability of the area as a whole;
- As referred to above, the precinct will be pedestrian friendly and will cater for people with disabilities as well as connecting well to the surrounding areas by all modes of transport.
- The Transport Statement which accompanies the application clearly demonstrates the desire to reduce reliance upon the private motor vehicle, encouraging public transport and cycling as well as walking to the centre;
- As evidenced in the Design and Access Statement, the overall design of the redevelopment of the precinct encourages connectivity to relate to the adjacent Asda such that the District Centre can be read genuinely as one destination with good permeability throughout;
- Visitors to the centre will recognise the improved precinct, new retail facilities and Asda work as a District Centre together and should not be seen as two separate parts of the District Centre. By improving the retail offer, this will attract residents such that the vibrancy and vitality can be brought back into the precinct;
- In terms of addressing deprivation issues within the local area, unfortunately the precinct itself is suffering from deprivation and is in dire need of regeneration. This proposal will not only deliver viable retail units and new homes of a size and scale to meet the market demand for retail occupiers that one would expect to see in a District Centre, but will also improve the existing precinct from a visual perspective.

6.16 Therefore, in terms of the vision for the Meadway Centre, this development proposal adheres to the vision to return the Meadway Centre to the community hub associated with the precinct several years ago. The applicants have worked hard to bring forward a proposal in collaboration with the Council which provides a high-quality mixed-use scheme and a cohesive community district centre whilst also being realistic about the site viability and deliverability of the proposals.

6.17 In relation to Section 5 of the Planning Brief, development principles are established referring to the amount of development, land use, layout and design, landscape, density and mix, scale, height and massing, architectural details and materials, sustainability, safety and security, transport and movement, natural environment, community and social role and management and maintenance. Taking these in turn, the following comments are made: -

Amount of Development

- 6.18 It is recognised there is a requirement to increase the overall floor space of the development to ensure the scheme is viable. The applicant has worked very closely with retail agents and retailers direct to ensure the quantum of floor space being delivered meets the range and size of units that are likely to prove attractive in the marketplace.

Land Use

- 6.19 It will be noted from the application drawings and the accommodation schedule it is the intention to maintain a strong emphasis on retail whilst allowing a degree of flexibility. In addition to the retail offer, residential development is also proposed to provide a high-quality mixed-use scheme which is commonplace in many district centres throughout the UK. The mixed-use proposal and density of development proposed makes best use of the land available and will ensure a healthy mix of uses that you would expect to be found in a District Centre such that the vibrancy and vitality of the centre can be maintained.

Layout and Design

- 6.20 The application is made in outline with layout and design subject to reserved matters. However, the layout and design of development has been carefully considered, negotiated and adapted and is fully addressed in the comprehensive Design & Access Statement submitted with the application.

Density and Mix

- 6.21 This density and mix make best use of the land available and is fully addressed in the comprehensive Design & Access Statement submitted with the application.

Scale, Height and Massing

- 6.22 The scale of development proposed including the height of buildings in relation to the neighbouring land uses has been assessed thoroughly and is fully addressed in the comprehensive Design & Access Statement submitted with the application.

Architectural Details and Materials

- 6.23 This issue is fully addressed in the comprehensive Design & Access Statement submitted with the application.

Safety and Security

- 6.24 Safety and security are key considerations and it will be noted from the Design & Access Statement CCTV is to be included as part of the proposal. The areas of public car parking are highly visible with natural surveillance from all of the retail units and indeed the residential properties above. The service yards and bin/storage areas will be secured and in relation to the public toilets which are mentioned in the Planning Brief, these are to remain in situ. To that end, safety and security has been taken into consideration as part of this development proposal.

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- 6.25 The inclusion of residential development would mean that the site would be accessed over a 24-hour period rather than just daytime shopping hours and would include a night-time economy and footfall of pedestrians, assisting the security of the area.

Transport and Movement

- 6.26 In relation to transport and movement, a detailed Transport Assessment has been prepared which concludes sufficient car parking has been provided for both the residential and retail aspects of the development alongside cycle parking with good connectivity to bus stops and local residential areas with good pedestrian circulation space throughout the precinct.

Natural Environment

- 6.27 The natural environment has been given full consideration in the preparation of the redevelopment proposals and in particular, a full Ecology Report accompanies the application alongside an Arboricultural Report. Whilst there is a requirement to lose trees at the lower end of the embankment to the west of the site, this will be mitigated by replacement planting and the improvement of the woodland setting towards the north of the embankment. There is negligible to low impact on the species surveyed and as referred to earlier in this statement, this is all set out in the Conclusions and Recommendations section of the Ecology Report

Community and Social Role

- 6.28 Again, as referred to earlier in this statement, the Meadway Centre and in particular the precinct should act as a community hub which, at present, it fails to do so. This redevelopment proposal has a very important community and social role by bringing about additional vitality and vibrancy to the precinct that will encourage active use and significantly enhance its role as a District Centre. As evidenced by the Statement of Community Involvement submitted with the application, local residents are very keen to see positive redevelopment proposals happen such that the precinct can perform the role as a focal point for the community. To that end, this aim and objective of the development principle is adhered to.

Management and Maintenance

- 6.29 A new security and management suite will be located centrally as a first-floor extension to the western unit to oversee the site and provide comprehensive CCTV coverage to improve the security of residents and shoppers. Again, the issue of management and maintenance as a development principle has been adhered to as part of this proposal.

Summary

- 6.30 Having due regard to The Meadway Centre Planning Brief (2013) and the development principles as set out in that document, it is maintained this development proposal reflects and respects the aims and aspirations of the Council to deliver a viable and vibrant District Centre to support the needs of the wider West Reading population.

7.0 Conclusion

- 7.1 This Planning Statement has been produced following instructions from Chillingham Ltd to support the full planning application for the partial re-development of the Meadway Centre, principally focusing on the Meadway precinct and the delivery of a high-quality District Centre which will bring about additional vitality and vibrancy to this part of West Reading.
- 7.2 The application is made in outline with all matters reserved except means of access. Nevertheless, significant design work has been undertaken to create the vision of how the centre would look and operate as a thriving mixed-use retail and residential community centre.
- 7.3 The proposals follow Option 2 of the Council's Meadway Planning Brief (2013) and the preceding sections of this Statement have fully assessed how the proposed development meets the Planning Brief and the Council's aspirations to regenerate the centre.
- 7.4 The proposal has a number of significant benefits deriving from it and should be supported by the Local Planning Authority for the following reasons: -
- The proposal makes efficient use of this sustainably located site which is identified as a District Centre in need of refurbishment;
 - The proposal fully supports Option 2 of the Council's Meadway Centre Planning Brief (2013) which seeks to regenerate the centre into a thriving and viable community hub and encourages additional vitality and vibrancy in a centre which is important to local residents of West Reading.
 - The proposal builds upon the 2017 planning permission (Ref: 15/0945) which sought to start improving the centre and its retail and residential offer;
 - The proposal comprises sustainable development;
 - The redevelopment will provide a quantum of new retail floor space that will prove attractive to retail occupiers, including national multiples, and in particular those that one would expect to be located within a District Centre.
 - The re-development will also provide high quality new homes in a sustainable location that will add to the vitality and viability of the district centre.
- 7.5 In view of the above, it is considered the scheme satisfies both National and Local Planning Policy and represents a viable and deliverable redevelopment proposal in accordance with Option 2 of The Meadway District Centre Planning Brief.
- 7.6 In this context, the proposals satisfy Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and we would invite the Local Planning Authority to assess the application, offer its full support and grant planning permission for the proposed re-development proposals.