

10 Arkwright Road, Reading RG2 0LU

Planning and Supporting Statement

Submitted on behalf of Zest Trading UK Ltd

Town and Country Planning Act 1990

Planning Application for temporary [5 years] change of use from B1/B8 [Office and Warehouse] to Sui Generis [Retail Warehouse Club] for part of the above premises [Retrospective]



**10 ARKWRIGHT ROAD
READING
BERKSHIRE
RG2 0LU**

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INTRODUCTION

1. This is an application for consent, retrospective and for up to 5 years from consent date, to regularise the existing usage of office and storage space for a Retail Warehouse Club which raises funds to support a local charity.

BACKGROUND

2. 10 Arkwright Road is owned by Paragon Design Joinery's Pension Fund and leased to Paragon Design Joinery Ltd, a fast-growing family business producing high quality bespoke joinery items and employing 31 office and workshop staff. In due time, the firm's intention [subject to planning] is to demolish and use the land to extend the firm's modern production unit at 12 Arkwright Road. In the meantime, Paragon uses most of the warehouse space at 10 Arkwright Road for storage ancillary to its production operations next door. However, the business has sufficient office space at 12 Arkwright Road, and for some years has informally allowed Zest Trading UK Ltd to use the office space at 10 Arkwright Road and more recently the side lean-to storage space where the low ceiling height makes it of little if any potential use to Paragon.
3. Zest Trading UK Ltd was formed in 2007 as a wholly-owned subsidiary of Ealing Educational Resources Trust, a charity which supports provision of education by OneSchool Global UK which provides education mainly [though not exclusively] for children of the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church community.
4. The operations of Zest at this premises consist of wholesale purchase, mainly of food and household goods, and retail sale to members of the Church community. The store is run by unpaid volunteers, and all profits are donated to the school charity.
5. Apart from when volunteers are on site taking deliveries, stacking shelves, stock-taking, cleaning, &c, the store is un-staffed. Community members gain access by keying a code into the digi-lock access control system. They select from the shelves, and scan and pay at the tills. The system relies entirely on the honesty of the customers.
6. There is ample parking at the front and side of the site for customers, as attendance is spread throughout the day, and almost half of customer visits occur outside business hours when Arkwright Road is not busy. As a result, the number of vehicle movements during working hours is no higher than would be likely if the premises were used as office and warehouse.

THE SITE

7. The site is currently allocated for B1/B8 use and provides a total of xx 563m² of floorspace, split between 120 m² of office space and 443 m² of warehouse. There is ample off-road parking at the front and side of the building.
8. The area for which consent is sought for temporary change of use to Retail Warehouse Club is shown un-hatched on the site layout plan AR-103 submitted. This amounts to 223 m², comprising 120 m² of office space and the side lean-to providing 103 m² of low-grade storage space. The space retained by Paragon Design Joinery Ltd amounts to 340m².

DURATION OF THE TEMPORARY CONSENT SOUGHT

9. As stated above, Paragon Design Joinery Ltd wishes to keep its options open as to when it will progress its objective [subject to planning] of re-developing 10 Arkwright Road for an extension to its production facility at 12 Arkwright Road to allow continued business growth.
10. Whilst very grateful to Paragon for the space made available, Zest has aspirations to find and move to larger premises, where it can offer customers a better buying experience and a wider choice of goods, as well as generating higher profits for charity.
11. The lease of the space therefore allows for a break at 3 months' notice by either party.
12. Although it seems fairly certain that one party or the other will exercise the break clause much sooner than 5 years, in order to allow flexibility, this application seeks consent for the change of use for a period not exceeding 5 years.
13. The lease requires Zest to restore the space to its previous use on vacating, so that it will again be available for office use, unless by then consent has been granted for demolition in view of re-building.

PLANNING POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

14. At a national level, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) implies a presumption in favour of consent where, as in this case, no sustainability concerns arise. Indeed, paragraph 118 [d] requires decisions to 'promote and support the development of under-utilised ... buildings, especially if ... available sites could be used more effectively'.

15. Locally, Policy SA12 makes clear that the Basingstoke Road corridor is a core employment area, and Policy CS11 resists loss of employment land.
16. However, paragraph 5.15[iii] of the Core Strategy does allow for 'ownership constraints' to be taken into account. In this case, with Paragon unwilling for good reason to grant an extended lease, it is most unlikely that any other party would take the space, which would therefore otherwise remain vacant.
17. Moreover, as only temporary change of use is sought, employment 'land' is not being lost, but will return to conventional employment use at the end of Zest's occupation. Further, the major part of the building is not covered by the lease to Zest and will continue to be used during the temporary period by Paragon for storage.
18. Further, the space demised to Zest is actually a hive of employment, albeit unpaid. In effect, the volunteers do add economic value, but they choose to donate it to charity. Whilst not counting as B1/B8 employment, it is hoped that, on de minimis grounds, this use can be accepted as economic employment.
19. Moreover, the store generates net profit of typically £8k per month to help keep the school in operation, which in turn saves the LEA vast sums which it would otherwise need to spend in providing places at local LEA schools.
20. These factors support the conclusion that taking a broad view of what counts as 'employment', any apparent conflict with policy CS11 is insignificant and outweighed in the planning balance.

THE PROPOSAL

21. Drawing AR-102 submitted with the planning application provides details of the location, and drawing AR-103 shows the layout of the application site, and the part [unhatched on drawing AR-103] for which change of use is sought.
22. No change is proposed to the existing situation, and the application merely seeks to regularise existing practice by gaining approval for the correct Use Class.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

23. This Supporting Statement is in support of a full planning application for temporary change of use to Sui Generis [Retail Warehouse Club] of part [223 m²] of an existing office/warehouse building, 10 Arkwright Road, Reading RG2 0LU.

24. It is hoped that this minor temporary permission can be granted. For site visit access, and if any further details would help towards grant of consent, please contact the undersigned.

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