

19th March 2018

COOPER READING BMW/MINI – DRAKE WAY, READING EXPLANATORY STATEMENT FOR THE EXTENSION

Introduction

This Statement has been prepared by Inchcape, the operator of the Cooper Reading BMW and MINI Dealership, in support of a forthcoming Planning Application to provide a new and extended external surface level car sales area on land fronting Drake Way. The Statement outlines the dealership's present operation on-site and provides an explanation of the business's requirement for an additional car sales area.

Existing Dealership

The existing Dealership consists of a three storey purpose built showroom, workshop and office area. This was purpose built to our design and specification opening in July 2015 and supported our relocation from former Dealerships in Reading on Kings Meadow (BMW) and Bath Road (MINI).

The building extends to 7,913 sq.m GIA in area and is set out as follows:

- External Area: visitor parking of 52 spaces with external covered display for 33 MINI vehicles.
- Ground Floor: 3,136 sq.m split 1,211 sq.m of showroom/offices for new BMW product, 403 sq.m of showroom/offices for new MINI product and 1,522 sq.m of shared productive workshop and part storage area.
- First Floor: 1,655 sq.m of showroom/offices/customer hospitality area for new BMW and MINI.
- Second Floor: 3,120 sq.m of showroom/offices/customer hospitality area for used BMW and MINI.

The Dealership has an internal capacity for 123 vehicles on display and 60 for storage before they are placed on display or sold. There is also capacity for 121 customer vehicles to be stored before they are serviced, repaired or valeted. In addition to this, we have an external storage compound to the immediate south accessed from Commercial Road. This is used for the delivery and storage of cars when they first reach the site before they are moved to the Dealership for display and onward sale. It has a total capacity of 100 vehicles (including 30 staff vehicles).

The Dealership employs 112 persons (full and part time) as part of the wider Inchcape group. Our team has a diverse range of skills and experience including technical / workshop, sales, administration and management. The Dealership mainly draws its employees from the Reading / Berkshire area.

The Dealership represents our largest facility in the Reading area and serves a customer catchment of c 1.5m broadly as far afield as Oxford, Slough, Winchester and Newbury.

Proposed External Extension

Since the Dealership first opened and brought BMW and MINI together on the same site for the first time, we have experienced a growth in car sales and repeat / returning visits for servicing. The increase in workshop / servicing has placed particular pressure on the internal storage areas to the extent they are now at capacity. The car decks that were intended for the display of cars on sale are now increasingly used for parking customer cars as part of our successful and growing service offer. As a result, we are under considerable capacity pressure in terms of area for the display of used cars.

The capacity we designed for in 2013 has therefore been the subject of review to ensure the Dealership can continue to be fit for purpose and support the expectations of our customers and manufacturer partner BMW Group. As a consequence, we have identified a requirement for an additional 60 to 70 display spaces for used BMW cars. This will increase the amount of cars that can be displayed for sale whilst allowing us to manage in a more efficient manner those cars that are being stored as part of a service visit.

To overcome the site's capacity constraint, we have identified the adjacent unused development plot for an extension. It represents a natural extension to the Dealership given its immediate physical relationship, longstanding vacancy / availability and the ability to link it with existing infrastructure and services. There are also no viable or deliverable options to extend the existing building or on other site boundaries. It is therefore a sustainable and cost effective option to address our capacity issues and ongoing business requirements.

The proposal is intended to address the existing lack of capacity to ensure the storage facility is operating with flexibility and does not run out of operational space. With the extension in operation, we do not therefore expect a material change in the number of visitors to the Dealership – perhaps an additional 20 or 30 per week. We also expect the number of employees to increase by 5 -6 FTEs vs present levels.



Martin Wheatley
Director Inchcape Estates