

PLANNING DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT:

Proposed Change of Use of ground floor unit from Financial and Professional Services (Use Class A2) to Restaurant and Cafés (Use Class A3) to create a café with ancillary takeaway facilities, with associated external alterations at:

62 Kings Road, Reading, RG1 3AA

Applicant : Penthouse Corporation Limited

Ref: 17-2355/FP/PDA/V1

Date: February 2018

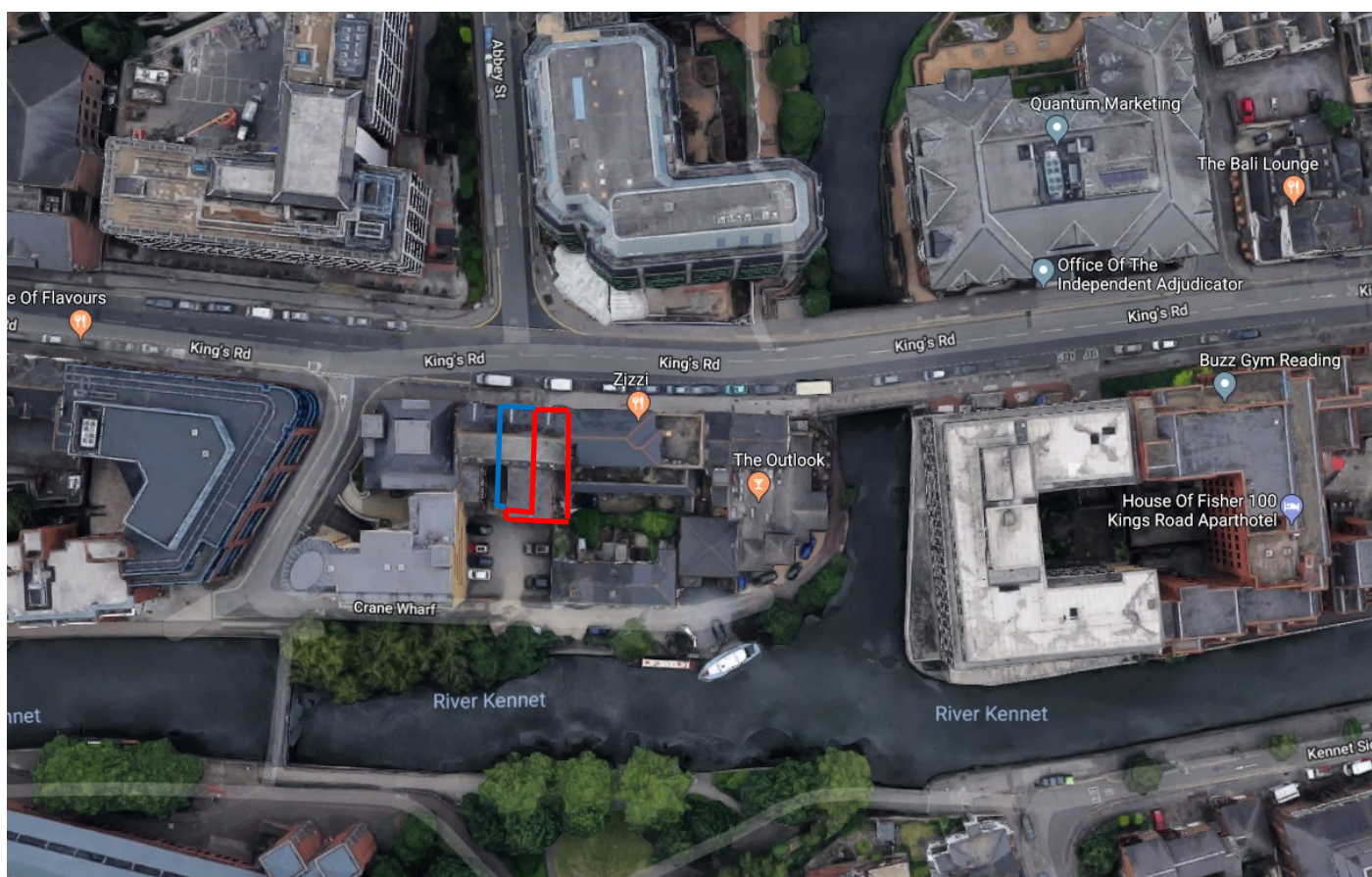


Figure 1: Plan view of 62 Kings Road Reading, application site highlighted in red (reference: Google maps)

Introduction:

This statement is submitted in support of a full planning application by Penthouse Corporation Limited for a Change of Use of the ground floor unit of the property from Use Class A2 Financial and Professional Services to A3 Restaurants and Cafés at 62 Kings Road, Reading, RG1 3AA.

62 Kings Road is located to the east side of the centre of Reading Town to the north of the River Kennet. The site sits in on a prominent main road in the town centre. The South side of this road consists of a series of smaller commercial units, some commercial chains, and many being small independent units. The North side of Kings Road consists of larger more dominant buildings, so there is a mixture of development in the area in both use classes and scale.

The applicant wishes to change the use of the existing ground floor from Financial and Professional Services Use Class A2 to Restaurant and Cafés Use Class A3 in order to propose a café with ancillary takeaway facilities, for sandwiches, cakes and coffee etc, to increase scope and viability for this unit which has been vacant since November 2017 due to the previous tenant, Swintons, vacating at the end of their long lease. This will allow a better marketing campaign for the unit, and also reflects the current interest they have received in the unit which has been mainly for A3 proposals, which a couple of potential tenants are interested in taking out a lease on this unit subject to the Change of Use being obtained first. Please note that the takeaway aspect is ancillary to allow customers to takeaway purchases for diversity of offerings, the main use is to be a sit down food facility in A3 use.

The Site and Development Proposal:

The site is located within the boundary of Reading Central Area and also within the Central Core of the Jan 2009 proposals maps, Zone 1. The site is not located within a conservation area nor immediately adjacent to any heritage assets.

The area consists of mainly 4 storey plus buildings, and is a strongly built up area, with long terraces in mixed use and large commercial buildings. The area consists of a mix of uses including restaurants, cafés, a Public House, large commercial office buildings, a church, and some residential above, and is within a 2-5 minute walk of the main retail areas of Reading Town Centre. This ground floor unit is located with a short parade of mainly A3 to A5 units and opposite are high rise commercial buildings, therefore the proposed Change of Use will be in-keeping with the commercial uses of the local area.



Figure 2: View of front elevation of the existing property (North elevation) taken from Kings Road, 62 is the left hand side unit.

The property is in relatively good condition, requiring some repair and painting works to improve the front façade, and to modernise the appearance on the streetscene, proposed in a similar style to the neighbouring properties, for a harmonious and in keeping appearance. The inside of the unit is in relatively good condition, however the rear windows would benefit from replacement with double glazed units. The majority of the works required are for fitting out the unit to suit the tenant's style, at present it is an empty office requiring internal decoration.

Relevant Past Planning History:

- None available online. Known there was a previous conversion and change of use of the upper floors of 60-62 Kings Road from offices to 8 flats.

Planning Policy Constraints:

- Reading Borough Council Core Strategy Jan 2008 with alterations Jan 2015 (referred to as the Local Plan in this document);
- Reading Central Area Action Plan;
- Draft Reading Borough Local Plan May 2017
- Reading Borough Local Development Framework—Revised Parking Standards and Design Oct 2011;
- NPPF;

Design Considerations, Principles & Visual Impact:

Local Plan policy SD1 is in favour of sustainable development and looks to promote a positive approach for considering development proposals. The proposal is considered sustainable as it reuses a currently empty unit and revitalises this unit which is more pleasing for the streetscene and outlook of the area, as even small vacant units can have a negative impact on a local area. The proposals will improve the economic and social conditions of the area as it brings back to life an empty unit, and provides a facility that encourages socialising, and due to its location with the larger office buildings, provides another likely independently run facility to the area for more variety for commuters, local employees and residents to use on route to work or during breaks.

The proposed Change of Use will require advertisements to be installed to advertise and promote the A3 use. At this stage as the proposed tenant has not yet been formalised, it is considered that the permission for advertisements will need to be obtained separately if they fall outside of the permitted advertisement regulations. As part of this planning application we have indicated likely positions of advertisements for interest and to provide a cohesive application.

With reference to Local Plan policy DM22 it is proposed that the main advertisement will be on the fascia board similar to the adjacent commercial units, and then there will likely be cut out logos or lettering designs on the glazing so that the windows are not obstructed but can provide further interest to the use of the unit and promote the unit. The proposed main advertisements will be on existing fascia board, and will not block any significant architectural features and will have no impact on the highway.

Proposal—Amount and site organisation

The proposal is a conversion and Change of Use of the existing ground floor unit from Use Class A2 to Use Class A3. The unit is 84.1m², and no extension is proposed. The unit is orientated North-South, with a small external yard to the rear that leads to the fire escape route. Under Central Action Plan policy RC11, this unit is larger than the 75m² tolerance, and there is no amalgamation with other units proposed.

Design and visual impact

Local Plan policy DM23 encourages shopfronts to retain their individual features and character of the building and surroundings, with the design, colours and materials and lighting to contribute to the character of the streetscene. This building forms part of terrace of 3 similar appearance buildings all with commercial uses at ground floor, there is a horizontal fascia board with deep soffit detailing below the first floor windows, and the neighbouring properties have painted theirs in dark grey or black for a more contemporary appearance, with their corresponding signage. It is proposed that this unit's frontage will be painted in dark grey or black to coordinate with the colours of the surrounding buildings and to tidy up the external appearance, this includes the piers and column for a cohesive and harmonious appearance.

The large picture shop front window is to be retained, to encourage an active frontage to the street at all times. Low level obscure film is proposed internally to provide some privacy and interest in the shop front window, with areas of lettering/cut out logos to be placed at high level on the remainder of the shop front, firstly to promote the unit and secondly to provide interest, similar to



Figure 3: Proposed front elevation drawing (NTS)

those used at 58 Kings Road. This is considered to be inline with the Reading Central Area Action Plan Policy RC10 that encourages active frontages with display windows or glazed frontages to contribute to the vibrancy of the Town Centre and provide visual interest, Kings Road being considered an existing active frontage area.

Impact on neighbours

The proposed change of use is considered to have minimal impact on the existing residential units above and neighbouring properties. At ground floor to the East and West of the site are other commercial uses, and to the North of the site are buildings in commercial use. All commercial uses are considered to be unaffected by the proposed Change of Use as there are no extensions to the property, no significant alterations to the front elevation apart from replacement door and repainting the fascia and soffit boards, and these neighbouring properties are commercial uses likely with similar operating times. To the South of the site is an open air car park that leads onto the footpath by the river. There is no proposed impact on this car park through the proposal, as the fire escape to the rear is as existing, which the applicants have a right of way over. There is no proposal to amend this existing fire escape nor to extend the building.

There is a flue proposed to the rear of the unit for the extraction for the kitchen, considered to be a low disruption and low odour type of extraction system to suit the cooking style of cafés, following consultation with extraction system suppliers, please refer to the separate extraction system statement. This is considered to have minimal impact on the adjacent commercial unit to the East due to it being located close to their own rear servicing yard. This extraction flue is also considered to have little to no impact on the existing residential units above as café food is considered low odour, low grease and a low disturbance type of cooking facility. In addition the natural of cafés is to be open during normal working hours, ie. 07:30 to 18:00pm approximately, subject to individual cafes. This means that the hours of operation likely fall within the standard waking hours of residents, outside of opening hours the extractors are turned off, so there is no impact on neighbours from the proposed Change of Use during these times. In addition it is proposed to change the existing windows to UPVC double glazed units which will improve the acoustic protection of the ground floor unit.

With reference to Local Plan policy DM4, as outlined above, it is considered that the proposed Change of Use will not cause a detrimental impact to the living environment or amenities of existing residential properties nearby, in regards to privacy and overlooking, access to sunlight and daylight, visual dominance and overbearing effects of development, as there are no alterations to window sizes or extensions proposed. And no impact to neighbouring properties due to noise and disturbance, artificial lighting, vibration, dust and fumes and smells, due to the type of cooking undertaken in cafés and the nature of times of opening for cafés. Deliveries will take place during opening hours, with deliveries made from the front of the property, which is a main road, and there should have no impact on existing residents due to the location of the deliveries. It is therefore considered that the proposals are compliant with policy DM4.

Highway and Access Considerations

The proposed Change of Use will likely have a higher amount of pedestrians accessing the unit, it is difficult to comment whether there will be a significantly higher amount of vehicular traffic to the site, due to the site being in the town centre and customers are likely walking past, or are locals living or working in the area utilising the facility. The existing use has some vehicular movements to the unit for customers and mainly employees who work in the unit, the employees could be travelling by foot, public transport, cycling or using the local public car parks if from further afield, due to being on the edge of the town centre, and the nature of A2 use classes it is likely that employees either live locally, or travel into the town centre by alternative modes of transport, rather than by car, especially as the site is within an 8 minute walk of the train station.

There will be some increase in vehicular movements to the existing unit due to the need for deliveries to be made, and some customers may drive if they are specifically travelling to this proposed café. The site is on a main road, and there is on street car parking outside the unit, which allows for the shop owner and employees to park a car or delivery vehicle within close proximity to the unit to allow for deliveries without detriment to the highways, there is also plentiful on-street short term pay and display parking for customers. There is no existing vehicular access onto the site itself as there is very limited external space, and no vehicular access from the rear. It is considered that the minor increase in vehicular traffic is not significant and will not cause a detrimental impact to the highway.

Car parking and Sustainable Transport:

There is no existing car parking spaces associated with the unit. The previous tenants would have used walked, used public transport or utilised the town centre parking facilities. There are no extensions proposed nor demolitions, therefore, no car parking spaces are proposed as part of this scheme. There is plentiful on street short stay parking outside of this unit, which is suitable for use of this type of premises. It is also considered that a lot of trade will be from passerbys or locals walking into or out of town, or those who live in the town centre.

The Revised Parking Standards and Design October 2011 refers CS4 Accessibility and the Intensity of Development, requiring development to be close to services and facilities by walking, cycling and public transport, and CS24 where car parking and bicycle parking requirements are applied in relation to the accessibility of locations within the Borough to sustainable transport facilities.

The site is located within Central Core Area Zone 1, defined as an area of having the best transport hubs with the main railway station and bus interchanges and within the town centre, and the area with the largest proportion of public car parking spaces. The Standards consider that typically retail units generate shorter term parking and commercial can be served well by rail and bus links. These Parking Standards refer to development in Zone 1 for A2 and A3 use classes not requiring on site parking as public parking is provided in line with Reading BC's current parking strategy. The Standards refer to delivering and servicing to A3 units in Zone 1 to be based on the merits of the application. The site has on-street parking outside the unit, and plentiful on street allowing for short term parking for unloading of deliveries.

Bicycle parking:

The existing ground floor unit has no designated bicycle storage. Due to the existing layout it is considered unlikely that employees brought their bicycles into the building due to the change in level. The proposal utilises an existing ground floor commercial unit, there is no bicycle parking facilities as existing, and there is no proposal to provide bicycle parking facilities due to the nature of the existing unit, and its location within the town centre and lack of suitable external space.

The Revised Parking Standards and Design October 2011 refers to A2 uses requiring 1 bicycle space per 6 staff, and for A3 uses refers to 1 bicycle space per 6 staff and 1 space per 300m². Balancing the existing requirements against proposed, this suggests that 1 additional space is required for the COU. We welcome further discussion on this policy standard if the conversion with no extension to footprint still requires this additional bicycle space to be provided.

Accessibility and Equality Act:

There is level access to the front of the unit from the pavement, it is not proposed to alter this existing level access. As existing there are two levels to the unit, the higher level has level access with the public highway and is proposed as the serving café area, the lower level is proposed to be retained as the facilities area, reusing the existing steps from the kitchen up to the serving area.

As existing the WCs are at the lower level. Due to the location of the existing foul drainage, the difference in internal heights whereby if the lower level is raised flush with the main café floor level the headheight would be 1.9m, and the structural restrictions of the unit, it is proposed to retain the WCs at the lower level.

Consultation has been carried out with Building Control regarding the internal layout and accessibility. Building Control commented that they would prefer the WCs to remain at lower level as headheight is restricted to under 2m if the floor level is raised, one WC is proposed to be increased in size to create a wheelchair accessible WC with space for a baby change.

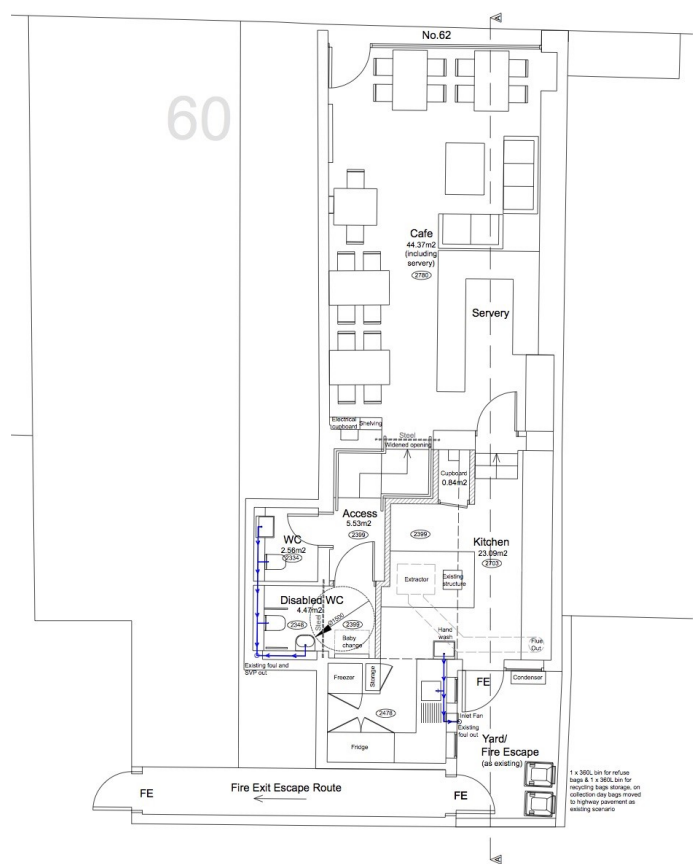


Figure 4: Proposed ground floor drawing (NTS)



Figure 5: Proposed section (similar to existing) (NTS)

A guided help access strategy is required to assist customers who are in wheelchairs or ambulant disabled down the steps in order to access the disabled WC. The steps are designed to with 2 x 1m landings, 1 after each step. Staff will be trained in the method of assisting guiding wheelchairs down the steps, and back up the steps in order to assist customers, there is to be at minimum one trained member of staff available during opening hours. Staff are to help a wheelchair user gently move down each step, turn 90 degrees on each landing and gently move down to the next step until the bottom corridor. The customer is then allowed to make their own way into the disabled WC unaided if required, whilst the member of staff waits at the bottom of the stairs. The user then exits the WC facing forward, allowing the member of staff to move behind the wheelchair and help guide the wheelchair back up each step and landing, until the main serving area is reached.

Sustainability, acoustic protection and air quality:

There is no proposed increase in footprint, and the upper floors of 62 Kings Road were converted previously into residential units, which included sustainable and acoustic upgrades between the ground floor commercial unit and the residential units above. It is considered that the existing unit has been suitably acoustically upgraded during the previous refurbishment works to suit the proposed scheme.

Local Plan policy DM1 requires development to demonstrate how they have been designed to incorporate measures to adapt to climate change. The building to be converted is existing, and the proposal is conversion from commercial use A2 to commercial use A3 with ancillary takeaway. There is little scope for upgrading works as there are no external alterations proposed to the existing single storey roof, nor to the frontage facing onto Kings Road, which as existing faces North.

Kitchens in cafes have to have high levels of ventilation if gas cooking is proposed, considered with the restricted nature of the existing building due to structural columns and the change in level these combined significantly reduces the scope for upgrades to the sustainability of the unit. The existing ground floor unit is proposed to be upgraded, through replacement of the rear timber windows with UPVC windows to improve the sustainability of the unit, it is considered that the unit as existing has been previously upgraded, and no further sustainable upgrades are proposed as the majority of the proposed alterations are internal fitting out to suit the café use. It is proposed that new light fittings and kitchen appliances will be low energy use where possible, and new electrical sockets will be raised to be 450mm minimum from the floor.

With reference to Local Plan policy DM19, please refer to the separate Extraction Flue Statement, which due to the type and nature of cooking within cafés, consultation companies have considered the proposal to have minimal impact on the air quality of the area. Whilst this proposal is near to other A3 restaurant and café units, the nature of the building and surrounding building layouts, and type of cooking in cafés, this proposal would not significantly reduce air quality in combination with the cumulative effect of other developments already permitted.

Foul drainage and Rainwater disposal:

There are two existing foul drainage outlets on site to the rear of the property connected to the mains foul sewer. It is proposed to retain the existing connections of the two WCs and their hand basins, and also the foul drainage point in the yard, which provides the foul drainage connection from the existing kitchen. There are no changes proposed to the final foul outlets.

It is considered that there will be a minor increase in foul drainage disposal due to the Change of Use, however the previous use was also commercial, and did not experience any issues with their foul drainage disposal. It is considered due to the nature of proposed use and the existing foul drainage, that the COU and increase will not cause detrimental harm or issues with the existing foul drainage disposal system.

Rainwater disposal remains as existing, no external changes to the existing roof, yard surface finish or methods of disposal of surface water.

Flood Risk Assessment

Please refer to separate flood risk assessment.

Bin storage

Bin storage has previously been located in the rear yard with bin bags stored in general waste bins, then bags moved to the highway pavement on collection day for private collection. It is proposed to utilise a similar system for this proposal. One 360L bin for refuse bag storage and one 360L bin for recycling bag storage are to be located in the rear yard, for ease of disposal from the kitchen, then the individual bags are moved to the highway pavement on collection day, privately collected due to being a commercial facility, as before.

Due to proposals likely to have a higher amount of refuse, the tenants will be liable for arranging more frequent private collections of their refuse to suit their turnover, estimated to require 3 collections per week due to size of cafe with an average of 2 bags of refuse and 1-2 bags of recycling generated per day. There is on street parking for collection vehicles to use.

Impact upon Wildlife, Ecology and Trees

The proposed scheme will have minimum negative impact on the site due to the existing site having little ecological value, consisting of building and a hardstanding small yard. There are no trees on the site, and as there are no extensions proposed there is no impact on the neighbouring trees. The proposed extraction system is for a low odour type of cooking, which is usual with café type menus, therefore it is considered that the flue will have little to no impact on the ecology of the surrounding area, as it is dispelling low odour, low grease air. There is a larger existing extractor for Zizzis to the West of the site adjacent to the site boundary that is considered to have far greater impact compared to this proposal, due to the type of cooking in the adjacent unit.

CIL:

The proposed Change of Use does not increase the footprint of the existing unit. The proposal also falls into 'All other chargeable developments' which incurs a £0 CIL charge.

Previous leaseholder:

Please note that whilst the Land Registry refers to there being a leaseholder, title BK435633, this lease expired on 29-09-2017 and therefore this lease is no longer valid and no notification under Certificate B is required. Land Registry title BK170043.

Conclusion:

In the policy context it is considered that this proposal is consistent with relevant policies of the Local Plan, and supplementary planning documents including Highways requirements, and government legislation set out in the NPPF.

The proposal scheme is to improve the usability and flexibility of occupancy of this now empty unit, and to assist with the sustainable continued use of the unit, providing another commercial use option for the unit, which has been on the market for lease since the previous tenants vacated at the end of their agreed lease. It is considered that the proposal is modest, and suitable for this location in the town centre. The Change of Use class is not detrimental to the surrounding area that is of mixed use, and the lower intensity use due to the size of the unit restrains impact on the surrounding upper floor residents.

The design of the scheme including minor external alterations to paint the façade and repair works have been carefully considered in order to enhance the appearance of the building and will significantly improve the appearance of the unit and bring back into use an empty unit reinvigorating the streetscene. The new commercial uses opposite and residential uses near by will benefit from the wider range and option of facilities available in the area.

We trust that this Planning Design and Access Statement demonstrates that the proposed scheme is suitable for this property, is in compliance with planning policy requirements, and the proposals will bring a welcome revitalisation to this particular unit on the streetscene.