

13 July 2018

To all Members of the Planning Applications Committee
Reading Borough Council
Civic Offices
Bridge Street
Reading
RG1 2LU

Dear Councillor

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE 18 JULY 2018
ITEM 8 – SOUTH COURT, BROAD STREET MALL, BROAD STREET, READING
APPLICATION NO. 180800

I am writing to you regarding our application for temporary planning permission for a three storey Urban Market, due to be considered by the Committee on 18 July 2018.

As background, we acquired Broad Street Mall in August 2015 and we have invested in the region of £3 million in refurbishing and upgrading the existing centre. We have also spent around £2 million upgrading the Fountain House offices on Queens Walk. We bought Broad Street Mall as a long term investment. We regard it as a key part of Reading town centre providing local shops and services and leisure uses to compliment the town centre's attractiveness.

The proposals for a temporary Urban Market are a key aspect in regenerating Broad Street Mall and the Hosier Street area enhancing footfall and repositioning the centre to provide a distinct offer to compete with the likes of Bracknell, Oxford and Slough who have ambitious town centre improvement programmes. This will constitute a further £1 million investment and catalyst for our wider masterplan vision for substantial further development.

You may recall you granted consent for a similar proposal following the receipt of further information to clarify the nature of the intended uses on 17 January 2018 (Ref. 171230/FUL).

I wanted to take this opportunity to reassure you on specific aspects of the proposal to address some concerns raised in the officers' report to Committee, as follows: -

1. Since our initial planning permission was granted in January 2018 we have received significant interest and enthusiasm from local traders and retailers in taking space in the proposals including from Warings Bakery, Tilehurst Village Butchers, Vintage Roots, Mortimer Chocolate, Village Made Cheese, Rebel Rides, Tamp Culture and a number of barbers and hair dressers.
2. Fundamentally the Urban Market is a Class A1 retail proposal where we expect the overwhelming proportion of uses to be retail sales. To compliment these independent traders we are seeking an element of Class A3 restaurant and A4 drinking establishment to encourage shoppers to dwell; the concept being to provide an experience for an afternoon out where you might eat, drink and shop, all in the town centre.



Moorgarth

3. We do not propose a "vertical drinking establishment". We propose a vibrant mix of local independent retailers and traders who would occupy small outlets created by converting and adapting shipping containers. We proposed to restrict any Class A4 drinking establishment use to be located only on the second floor level which is clearly contained, identifiable and distinct from the ground floor shopping centre entrance and Hosier Street. This comprises a minority of the scheme (34% by area) of approximately 81 sq.m. However, we do anticipate Class A1 retail use on the second floor as well.
4. We have supported the Council in addressing anti-social behaviour issues in this area including by acquiring the former Eva's nightclub and reaching agreement to terminate the lease and close the premises. We have made an application to demolish the nightclub which we intend to carry out once we have secured your approval to do so.
5. The Urban Market is proposed to be managed by our team who run Broad Street Mall. We want to provide activity and generate footfall to enliven this part of the town centre in a safe and outward facing environment. It is intended as a wide retail offer and not focussed on drinking. We have already prepared a management and operations plan which has been submitted to the Council for approval under the January 2018 permission.
6. I am enclosing a copy of the computer visualisation that we have produced (included in the officer's report at paragraph 6.22) showing the frontage to Hosier Street. We feel this is inviting, permeable and outward looking and provides surveillance to the street. It is in our interests as owners and operators of Broad Street Mall to encourage footfall on Hosier Street and draw people into the Mall.

We are investing in Reading and to progress our plans for the improvement of Broad Street Mall and its environs working in partnership with the Council.

I hope that you can support our application for temporary consent so that we can continue this programme enlivening, enhancing and diversifying the town centre retail offer.

Yours faithfully

pp. S. Jones

Gary Lewis
Managing Director
Moorgarth Group Limited

Enc.