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Alison Amoah
Reading Borough Council
Planning Applications Team

By email to Alison.amoah@reading.gov.uk

Dear Alison

180698 – Change of Use at 488a Basingstoke Road

I have seen the representation from JLL for Procter and Gamble submitted to RBC, raising concerns about my clients proposed COU, as set out in Application ref 180698.

On the substantive point (Health and Safety issues) I understand that you are undertaking the relevant consultations, and the responses will be taken into account in any decision.

On other points raised, the following will I hope assist.

1. The property has been vacant for over a year following Ultima's relocation, without market interest. However, prior to that, it was not a 'lightly used warehouse/ office', but a busy B1 use with around 120 employees on site during the working week.
2. The proposed change of use will reduce the numbers of permanent/regular on-site staff. On around 60 days of the year The Family Church will hold services/events which will attract larger attendance, but these will be at times that the majority of other activities will not be taking place (i.e. weekends and Bank Holidays).
3. Numbers who might attend on other occasions as a result of hiring out the space for community use is uncertain but will not exceed any licence granted. The café use is anticipated to be mainly for those on the site for other activities, plus people in the immediate local area. It does not have a prominent street frontage so is unlikely to attract passing traffic.

4. No one will be resident on the site overnight. At all times when the building is open, on site facilities management will be in place to ensure supervision and neighbourly behaviour. The security gates will be locked at all other times.
5. My clients appreciate Procter and Gamble's points about noisy activities on their own site and will proceed on a caveat emptor basis. As the Church's management team have been resident on the site for around 6 months, they are aware of the situation, and do not foresee any conflicts. They certainly have no wish to restrict any adjacent business use. It is noted that some of the buildings where diverse employment activities take place within the neighbouring site are a similar distance from the storage tanks.
6. On the safety issues we must await consultee responses. I have however already confirmed to the Council that no bonfires, fireworks or barbeques are proposed within the site/outside the building, and that this could be controlled by a Condition if necessary. As far as I am aware there were no such limitations (or on smoking) on the previous use. I therefore cannot see that any risk of conflict on safety grounds is increased over the existing use.
7. My client intends to be a good neighbour, and to exercise control over all users and visitors to its premises. It is also directly involved in supporting employment and other training, providing space for small business and developing community well-being, all of which are positive benefits which generally support local employment.
8. On the Policy issues – RBC will take a view on the relative benefits and harm in the planning balance. As you will have seen in submissions, I consider that the use proposed brings forward significant benefits. The most recent Employment Study indeed concluded that the application site was not essential to the continued success of the wider employment area.

Please take these comments into account in your determination of the application.

Yours sincerely

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Red Kite Development Consultancy