

Planning
Reading Borough Council
Civic Offices
Bridge Street
Reading
RG1 2LU

Planning Application by Cubico Bathrooms

Unit 2, Reading Trading Centre, Rose Kiln Lane, Reading, RG2 0JZ

Johnson Mowat Planning and Development Consultants acts for Cubico Bathrooms (Cubico) which is the perspective tenant of the above unit.

Background

Cubico is the market-leading bathroom company supplying a range of high-spec products including baths, showers, taps and toilets. With an emphasis on high quality and low cost, Cubico provides the UK's bathroom trade with a high quality product and unparalleled customer service.

Cubico is therefore looking to occupy Unit 2 for the purposes of storage and trade. Cubico will supply both independent retailers and traders with a huge choice of bathroom products. Although sales can be made to visiting members of the public, these would be ancillary to the level of trade sales.

Planning permission 150936, was granted for the following development at the adjacent until Unit 1 for:-

"Change of use to allow storage, distribution and sale of hard wall and floor finishes and associated products and/or Class B8 use with ancillary trade counter (sui generis)."

The acceptability of ancillary retailing within one of the units has therefore already been established.

The current application seeks a permission relating to unit 2 which would include *"the display and sale of bathroom fittings, equipment and ancillary productions or any use within B8 use class, with ancillary trade counter (sui generis)."*

In addition, a new consent specific to Unit 2 would provide certainty for both the applicant and local planning authority that the proposed use is specifically referenced within the 'Description of Development' within the planning permission. This would address any ambiguity over the precise Use Class in which a trade warehouse, with ancillary sales to the public, sits.

The Application Site

The application site comprises a 382 sq. m (4,115 sq ft) single storey open floorplate building sited within the Reading Trade Centre.

There are 8 parking spaces, adjacent to the unit with HGV access.

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Other occupiers at Reading Trade Centre are Topps Tiles and Truemans.

The Proposed Operation

The application seeks planning permission for the following consent:-

“The display and sale of bathroom fittings, equipment and ancillary productions or any use within B8 use class, with ancillary trade counter (sui generis).”

The submitted floor plan shows floor area and layout of the unit.

Unlike other operations **full room-sets** cannot be readily listed or shown in catalogues, or within small display areas to the front of the warehouse. The appearance of bathrooms can often only be appreciated as full room-sets when shown covering a large display area. These are bulky goods; and our experience suggests that customers are normally unwilling to make a purchase without a physical viewing. This alone provides the main justification for floorspace available for the display of products.

Cubico stresses that the larger display area is principally for the benefit of our trade customer, however it will also provide a welcoming environment for a very small number of private customers to compare and contrast their products.

Unit 2 would carry high stock levels, to provide an ‘on demand’ supply for customers. Cubico must be located in a trade park environment due to the nature of their operation and the fact that the vast majority of their clients are tradespeople who have the option of also linking trips so as to benefit from products offered by neighbouring premises.

Clearly, the bulky nature of a bathroom supplier means that a large open plan warehousing is required, with parking being available immediately outside the unit. An industrial location is the most appropriate location for such a use as a town centre location would be unsuitable and undesirable. Moreover, the proposed use would complement the other trade warehouse uses within the immediate vicinity.

Cubico’s occupation of Unit 2 is anticipated to result in the initial creation of approximately four jobs. All employees will be located permanently at the warehouse. This level of employment is similar, or greater, than that which might be expected from alternative Class B uses.

The hours of operation of the Unit are proposed to be 08.00 to 17.00 (Monday to Friday), 09.00 to 17.00 (Saturday) and 10.00 to 16.00 (Sunday).

Planning Policy

National planning policy is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (2012). The Framework sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development and seeks to build a strong, competitive economy, with §19 of the Framework stating:-

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“The Government is committed to ensuring that the planning system does everything it can to support sustainable economic growth. Planning should operate to encourage and not act as an impediment to sustainable growth.”

It is therefore requires that “significant weight” should be placed on the need to support economic growth, with §20 requiring that:-

“To help achieve economic growth, local planning authorities should plan proactively to meet the development needs of business.”

At a local level, the Local Plan for Reading the Reading Borough Local Development Framework is made up of the Core Strategy, Reading Central Area Action Plan, Site and Detailed Policies and the Proposals Map.

Core Strategy policy CS10 ‘Location of Employment Development’ sets out that *“other major employment uses, including industrial and storage and distribution will be located in the A33 corridor or in the Core Employment Areas”*.

Sites and Detailed Policies Document SD1 sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Therefore, as Cubico’s operation is a genuine hub for the supply of bathroom products, we conclude that the proposed use is also compatible with local planning policy.

Conclusions

The intended use of the application property is as a hub supplying independent bathroom retailers and tradesmen throughout Reading, Berkshire and the south east of England. As such, it falls to be considered as a B8 use, but requires a display area and an ancillary trade counter (sui generis).

The proposed use is fully compatible with the Reading Trading Centre and would complement existing occupiers.

The proposal would create 4 full time jobs and contribute towards job creation and sustainable economic development as required by both national and local planning policy.

The development is in accordance with the requirements of the Framework and the Development Plan, and it can be concluded that there are no material considerations that indicate it should be determined otherwise.

Supporting Plans

Supporting Plans include:-

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- Site Location and Block Plan;
- Elevations – 13/102;
- Existing Floor Plan – 10/202;
- Site Plan – 200;
- Proposed Floor Plan;
- Boundary Plan – 2000; and
- Site Brochure.

We therefore respectfully request that planning permission be granted.

Should you require any further information, please feel free to give me a call.

Yours faithfully,

Richard Mowat

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