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JR Properties

2 Bedford Road, Reading, RG1 7HS

Retail Sequential Assessment



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Full Planning Application to Reading Borough Council for the demolition of the former Royal Public House and erection of a part 5 storey building which would provide a new unit (Use Class A1/A2/A3) at ground floor and 6 self-contained flats (Use Class C3)

Our REF: APA/JRPRO/16/1448

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Sequential Assessment has been prepared in support of the planning application for the demolition of the former Royal Public House, 2 Bedford Road, Reading, RG1 7HS and the erection of a 5 storey building which would provide a new unit (Use Class A1/A2/A3) at ground floor which would be 106 square metres and 6 self-contained flats (Use Class C3) above.

2.0 POLICY BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Core Strategy (adopted in January 2008 and amended in January 2015), the Reading Central Area Action Plan (2009), the Submission Draft Reading Borough Local Plan (March 2018) and the National Planning Policy Framework all require that Local Planning Authorities apply a sequential test when determining planning applications for main town centre uses which are not located within an identified centre or in accordance with an up-to-date Local Plan.
- 2.2 In this case, the ground floor unit would be a main town centre use. As set out in paragraph 24 of the Framework the sequential tests requires *'applications for main town centre uses to be located in town centres, then in edge of centre locations and only if suitable sites are not available should out of centre sites be considered'*. The Framework defines edge of centre as *'a location that is well connected and up to 300 metres of a town centre boundary'*. The Application Site is situated approximately 260m to the east of the Primary Shopping Area which is below the threshold and furthermore the two are visual and physical well connected by Oxford Road. Thus, the Application Site is considered to be edge of centre.
- 2.3 The Framework goes on to state that preference should be given to sites which are accessible and well connected to the town centre. The Application Site is within walking distance of the town centre and it is highly accessible given its proximity to Reading West train station and a number of bus stops which provide reliable and frequent connections in and around Reading and to locations further afield such as London.

3.0 PURPOSE OF THE GROUND FLOOR USE

- 3.1 The proposed ground floor unit would serve the day-to-day needs of those who reside in the immediate surrounding area, including the residential units situated on the upper floors. Furthermore, it is also considered that given the Application Sites edge of centre

location on a main route into the town centre it will benefit from an element of passing trade. The proposed floorspace falls below the threshold for requiring a Retail Impact Assessment as set out in the Submission Draft Reading Borough Local Plan (2018) and paragraph 26 of the Framework. Nevertheless, the proposal is not seeking to compete with or draw trade from the Primary Shopping Area.

3.2 In addition, the applicant is proposing the A1/A2/A3 use at ground floor because it would provide an active frontage on to Bedford Road and Oxford Road. This is in accordance with both Policy RC5 (Design in the Centre) of Reading Central Area Action Plan (2009) and Policy CR2 (Design in Central Reading) of the Submission Draft Reading Borough Local Plan (2018) which require proposals in Reading Town Centre to provide active frontages that engage with the street at lower levels.

3.3 For the reasons stated, the proposed Part A element of the development is wholly ancillary and incidental to the primary residential proposal and is not, therefore, market-/operator-led and is not responding to a specific user demand. It is unlikely therefore to attract a user that would otherwise locate in the Town Centre.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

4.1 The Framework requires that when applying the sequential test, Applicants and Local Planning Authorities should demonstrate flexibility on issues such as format and scale. It was agreed during the pre-application meeting on 20th February 2018 that it would be appropriate to assess Reading Primary Shopping Area as part of the Sequential Assessment given that it is an identified Regional Centre.

4.2 Accordingly, an assessment has been carried out to establish if there are any suitable and available sites or properties in the identified centre that could reasonably accommodate the proposed development. The proposed development is for 106 squares metres of a main town centre use at ground floor. Therefore it is considered appropriate and proportionate to only assess properties which are available and provide 75 – 150 square metres of floor space at ground floor level.

4.3 In order to establish any sequentially preferable locations which meet the criteria outlined above, searches were carried out on Rightmove and Propertylink, both of which include properties and sites which are for sale/to let by a wide range of local and national agents. The assessment was carried out in May 2018 and it's important to recognise that

in a centre such as Reading there is a high turnover of properties and this assessment can therefore only provide a snapshot in time.

5.0 ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The research identified 2 available units which meet the identified criteria set out in paragraph 3.2. As assessment of those properties is set out in the table below.

Location	Assessment
West Street (Chicken Ranch)	The ground floor unit only has planning permission for A3/A5 uses. The proposal is for A1/A2 and A3 uses and therefore the property is not suitable.
Unit 64 Broad Street Mall	The A1 unit provides 123 -157 square metres of floor space. It does not however have planning permission for an A2/A3 use and therefore it is not appropriate.

- 5.2 The above table demonstrates that no sequentially preferable sites have been identified which could reasonably accommodate the proposed development.

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 In summary, the methodology of the sequential assessment sought to provide flexibility in terms of format and scale in accordance with the Framework. It would appear from the assessment that there are no sequentially preferably sites, therefore the proposal complies with local and national planning policies and moreover preference should be given to the Application Site because it is accessible and well connected to the town centre. Therefore the proposed development should be supported.



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