

**PLANNING STATEMENT REGARDING 51 VASTERN ROAD RG1 8DJ
including Design and Access statements and supplementary answers
to Planning Application Form questions Reference PP-06719038**

14.02.2108

On behalf of the Freeholder:

David Herbert of Ardross Cottage, Checkendon, RG8 0SX

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of the freeholder David Herbert to support Planning Application **PP-06719038** concerning the ground floor unit at 51 Vastern Road, Reading RG1 8DJ for:

- a change of use class of the ground floor unit from a shop and premises (A1) to a Sui Generis class for use as an MP's constituency office, surgery and occasional community meeting facility for a temporary period of four years and six months,
- changes to external signage to indicate the new use.

Should the application be successful, the intention is to lease the ground floor to Matt Rodda MP for Reading East for use as above.

1.2 The site is located on the corner of Vastern and Lynmouth Roads within Reading's Central Area, but just outside the Reading Station Area. It is at the end of a terrace of residential houses in Vastern Road.

1.3 David Herbert is the freeholder for the whole building and site. The ground floor has been a restaurant or food shop for 20+ years. In recent times, until November 2017 the ground floor unit was leased and acted as a hot and cold sandwich shop with an associated kitchen and office. The 125 year lease on the maisonette above (postal address 51A Vastern Road) on the building's first and second floors is held by David Herbert and Caroline Herbert. It is sublet on shorter terms as a residential unit, and is and will remain separate, with no shared entrances, and is occupied. There is no basement.

- 1.4 See attached Figure 1 Location plan, Figure 2 Site/Block plan, Figures 3A, B & C being photographs of the building, Figure 4 current floorplan (at a scale of approximately 1:58) and Figure 5 the front elevation.
- 1.5 The contractor for the Parliamentary Security Department has assessed the ground floor unit and environs, stated that it is suitable for the functions described, and will supply and fit a number of security features.
- 1.6 In this document, the terms used have the following meanings:
- 'site' – the building plus front garden and rear parking and bin areas
 - 'unit' – a distinguishable separate part of the building, being either the ground floor unit or the maisonette.
 - 'ground floor unit' - the combination of rooms on the ground floor which are the principal subject of the application.

2. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Question 3: Description of the proposal as set out in Application Form.

This is an application for:

- a change of use from a shop and premises to Sui Generis class for use as an MP's constituency office, surgery and occasional community meeting facility for a temporary period of four years and six months, or until notice given directly or authorised by the MP expires, whichever is the shorter.
- external signage to replace the current front signage; to show that these are office and surgery premises for Matt Rodda,

The proposed changes are shown in the attached plans and floorplans - Figures 4 – 8.

An initial fit out will be carried out before occupation to bring the unit up to an appropriate modern standard for the activities envisaged, including installation of:

- security features recommended by the Parliamentary Security Dept:
 - external security lights over front and rear doors, downward pointing and cowled to illuminate each door and the immediate ground,
 - strengthened front and rear door locks and hinges,
 - window security strengthening film,

- intruder alarm,
- smoke alarms,
- emergency lighting,
- modern office lighting,
- widening of an internal doorway to improve internal access.

Fireproofing to 1 hour standard between the ground and first floor is already installed.

This is a relatively small site: 143 sq m total external and internal, of which the ground floor gross internal area is 50 sq m, a figure which includes the 6 sq m of the street entrance doorway and stairwell of the maisonette above (51A) and which is inaccessible from the ground floor unit.

The proposed fit out will retain the current shop appearance and frontage, and similar but smaller signage.

The proposed uses for the ground floor unit are:

- office accommodation for 4 or 5 constituency staff researching and responding to (principally Reading East constituents') requests via phone and email,
- MP surgeries – usually with prearranged appointments for individual constituents, with a receptionist and waiting area,
- part time as an information centre, manned by a volunteer,
- as an occasional meeting place for groups, either for meeting with Matt Rodda, or as a free meeting place for local community groups
- as a training facility for people on placement – work & research experience and training for students, volunteers and interns.

For planning purposes, **the key features** are the **Change of Use**, the **signage**, and the **external security lighting**.

3. PLANNING STATEMENT - POLICIES & DOCUMENTS

3.1 Proposed Change of Use:

This application is for a change of use of the ground floor unit to Sui Generis, acknowledging the nature of the unique combination of activities intended to be carried out. This was recognised by RBC's Planning Dept in its pre-application advice given on 12.02.2018 Reference 180020.

3.2 Planning Appraisal inc aspects of Design and Access

51 Vastern Road lies within Reading's Central Area, near the north side of the Station, the detailed **RCAAP Proposals Maps 2009** show that it is adjacent to but not within the Central and Office Cores, and immediately adjacent to but not within the RC1g Station/River Major Opportunity area.

51 Vastern Road is at the extreme south-eastern tip of an area around Caversham Road and Vastern Road that is largely residential but also comprises a mix of small shops, offices, cafés, and a school. It is at the end of a terrace of residential houses in Vastern Road, and Nos. 1, 3 and 5 Lynmouth Road, the first building round the corner, is an antiques shop. As it is not within any of the core areas, there appear to be few pieces of direct policy as to what uses could and could not be permitted.

The guidance in the **RCAAP 2009** regarding the immediately adjacent **RC1g Riverside** area states: "The main use of the site should be residential, although some small-scale offices.... will also be appropriate."

This indicates that a mix of functions is expected in the immediate neighbourhood.

As the site is not within any of the core centres, and being relatively small with proposed changes that will retain the shop appearance and frontage, there appear to be few other policies that are directly relevant to the proposed change of use.

However the proposed change of use can be reviewed against the general vision and objectives that inform the RBC documents.

3.2.1 Serving the residents/constituents

RCAAP Introduction 1.2 "...to provide the highest quality services and

facilities for all who live in, work in and visit Reading; and to maintain and improve quality of life for everyone. Significant change in the centre will be vital in taking the centre to this next level.”

Draft RBLP Objective 2.2.2.1 “Strengthen the role of ...central Reading... providing an accessible focus for ...meeting the needs of residents, workers, in Reading Borough, and the wider area;”

The presence of an MP and staff at an accessible location in central Reading will complement the services already available from the Civic Centre, Citizens Advice Bureau and Central Library, all also located in the Central Area, to serve the constituents of Reading East. It is in alignment with **RCAAP 1.2** and **Draft RBLP Objectives 2.2.2.1** for the Central Area.

3.2.2 Access transport

All the Central Area lies within the Reading East constituency, and 51 Vastern Road is well placed to service constituents from all parts of Reading East.

The site is only 240m from bus stops at Swansea Rd servicing both North (Caversham) and South Reading, and is only 240 m from bus stops at the Station northside for connection through to most other bus routes in, out and around Reading including to the Park & Ride systems and the potential Mass Rapid Transport system from Thames Valley Park. These meet the guideline distances of less than 400m in **Draft RBLP CC6 4.1.27**

Also, it is only 300m from the north entrance to the station, serving rail commuters returning from London (Paddington, Waterloo and in the future Crossrail), Oxford and Basingstoke.

Additionally 51 Vastern Road provides facilities to staff and visitors arriving by car and bicycle.

3.2.4 Access statement

Currently the front and rear doors both have manifestation and clear openings of 780mm. The route from the rear parking to the rear door is via a 1.4m sidepath with 1.25m minimum clearway. These measurements meet the minimum requirements for wheelchair access set out in **Building Regulations 2010 Approved Document M**. It is anticipated that a second stage of works will be scheduled to improve this access & usability.

3.2.5 Design statement

Little external change is proposed – a change of signage and the addition of 2 security lights over each of the front and rear doors - see below the supplementary answer to Question 9 – Materials, and Figures 6, 7A and 8.

The appearance and character of the ground floor unit and frontage will be retained, and the exterior lighting and other internal fit-out work - strengthened door locks and hinges, window security film and intruder alarm – will aid crime prevention. These changes are aligned with and support **RCAAP 2009 Policy RC5.**

4. SUPPLEMENTARY ANSWERS TO APPLICATION FORM QUESTIONS

Question 7: Waste storage and collection

Figure 6 shows the current locations for bin storage and collection, each being 1.2m x 0.8m suitable for 1 general and 1 recycling bin.

Question 8: Authority Employee/Member

In addition to the responses given, we confirm that Matt Rodda MP, the anticipated tenant for the Ground Floor Unit, is also currently an elected Councillor for Reading Borough Council's Katesgrove Ward.

Question: 9 Materials

Walls: Currently the frontage to Vastern Road has a number of signs in dark red and gold advertising the sandwich shop. See Figures 3A and 4.

The intention is to replace the current external signage with new signage indicating that this is the constituency office for Matt Rodda MP.

In September 1990 Application 901064 for a New shopfront, and Application 900289 for Spot lit signage were permitted, although in practice there is no illumination of current signage.

If this application is successful, the intention is to preserve the shop-type frontage with its corner shop appearance, and to replace the signs by ones in red and white – see the attached **Figure 8 Proposed Front Elevation**, thereby meeting **RBCS 2015 CS7**.

The translucent film in the larger front windows will be removed and replaced by ones occupying one half of each top window, white text on a red background. The lower edge will be 2.00m above floor level, 2.2m above street/ground level - i.e. above eye level for most people - and will not obstruct visibility out or in, thereby satisfying **RBSDP 2015 DM23**.

The current size large size wall sign will be taken down and replaced by a smaller one approx. 1.5m x 0.6m which will not extend above the lower edge of the 1st floor windows, again in white text on a red background. Other current signs will be removed. See Figure 8.

The new signage will be of materials, size, lettering and location satisfying

the guidance for various Classes (2(B), 5 or 13) of Advertisements which are normally permitted as published in:

Department of (now Ministry of Housing,) Communities and Local Government: Outdoor Advertisements and Signs June 2007.

The window display will provide an active street frontage, and the signs meet the requirements of **RBSDP 2015 DM22 and 23**.

See Figure 8 for details.

External Lighting: The security lights over the front and rear doors will be downward pointing and cowled to illuminate each door and the immediate ground area. The adjustment of these to minimise light spillage will be carried out as part of the fitting, particularly where the rear door is overseen by first floor back windows of both 51 and 49 Vastern Road. Figures 6 and 7 show indicative locations of the lights.

Question 10: Cycle and Car Parking

The areas for parking 2 cycles and parking 1 car are shown in schematic diagram Figure 6. This is not new provision.

Question 11: Foul sewage

The initial fit out will make no change to connections to the foul waste sewers.

In all probability any subsequent work will similarly make no changes, but this will be examined again and guidance and permission sought if such changes are being considered.

Question 12: Flood risk and SUDS

RBC SFRA Jun 2017 App C Pts 1 & 2 show that the principal source of risk of flooding at 51 Vastern Road is from river overflow, rather than from surface water flooding, and that according to NPPF data the site is in a **Flood Risk 3a zone**, with a greater than 1% probability of flooding in any one year.

Within the context of flooding the key issues for the site are:

- Change of Use from A1 – Sui Generis

- change of external signage
- addition of external security lights over front and rear doors.

As these will not increase the size of the building, and making only some minor alterations to the external appearance, then under:

**Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government guidance
NPPF PPG on the gov.uk website Para 046 Ref ID: 7-046-20140306**

the work at 51 Vastern Rd constitutes a '**minor development**'.

RBC SFRA Jun 2017 main Table 11.1 shows that both the current Use class (A1 take away sandwich shop) and the target Change of Use class (Sui Generis – with a mix of professional services, office and assemblies) put 51 Vastern Rd into the flood risk '**less vulnerable**' class.

Table 11.2 in the same document then shows that for '**less vulnerable**' sites in **Zone 3a** then **development is appropriate**.

The source of this, Table 3 in **NPPF PPG** on the gov.uk website **Para 067 Reference ID: 7-067-20140306**, states in the Notes to Table 3 that:

'Sequential and Exception Tests do not need to be applied to minor developments and changes of use...'

In summary, the proposed Change of Use and initial fit out will make no change to any surface water run-off arrangements, will not reduce the capacity of the flood plain to store floodwater, impede the flow of floodwater or in any way increase the risks to life and property arising from flooding, and are therefore compliant with **RBCS Policy CS35: Flooding** and under NPPF PPG guidance it is **appropriate to undertake carry out this minor development** without further examination of the flood risks.

RBC SFRA Jun 2017 App C Pt 2 shows 51 Vastern Rd to be in a zone of 1 in 1,000 probability of rain originated flooding in any one year. Regarding drainage, this is a minor development and involves no new rain capture and drainage or connection arrangements. The introduction of **SUDS** is therefore not applicable.

The current surface water handling system – gutters, downpipes, drains and gravel sections adjacent to tarmac areas – will be regularly maintained.

Question 13: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation Not applicable.

Question 14: Existing use

51 Vastern Road is adjacent to a terraced residence in Vastern Road, and to a shop in Lynmouth Road. The change of activity from hot and cold sandwich shop to the new Sui Generis activity will result in reduced food odours and waste, while retaining the shop-front appearance of the building thereby causing little visible change to the area..

Question 15: Trees and hedges

There are two pavement street trees nearby on Vastern Road, one 15m away and the other 20m. They are not close to any access to the site and will not be affected.

Question 16: Trade effluent and Waste

The change of activity from sandwich shop to the new Sui Generis activity will result in reduced food waste.

Question 17: Residential units

Not relevant.

Question 18: Non-residential floorspace.

No change in floorspace. Note the GIA of the ground floor is 50 sq m, of which 6 sq m is the access way to the maisonette above, and is completely separate and accessible only from the street outside, and constitutes part of the maisonette.

Question 19: Employment

The employees on-site will rise from the current 0 to 4. These employees will be moving from a temporary site in the central core to this site.

Question 20: Use and Hours of opening

In more detail the proposed uses and opening hours for the unit are:

- office accommodation for 4 or 5 constituency staff researching and responding to (principally Reading East constituents') requests via

phone and email, in normal working hours: within the region 08.00 – 18:30hrs of Mon - Fri;

- MP surgeries – (in normal working hours) usually with prearranged appointments for individual constituents, with a receptionist and waiting area, and offering easy access by public transport and alternatively parking facilities for bicycles and cars. These sessions are arranged at times often set by the gaps available from Parliamentary duties. Currently Matt Rodda holds surgeries in a number of places throughout the constituency and while Vastern Road will not be used on a daily or even weekly basis for this, the premises will provide a public Central Reading focal point for the MP's activities;
- part time as an information centre, manned by a volunteer. The full nature of this is to be determined, but it is likely to be for 2 hour periods during normal working days;
- as an occasional meeting place for groups, either for meeting with Matt Rodda, or as a free meeting place for local community groups, with a member of staff or separate volunteer in attendance. These are likely to be evening meetings within the region 18:30 – 22:00hrs;
- as a training facility for people on placement – work and research experience and training for students, volunteers and interns, during normal working hours.

While the norm will be normal office hours, there will be occasions when late working is required.

Question 21: Site area.

The maisonette has the use of a further parking space, at the end of the site furthest from Vastern Road.

Question 22: Processes

No further comment.

Question 23 Hazardous substances.

At this point no use of hazardous substances is foreseen.

Should any hazardous substances arise they will be handled and disposed of as recommended by the manufacturer/supplier in-line with RBC guidance. Copier/printer toner supplies will be recycled as recommended by the

manufacturer/supplier.

Question 24: Site visibility and visits. No further comment.

Question 25: Certificate A. A pdf of a signed Certificate A is attached. The original is available if required.

Question 26: Declaration. A pdf of a signed Declaration is attached. The original is available if required.

5. SUMMARY

The applicant believes that the proposed change of use for Ground Floor 51 Vastern Road, and its occupation by Reading East's MP and constituency staff would provide facilities in-line with and enhancing the other civic services in the Central Area, would not be materially detrimental to the amenities of occupiers of nearby properties, and would be much in-line with the general character of its current and future immediate surroundings.

6. REFERENCES

R.1 Current documents:

Reading Centre Area Action Plan (**RCAAP**) Adopted 2009 and Appendix with Proposals Map 2009

Reading Borough: Core Strategy (**RBCS**) with alteration Adopted 27.01.2015

Reading Borough: Sites & Detailed Policies Document (**RBSDP**) 27.01.2015
Proposals Maps Appendices

Reading Borough: Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (**SFRA**) Jun & Dec 2017

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government guidance NPPF PPG on the gov.uk website

Department of (now Ministry of Housing,) Communities and Local Government: Outdoor Advertisements and Signs June 2007.

R.2 Incoming documents:

Draft Reading Borough Local Plan (**RBLP**) May 2017 & Draft Proposals Maps April 2017

7. ATTACHED DOCUMENTS

Document 1: This Planning Statement including Planning statement proper, reviewing proposals against Policies, brief Design & Access statements, Flood risk statement, SUDS declaration, and supplements to answers to Questions.

Document 2: Electronically Signed CIL declaration

Document 3: Signed Ownership Cert A declaration

Document 4: Signed Declaration

Figure 1 Plan: Site location plan 1:1250

Figure 2 Plan: Site block plan 1:200

Figure 3A Photo: Front view with current signage

Figure 3B Photo: Side view

Figure 3C Photo: Rear view

Figure 4 Plan: Outline of current floorplan arrangements (1:57)

Figure 5 Plan: Front elevation and current signage

Figure 6 Plan: Site plan 1:200 with current cycle and car parking, bin arrangements, and proposed locations for security lights

Figure 7A/7B Plans: Elevation (1:20) of front/rear door showing proposed location of security lights

Figure 8 Plan: Front elevation (1:50) showing proposed signage and security lights.