

**PLANNING APPLICATION FOR THE DEMOLITION
OF AN EXISTING BUILDING AND THE ERECTION
OF A INDUSTRIAL UNIT WITH ASSOCIATED
PARKING AND HARDSTANDING**

**PLANNING, DESIGN & ACCESS
STATEMENT**

ONE DARWIN CLOSE READING RG2 0TB

ON BEHALF OF THE WHITE PARTNERSHIP

**TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (AS AMENDED)
PLANNING AND COMPULSORY PURCHASE ACT 2004**

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been produced on behalf of The White Partnership in support of a planning application at One Darwin Close, Reading.
- 1.2 The application is for the erection of a warehouse building with ancillary office space following the demolition of the existing building. The last use for the site was a laundry business, the buildings are passed their best and do not provide flexible space, which could accommodate a light industrial use with ancillary office space.
- 1.3 The statement is accompanied by the following documents alongside the relevant fee of £11,935 and the application forms.
- Location plan
 - Existing and proposed layout plans
 - Existing and proposed elevation plans
 - Existing drainage plan
 - Roof layout plan
 - Cross section plan
 - Air Quality Assessment produced by Aether
 - Drainage Strategy produced by Stilwell Partnership
 - Ecology Appraisal produced by WYG
 - Energy and Sustainability Assessment produced by Stilwell Partnership
 - Ground Conditions Assessment produced by Patrick Parsons
 - Noise Assessment produced by Stilwell Partnership
 - Topographical Survey produced by Usk Land Survey
 - Transport Statement produced by Ridge & Partners

2. SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 One Darwin Close forms part of the edge of an industrial area approximately 2.5km south of the central area of Reading. This land is designated as a core employment area within the Reading Local Plan, which extends southwards from the site. Darwin Close serves some light industrial units off Commercial Road. The site benefits from good access to the A33, which provides links into Reading and to the surrounding area. Two bus stops are located approximately 350m to the north of the site providing public transport links into Reading town centre and the surrounding area.
- 2.2 The site currently contains a two-storey flat roofed brick building which incorporates a pitched roof element in part, with an associated hardstanding and vehicle access to the North and West. A small group of trees lie on the northern edge of the site. The current building on site is of no architectural merit and does not significantly contribute towards the character of the area. There are no formal parking bays on site. However, an area of hardstanding is currently used for vehicle loading and parking.
- 2.3 A housing development lies directly to the north of the site on Commercial Road, which contains 2 and 3 storey blocks of houses and flats, approximately 25m away. Other adjacent uses include a 6-storey office block 29m away on the opposite side of the road to the west, a 2-storey printing office adjacent to the south and various retail warehouse units to the south on Darwin Close. These buildings are generally 2 to 3 storeys and are of a flat and pitched roof design. The use of building materials varies, older office buildings demonstrate a use of brick, whilst more contemporary warehouse buildings use cladding.

3. PLANNING HISTORY

3.1 Following a search of the Council's online records the following application relates directly to the site.

- *Ref. 911008:* An application was permitted in May 1991 for the change of use from industrial to general laundry use with new external storage facilities and 28m high flume.

3.2 The following application relates to land in the immediate vicinity on Darwin Close:

- *Ref. 101583:* An application was permitted in 2010 for a new detached storage building and lean to covered storage area to the side of the factory. The warehouse demonstrates a similar design to the proposed design at one Darwin Close. The proposed building was determined to be in keeping with the commercial nature of the site and acceptable in design terms.

4. PROPOSAL

- 4.1 With reference to the requirements of the Planning Practice Guidance with regards to Design and Access Statements, the proposal is described as follows:

Use

- 4.2 The application site currently contains a vacant building. The previous use was as a commercial laundry, a Sui Generis use.
- 4.3 The site is located within a defined core employment area and therefore the proposed use B1 and B8 uses will be wholly appropriate in this location. The specific proposed use of the proposed building will be for the assembly of roller shutters and the fit out of offices, together with associated storage and ancillary office space.

Amount

- 4.4 The application site extends to approximately 0.3ha and is currently occupied by a building with a footprint of some 1,627sqm. It also contains office floorspace at first floor level.
- 4.5 The proposed replacement building will provide a similar level of floorspace albeit, the building itself will have a slightly smaller footprint. The proposed floorspace will be as follows:
- Ground Floor: 1,400 sqm
 - First Floor: 891 sqm

Layout and Scale

- 4.6 The proposal is for a two-storey warehouse building, the layout and scale of which have been influenced by the existing access points of Darwin Close and Commercial Road, the existing building and the surrounding uses. The majority of the surrounding buildings are either two-storey or three-storey, and therefore the proposed building will be entirely appropriate for this location.

Appearance

- 4.7 The proposal incorporates a more contemporary style building in replacement of the existing brick building. The pitched roof allows for the whole of the building to

be served by natural daylight through windows within the roof. The repositioning of the new building allows for new parking bays to be introduced. Windows on the front elevation will serve the office and warehouse space with natural daylight, which will allow for improved working conditions.

- 4.8 The new building would be constructed of a steel frame, metal sheet cladding, glazing and a brickwork plinth along the base of the building.
- 4.9 The proposed building, whilst simple in its design, is entirely fit for purpose for a light industrial use and will result in significant visual improvement on site. The redevelopment will improve the visual outlook for occupiers of residential properties opposite site on Commercial Road, in addition to the neighbouring properties on Darwin Close.

Access and Parking

- 4.10 The proposed building will utilise the existing access points to the site off Darwin Close and Commercial Road. 15 new car parking bays, 7 van bays, lorry loading bays and 10 cycle spaces are proposed. These new parking bays will provide staff and customers of the proposed business with on-site secure parking and sufficient delivery space. The building is set back further to the south to allow for adequate turning space and parking.

5. ASSESSMENT AGAINST PLANNING POLICY

5.1 The development plan consists of the adopted Reading Core Strategy policies, The Reading Central Area Action Plan, The Sites and Detailed Policies Document and other supplementary planning documents. The emerging local plan when adopted will replace all existing development plans in Reading. The new local plan is due to be adopted in 2019. A draft local plan was subject to a consultation which ran from May 2017 to 14th June 2017.

5.2 In addition to the above, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) will be used as a material consideration in the determination of this planning application.

The NPPF

5.3 The following sections of the NPPF are considered to be relevant to this application.

Sustainable Development

5.4 Paragraph 7 establishes that there "are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental." It states that "These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles":

"an economic role – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;

a social role – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and

an environmental role – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy" (p.2).

- 5.5 The proposal uses flexible space to accommodate a mix of B1 and B8 uses contained within one building. This space would support growth and retention of businesses within the defined employment zone. The proposal would update and enhance an existing employment space, which is in need of improvement. The site at present is vacant and the redevelopment of this site would bring it back into productive use. By doing so, the proposal will support a strong and competitive economy.
- 5.6 The redevelopment of the site would fulfil the social role by contributing to an improved, high-quality environment for local residents and workers. The proposal will also provide various employment opportunities for those living locally.
- 5.7 In terms of an environmental role, the proposal would enhance the built environment. The new building would be more energy efficient than the existing. The provision of 10 cycle spaces on site will encourage more employees to cycle to work which will help contribute towards a low carbon economy.

Building a Strong Competitive Economy

- 5.8 Paragraph 18 states that the government is committed to securing economic growth in order to create jobs and prosperity. Paragraph 20 continues to explain that to achieve economic growth, local planning authorities should plan proactively to meet the development needs of businesses and support an economy fit for the 21st century.
- 5.9 Investment in business should not be over-burdened by the combined requirements of planning policy and seek to address potential barriers to investment, including a poor environment or any lack of infrastructure, services or housing.
- 5.10 In this case, the proposed redevelopment of the site will enable a new business to be located on a site which is currently vacant. The new business will be suitably located within close proximity to an accessible transport network which will benefit any future business on site. The design meets the needs of the proposed use on site as well as providing flexible floor space which has the potential to meet the needs of a B1/B8 use in the future.

Principle of Development

- 5.11 The site is located in an allocated employment area as defined in the Core Strategy key diagram and proposals map. Paragraph 3.24 of the Core Strategy identifies that the majority of Reading's older industrial areas provide commercial accommodation for a range of industrial, service distribution and storage activities that support the local economy. It is identified that many of these premises are in need of renewal to provide more up to date and efficient space. The Core Strategy promotes regeneration of such areas.
- 5.12 This proposal allows for the redevelopment of an existing site, which is in need of renewal and as such would meet the principles identified in the Core Strategy. In addition to these comments, the site is located within the settlement boundary where development is permitted in accordance with Core Strategy CS6. For the reasons set out, the principle of the proposed redevelopment is considered to be wholly acceptable.

Employment

Policy CS10 Location of Employment Development

- 5.13 This policy states that major office development will take place in the centre of Reading along the A33 corridor. Other major employment uses, including industrial and storage distribution will be located in the A33 corridor or in the core employment areas.
- 5.14 The site is located within a designated employment area in the Core Strategy. The use of the site is proposed as a part production unit and office space (B1) and part as a storage warehouse (B8). The proposal would therefore be entirely in accordance with the uses set out in Policy CS10 of the Core Strategy.

Emerging Local Plan Policy EM1 Provision of Employment Development

- 5.15 Policy EM1 sets out that provision will be made for an additional 53,000-119,000sqm of office floor space and 148,000sqm of industrial and/or warehouse space in Reading for the period 2016-2036.
- 5.16 The proposal will introduce new office and warehouse space to help meet the needs set out above for the emerging plan period.

Emerging Local Plan Policy EM2 Core Employment Areas

- 5.17 Major office development will take place in the centre of Reading along the A33 corridor. The core employment areas are shown on the proposal map and include the allocated area EM2d known as Bennet Road, where the site and surrounding area is located.
- 5.18 The site is found on the edge of the core employment area. Development for an employment use is therefore appropriate in this location.

Design and Layout

Policy CS1: Sustainable Construction and Design

- 5.19 Proposals for new development will be acceptable where the design of the buildings and site layouts use resources efficiently and with care and take account of the effects of climate change.
- 5.20 The proposal will enable sustainable construction methods to be used in the building process.

Policy CS2 Waste Minimisation

- 5.21 Development should demonstrate measures to minimise the generation of waste in the construction and life of buildings. The layout and design should provide adequate space to facilitate waste storage. Card compactors will be used and storage containers provided for recyclable materials, internally within the building. Covered skips are utilised externally for recyclable materials also.

Policy CS7 Design and the Public Realm

- 5.22 All development must be of a high-quality design that maintains and enhances the character of the area of Reading where it is located. The following components of development will be assessed to ensure the development makes a positive contribution to the urban design principles, of which are set out below.

- *Layout: Urban structure and urban grain*

- 5.23 The building will be offset slightly from the footprint of the existing building, but is set back from the road. This is to accommodate parking bays to the front and side of the buildings.

5.24 The large warehouse building will be in keeping with other warehouse buildings of a similar style, form and layout however would be of a more contemporary design in comparison to many of the larger older brick buildings in the surrounding area.

- *Landscape*

5.25 The surrounding landscape within the employment area consists of various sized warehouse or office buildings with large areas of hardstanding. The proposal would therefore be entirely in keeping with the surrounding landscape.

- *Density and Mix*

5.26 The use and size of the building is considered acceptable in the context of the existing employment area, where similar uses exist. There will be no increase in the density of the area as a result of the proposed development.

- *Scale: Height and Massing*

5.27 A 2-storey warehouse building with ancillary office space is proposed. This is in keeping with the character of the local area when considering the variety of heights of buildings in immediate area. The total internal floor area will equate to 2,283.00sqm, which covers over 2-storeys. Whilst there will be an increase in floor area to accommodate the 2nd storey element, the footprint of the building will be reduced from 1,627.94sqm to 1413sqm. This proposed mass is designed to meet the flexible needs of the business, which will benefit from the future use of the site.

- *Emerging Local Plan Policy CC7 Design and the Public Realm*

5.28 All development must be of a high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading it is located.

5.29 It has previously been set out within this statement that the site is located within an existing employment area, which predominantly contains office and warehouse buildings. The proposed building will significantly improve the appearance and character of the site.

Transport and Parking

5.30 The transport assessment which accompanies this report establishes the following:

- The site is located within good proximity to several public transport services and other amenities.
- There are no operational safety problems within the local highway network.
- The vehicle trips generated by the proposed development will be limited and will have a negligible impact on the surrounding highways network.

Policy CS4: Accessibility and the Intensity of Development

5.31 The scale of development will relate to the level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport to a range of services and facilities.

5.32 Access can be gained to the site via the A33, a major road which links the industrial area to the centre of Reading and to the M4 to the south. A bus stop is located on Manor Farm Road approximately 400m away from the site. Cycle storage facilities are proposed to accommodate 10 bicycles.

5.33 The accompanying transport statement sets out there are a variety of bus services providing a range of frequent bus services to the immediate and wider surrounding area.

Policy CS24 Car/Cycle Parking

5.34 Maximum car parking standards will be applied in relation to the accessibility of the locations within the borough to sustainable transport facilities. The Council's Revised Parking Standards SPD sets out the parking requirements as below.

Parking Standards

5.35 The site is located within zone 3 and therefore the following maximum standards apply.

- B1(c) Light Industrial- 1 space per 100m².

5.36 As the proposed development will be 2,283m² this would require a maximum of 22.83 spaces.

5.37 A total of 22 spaces are to be provided, which meet the council's maximum requirements. The spaces provide for the needs of the proposed business use, and provide necessary space for vehicle loading and unloading. Providing parking on site will reduce the need for parking on the road. A similar area of hardstanding for vehicle movement and parking is provided as currently exists.

5.38 The Council requires the following minimum cycle parking standard (1 per m²) to be met:

- B1c Light industrial 250m²

5.39 This policy would require a minimum of 9 parking spaces on site. The scheme meets this requirement.

Emerging Plan Policy CC6 Accessibility and the Intensity of Development

5.40 The scale and density of development will be related to its level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport to a range of services and facilities, with the densest and largest scale development taking place in the most accessible locations.

5.41 The principle of development of a similar size has already been established on site. It has already been established that the site is well located to a regular bus service and the site is easily accessible by car.

Emerging Plan Policy TR3 Access, Traffic and Highways Related Matters

5.42 In the determination of new or altered access onto the transport network, improvement works, the generation of additional trips, consideration will need to be given to the effect on safety, congestion and the environment.

5.43 There would be no new or altered access to the development. Where the position and layout of the building will be altered, there will be a new parking layout. This will significantly improve the existing informal parking area which currently exists.

Air Quality and Pollution

Policy CS34 Pollution and Water Resources

5.44 Development will be permitted where there it would not be damaging to the environment though air, land, noise or light pollution.

5.45 An air quality assessment accompanies this application this sets out:

- An air quality assessment has been carried out to determine the impact of emissions from road traffic on sensitive receptors.
- The findings demonstrate that no mitigation is required as the air quality objectives are predicted to be met.
- Other measures such as secure and covered cycle storage, car share schemes should be considered.

5.46 The findings described ensure that the development will not result in unacceptable levels of air pollution. The scheme provides cycle storage in order to encourage the reduction of car travel. This will help to reduce air pollution generated from car use.

5.47 A ground conditions appraisal has been conducted by Patrick Parsons and accompanies this statement. This concludes that the risk of contamination being present at the site is considered to be moderate and as such the risk to human health has been assessed as low to moderate. It has been recommended that a phase II ground investigation is undertaken to confirm the initial recommendation.

Ecology

5.48 Core Strategy Policy CS36 states that:

"development should retain, protect and incorporate features of biodiversity or geological interest found within the application site into their schemes."

5.49 An ecology report has been conducted for the purpose of this application and establishes the following points.

- The nearest wildlife designated site is located 800m north of the site (the River Kennet/Kennet and Avon Canal Local Wildlife Site).
- A total of 5 habitats were identified, all of which are of a low ecological value. The trees on site were assigned as having negligible suitability for roosting bats. The buildings on site were also assessed for their potential to support roosting bats, it was concluded the buildings had a negligible suitability to support roosting bats.

6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 This statement has set out the case for an application for the demolition of an existing, former laundry building and the erection of a warehouse building with ancillary office space. The redevelopment of this site will provide a much more appropriately designed building on a site located within a designated core employment area.
- 6.2 It has been explained above that the site location is appropriate for the specific use of the facility. The proposed scheme will enhance the character and appearance of the area and will not have any harmful impact on the existing residential, office or light industrial buildings nearby. It has been demonstrated that the overall footprint and floor area will not significantly change. In addition to this, the layout has been improved to accommodate formal parking bays.
- 6.3 Supporting technical reports accompany this statement. The transport report concludes there will be no adverse impact on the surrounding highways and that the scheme meets the Councils required standards. The air quality assessment has established the scheme will not result in unacceptable levels of air pollution.
- 6.4 It has been demonstrated that the proposed scheme is in adherence with the relevant development plan policies and the NPPF, which is a material consideration. For the reasons set out in this statement, it is respectfully requested that planning permission is granted.

APPENDIX 1

PHOTOS



Access from Darwin Close



Access from Commercial Road