

# DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

In connection with a Planning Application

*For a Change of Use & External Refurbishment*

*At*

**Former Mazda Showroom  
26 Portman Road  
Reading  
RG30 1EA**



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*Prepared by:*

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## 1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Design and Access Statement (DAS) accompanies a planning application for the *Change of Use and external refurbishment of 26 Portman Road, Reading, RG30 1EA*. The site's current planning use is defined as Sui Generis "Car Service, Parts, Distribution & Sales", and the application seeks to change this to B8 Storage and Distribution with Ancillary Trade Counter.

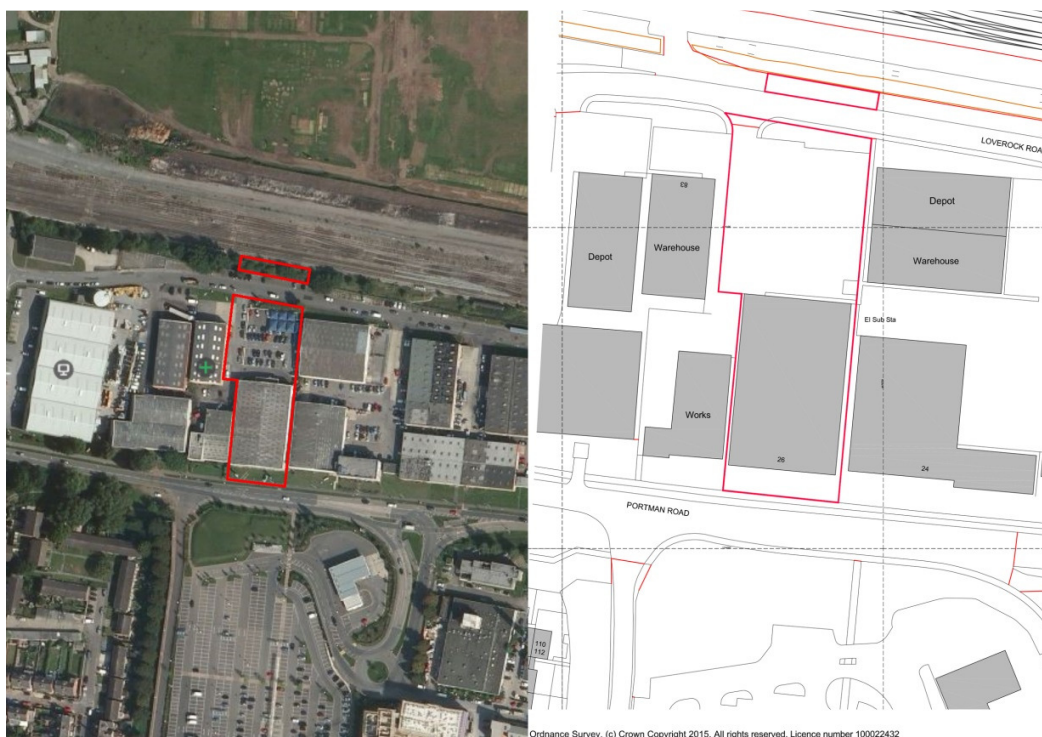
1.2 The application is made on behalf of The Door Store who operate several trade warehouses in Northern Ireland which sell internal doors, ironmongery and timber floors. They are seeking to expand their business and open a new store in the Reading area.

1.3 The proposal involves the change of use of the existing Mazda showroom, and does not involve a change in the footprint of the building or increase in the total floor area.

1.4 The following sections will describe the existing site, its context and set out the proposals which we wish you to consider.

## 2.0 The Site & Context.

2.1 The application site is located at 26 Portman Road, Reading, RG30 1EA, as identified with a red boundary on the aerial photograph and OS Plan extract below. The existing site comprises the former Mazda showroom, garage & MOT test centre and an associated car park for up to 62 cars (31 customer and 31 for sales).



OS Site Plan & Aerial Photograph (Not to scale)

2.2 The application site measures 0.46ha in area comprising the former car showroom and garage building, an associated at grade car park, shared access road and a small strip of land wedged between Loverock Road and the rail line.

2.3 To the east and immediately adjacent to the site is a similar warehouse style building which houses a number of businesses, including EMS and Redland Healthcare Ltd. Further to the east is the Seventh-Day Adventist Church.

2.4 To the west of the site and immediately adjacent is a two storey, flat roof industrial and office building. Further to the west is a further industrial and office building occupied by Rodmatic Ltd, and further along is the Selco Builders Merchant.

2.5 To the south of the site, on the opposite side to Portman Road is the car park serving the Tesco Superstore.

2.6 The wider area takes the form of an Industrial & Retail Park and is identified as a “Core Employment Area” under RBC’s Core Strategy SA12h: Portman Rd. The surrounding buildings are mainly detached warehouse type structures, which vary in size and design. The predominant cladding material is brick or metal sheet cladding, finished in a variety of colours, but the estate contains a few examples of curtain walling with glazing and opaque infill panels. Although the buildings are clad with similar materials there is no overarching design philosophy with plots being developed, refurbished and redeveloped on an ongoing basis. Many of the buildings are subdivided into smaller units.

2.7 The now vacant showroom and garage building is located on the southern portion of the site, set back from Portman Road and has a gross external area of 1,836m<sup>2</sup> / 19,762ft<sup>2</sup>.

2.8 The building is effectively 2 storey in height, with the majority of the accommodation at ground floor level and a small office mezzanine at first floor level providing the following gross internal areas:

|                                  |                            |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Total Gross Internal Area</b> | <b>1,918 m<sup>2</sup></b> |
| <b>Ground</b>                    | <b>1,758 m<sup>2</sup></b> |
| <b>First</b>                     | <b>160 m<sup>2</sup></b>   |

2.9 The current internal floor area can be further divided into a number of uses, as set out in the table below and illustrated on the floor plans:

| <b>Use</b>      | <b>Area</b>          | <b>% of Total</b> |
|-----------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Sales           | 581 m <sup>2</sup>   | 30.3%             |
| Servicing & MOT | 1,097 m <sup>2</sup> | 57.2%             |
| Offices         | 160 m <sup>2</sup>   | 8.3%              |
| Ancillary       | 80 m <sup>2</sup>    | 4.2%              |



Illustration of existing accommodation. Ground & 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Plans (Not to scale)

2.10 The building is constructed from a metal portal frame system with a shallow pitched roof. The building is clad with brick at ground floor level and a metal cladding system at 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, typical of warehouse construction in the area. The roof is also clad with a concrete roofing system.

2.11 The buildings primary frontage addresses Portman Road and contains a number of large windows which were used to display cars and acted as a show window. The secondary frontage faces onto the at grade car park. It is this secondary frontage which provides access to the building.



Views of existing rear & front elevations

2.12 The car park occupies the northern portion of the site. It is at grade and is accessed from Loverock Road via a shared access road over which the site has a right of way.

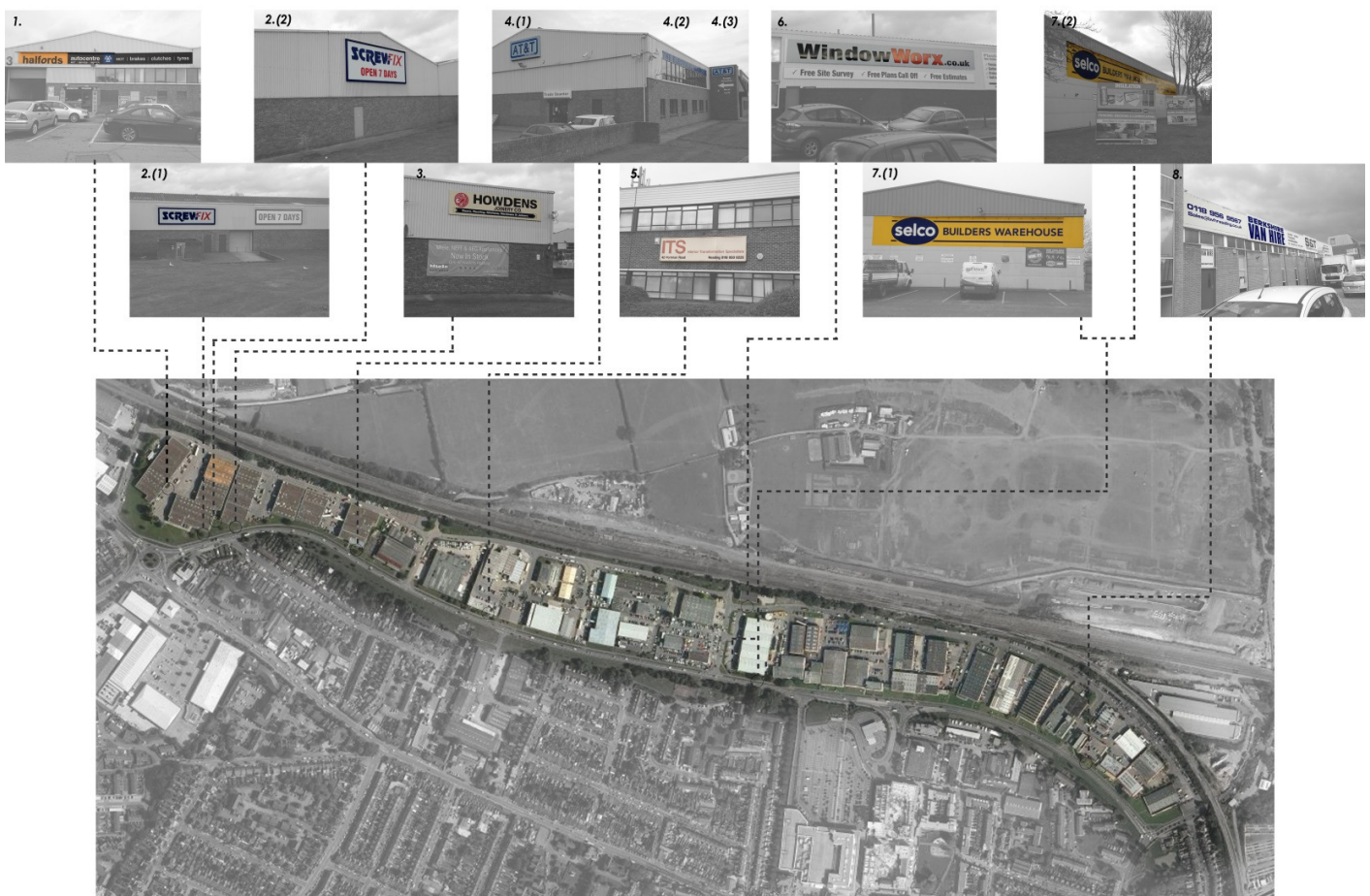
2.13 Portman Road is a busy single carriageway which acts as a conduit between Tilehurst, Reading Town Centre and Caversham, via Cow Lane. Cow Lane has been subject to ongoing engineering works which are

due to be completed shortly. This will remove the current bottle neck and result in improved vehicle, bus and cycle routes.

2.14 Portman Road does not provide direct vehicle access to the premises within the wider Industrial and Retail estate. This is instead provided by Loverock Road, which runs parallel to Portman Road and several roads which connect the two. Loverock road is in essence the main service road for the wider estate, providing vehicle access for cars and delivery vehicles to the majority of premises.

2.15 As described earlier in this section the buildings within the estate vary in size and design and are occupied by a variety of different businesses, including office, industrial, storage and distribution, wholesalers, garages, print works and places of worship.

2.16 The variety of uses and businesses is reflected in the variation of signage design. The image below includes a selection of applicable signage designs which can currently be found within the estate, along with their locations.



Photographic Survey of Current Signage & Location Plan

| Signage                | Dimensions (approx.) | Area (approx.)      |
|------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| 1.0 Halfords           | 17.6 x 1.2m          | 21 m <sup>2</sup>   |
| 2.1 Screwfix           | 6.6 x 1.8m           | 12 m <sup>2</sup>   |
| 2.2 Screwfix           | 7.2 x 2.5m           | 18 m <sup>2</sup>   |
| 3.0 Howdens            | 6.2 x 1.4m           | 8.5 m <sup>2</sup>  |
| 4.1 AT&T               | 4.1 x 1.4m           | 5.5 m <sup>2</sup>  |
| 4.2 AT&T               | 13.8 x 0.7m          | 9 m <sup>2</sup>    |
| 4.3 AT&T               | 1 x 1.8m             | 1.8 m <sup>2</sup>  |
| 5.0 ITS                | 4.5 x 1.3m           | 5.85 m <sup>2</sup> |
| 6.0 Window Worx        | 18.5 x 1.3m          | 24 m <sup>2</sup>   |
| 7.1 Selco              | 16.2 x 2m            | 32 m <sup>2</sup>   |
| 7.2 Selco              | 27.8 x 2m            | 55 m <sup>2</sup>   |
| 8.0 Berkshire Van Hire | 12 x 1.7m            | 20 m <sup>2</sup>   |

Table of Signage Dimensions (Approx.)

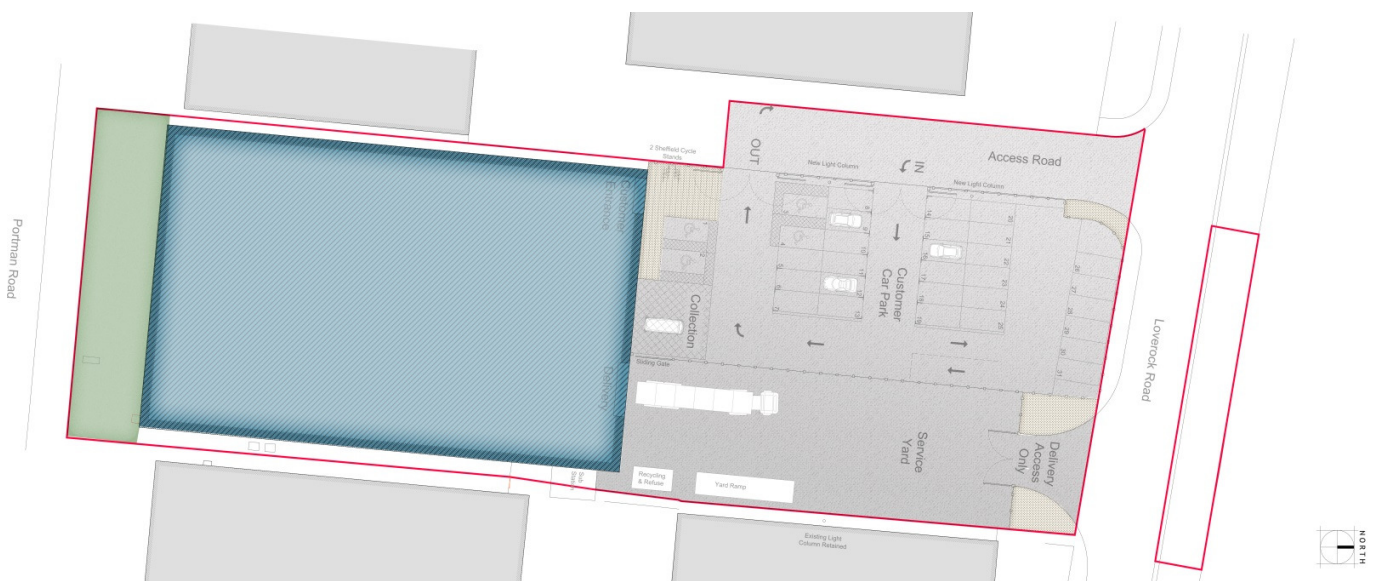
## 3.0 Design Principles & Concepts.

### 3.1 Proposal.

3.1.1 The proposal is to retain the existing warehouse style building and at grade car park. The vacant building will be refurbished to function as a Warehouse & Distribution building with ancillary trade counter. This will involve the replacement of the existing roof finish (to allow safe disposal of the asbestos roofing panels) and refurbishment and remodelling of the existing elevations.

3.1.2 Vehicular access will be retained from Loverock Road via the access road, along with the creation of a new dedicated service entrance from Loverock Road.

3.1.3 The existing at grade car park will be retained but divided to provide a distinct customer and staff car park for 31 vehicles, including 4 accessible spaces, and a separate service yard. This will separate delivery and customer vehicles creating a safer environment for customers and employees.



3.2 Amount.

3.2.1 The existing building footprint of 1,836m<sup>2</sup> / 19,762ft<sup>2</sup> will be retained.

3.2.2 The internal layout will be remodelled to provide a large warehouse space, ancillary trade display area and counter, as well as staff and customer facilities. This accommodation will be arranged at ground floor level, with the creation of a small mezzanine storage area above the staff facilities. This arrangement will provide a total gross internal area of 1,886m<sup>2</sup>, which is 82m<sup>2</sup> less than the current car showroom & garage.

| Proposed Total Gross Internal Area | 1,886 m <sup>2</sup> |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Ground                             | 1,758 m <sup>2</sup> |
| First                              | 128 m <sup>2</sup>   |

3.2.3 The warehouse and staff facilities will account for 1,294m<sup>2</sup> (71%) of the floor area, with the ancillary trade and display area accounting for the remaining 542m<sup>2</sup>, (29%) of the floor area. This is illustrated on the plans below.



Proposed Ground, First & Roof Plans – Not to scale

3.3 Scale.

3.3.1 The proposal does not seek to increase the overall volume of the building or adjust the overall external dimensions. The existing roof covering will be replaced but the eaves and ridge heights will be maintained.

3.3.2 The proposal does seek to introduce a parapet wall to the front and rear elevations as part of the refurbishment work. The top of the parapet will be situated slightly higher than the existing ridge line.

3.4 Landscaping.

3.4.1 The majority of the existing external area is occupied by the at grade car park, which is finished with tarmac. The car park is enclosed on two sides by a low rendered wall to the east and north, by the showroom building to the south, and by an adjacent industrial unit to the west. Running parallel to Loverock Road is a small strip of soft landscaping, made up of grass and low shrubs. There is also a strip of soft landscaping running along the boundary with Portman Road.



View of the existing showroom from Portman Road



View of car park from Loverock Road

3.4.2 The proposal is to retain the at grade car park and extend this to include the strip of soft landscaping which runs along Loverock Road. The low rendered wall will be removed and a chain linked fence installed, with access gates. A similar fence will be used to separate the customer car park from the service yard.

3.4.3 The landscape strip which runs along Portman Road will be retained.

### 3.5 **Design & Appearance.**

3.5.1 The proposal seeks to reuse the existing building which will require refurbishment so that it can meet the functional requirements as a warehouse with ancillary trade area.

3.5.2 It is proposed that existing metal cladding on the primary elevation facing Portman Road will be replaced with a composite metal cladding system which will wrap the corners of the building and be finished in the company's corporate colour. The new cladding will form a level parapet, replacing the existing gable roofline. The ground floor glazing will be retained, with two new glazed panels introduced, maintaining the visual connection and surveillance of Portman Road.

3.5.3 The existing porch structure on the secondary elevation (facing the car park) will be demolished and in a similar fashion to the primary elevation, the existing metal cladding will be replaced with a composite metal cladding system which will wrap the corners of the building and form a new parapet. The first floor office mezzanine is to be removed along with the windows which served it.

3.5.4 Both the pedestrian and delivery entrances to the building will remain on the secondary elevation. The pedestrian entrance will be moved from the centre of the elevation to the north east corner of the building, with new glazed doors replacing an existing window. The existing roller shutter door used for delivery access will be removed and blocked up, with a new roller shutter door installed adjacent to this. Additionally a new glazed window will be installed overlooking the car park. This will function as a display window.

3.5.5 The flank elevations are currently punctured by a number of services and ducts. It is proposed that these services are removed and the metal cladding system repaired and refurbished.

3.5.6 The existing metal roofing system contains asbestos. This will be carefully removed and disposed of, before being replaced with a new composite metal roofing system. The new metal roofing system will contain a number of inline roof lights which will increase the amount of natural daylight entering the building.

3.5.7 The existing brickwork which wraps the ground floor level will be retained, with any redundant openings infilled with a matching brick.

3.5.8 The main elevations to Portman Road and Loverock Road will also incorporate signage. A primary sign with the company name and logo will be located centrally on each elevation, positioned to just break the level of the new parapet cladding. Additional secondary signage will wrap each of the building corners of the Portman Road elevation, providing information on the range of products available within the store.

3.5.9 The primary signage will measure 18m x 3m with a total area of 54m<sup>2</sup> which is comparable with signage on nearby buildings such as Selco Builders Merchants. Each face of the secondary signage will measure 3m x 2m. The signage will take the form of a flex-face sign with back illuminated lettering.



Proposed Elevation - Portman Road



Proposed Elevation - Loverock Road

## **4.0 Access.**

### **4.1 Vehicular Access**

4.1.1 Customer vehicles will utilise the existing vehicle access from Loverock Road via the shared Access Road, over which the premises has a right of way. From here vehicles will access the car park from a dedicated gated entrance and follow a one way traffic system. Vehicles will then exit the car park via a separate gated exit onto the Access Road.

4.1.2 The car park provides parking for 31 vehicles, including 4 accessible parking spaces. The car park also includes an area for trade customers to park and collect orders.

4.1.3 The proposal seeks to create a separate goods/delivery access from Loverock Road. This new access point will serve the goods/service yard and ensure delivery vehicles and customer vehicles do not interact within the site, improving safety.

4.1.4 Two Sheffield cycle stands will be located adjacent to the customer entrance providing secure cycle parking for 4 bicycles. A further Sheffield cycle stand will be provided within the warehouse providing secure cycle parking for 2 staff bicycles.

### **4.2 Pedestrian Access**

4.2.1 Pedestrian access will be maintained from Loverock Road, via the Access Road and car park. The pedestrian access will be located on the north west corner of the building.

### **4.3 Inclusive Access**

4.3.1 The at grade car park includes 4 accessible parking spaces. From here customers and staff will be able to access the building at ground floor level using the entrance doors in the north west corner of the building. This entrance will provide a level threshold in accordance with Part M of the Building Regulations.

4.3.2 All accommodation within the refurbished building will be provided at ground floor level, which will be free from steps or ramps, providing unhindered level access to all. Additionally the internal layout and facilities will be designed and constructed in accordance with Part M of the Building Regulations.

### **4.4 Refuse**

4.4.1 Refuse storage facilities will be provided within the warehouse and within the service/goods yard.

## **5.0 Sustainability.**

5.1 The site benefits from being located in an established Industrial Estate near to a residential area. As such the site is served by good public transport links. The site is served by a number of local bus services which run along the Oxford Road into the town centre. It is understood that once the Cow Lane engineering works are complete a new bus route will operate in close proximity to the site. This will allow a large proportion of the building's potential employees to travel by public transport, or walk from the nearby residential areas.

5.2 The existing building has been unoccupied for several years. The proposed refurbishment of the existing building, rather than redevelopment of the site provides a means to reduce the environmental impacts associated with construction and retain the embodied energy within the existing structure.

5.3 Due to the age of the building it will perform poorly when compared with a modern warehouse building. The refurbishment will be subject to meeting the requirements of the current Building Regulations, which include measures to improve the energy efficiency of the building and its services. Additionally modern

services will be installed which are more energy efficient and therefore reduces the buildings energy and carbon demands.

## **6.0 Summary & Conclusion.**

6.1 The site is located within an established Industrial & Retail Park and is identified as a “Core Employment Area” under RBC’s Core Strategy SA12h: Portman Rd. There are currently limited locations within Reading for a Warehouse building of this size.

6.2 The site’s current planning use is defined as Sui Generis “Car Service, Parts, Distribution & Sales”. The site has been vacant and marketed for the past two years, but has not received any interest from potential purchaser who would wish to use it as it’s lawful planning use. The application seeks to change this to B8 Storage and Distribution with Ancillary Trade Counter, allowing the building to be refurbished and brought back into use.

6.3 As well as providing local employment, the proposed refurbishment will improve the buildings appearance, energy efficiency and functionality. These proposals, combined with the site location and market conditions represent a very sustainable proposal, extending the lifespan of the existing building and helping to secure the long term future of the site.

6.4 The proposals do not seek to alter the character of the surrounding area, simply to update and improve the existing building to meet its intended function. The scale, massing and materials of the building will remain largely unchanged and will remain a recognisable element of the wider Industrial Park.