
May 2015



**The Meadway Centre, Tilehurst,
Reading**

Planning, Retail and Sustainability Statement

**Partial Redevelopment of The Meadway Centre
including Partial Demolition of
existing Precinct and the Construction
of 4,500m² (gross external area) of
New A1, A2, A3, A4, A5 Units
along with the Refurbishment of
the existing Precinct through
the Creation of Additional Floor Space
for A1 Occupiers and External
Alternations, Customer Car Parking,
Landscaping and Associated Works**

On behalf of

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning and Retail Statement (PRS) has been prepared on behalf of Chillingham Ltd to support a planning application for the partial redevelopment of The Meadway Centre, in Tilehurst, Reading which includes for the demolition of part of the existing precinct and the erection of new retail units alongside the refurbishment of existing retail units which form the Meadway precinct.
- 1.2 This statement describes the application site and proposed development before identifying and examining retail planning and wider policy issues relevant to the application.
- 1.3 In formulating this statement and assessing planning merits, the starting point has been an assessment against the Development Plan before taking account of relevant material planning considerations. Key considerations include the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and associated guidance contained in the National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG). Regard has also been had to the adopted Supplementary Planning Document entitled “The Meadway Centre, Planning Brief”.
- 1.4 This report proceeds as follows: -
 - Section 2 describes the site and planning history;
 - Section 3 provides more detail about the proposed development;
 - Section 4 provides an overview of relevant planning policy;
 - Section 5 provides an overall assessment of planning merits;
 - Section 6 addresses the requirements of The Meadway Centre Planning Brief; and
 - Section 7 sets out our conclusions

2.0 Site Description and Planning History

Site Description

- 2.1 The Meadway Centre is annotated as a District Centre located on Honey End Lane approximately 3km west of the centre of Reading and 3km from Junction 12 of the M4. The centre serves a local catchment and comprises two areas. Firstly, and the area which is the subject of this full planning application, the northern part of the Meadway Centre comprises a shopping precinct which has a central, linear, pedestrianised courtyard running east-west with approximately 30 retail units framing the courtyard north and south with a larger “bookend” unit at the western extent of the precinct which is currently occupied by Boots and a gymnasium. Above the retail units forming the precinct are a number of residential properties and there is car parking to the side and rear.
- 2.2 The second part of the Meadway Centre which does not form part of this application proposal is home to an Asda superstore with its own dedicated car parking to the rear. As highlighted, both these areas are in separate ownerships and this application solely centres on the Meadway Precinct north of the existing Asda store.
- 2.3 There are also existing public toilets owned by Reading Borough Council which are located fronting Honey Pot Lane between the precinct and Asda.
- 2.4 All approaches to the precinct are via Honey End Lane which runs in a north/south direction to the east of the Meadway Centre.
- 2.5 It is recognised the precinct, which was opened in 1967, has become dated and is in a very poor condition due, in part, to the number of vacant units within the precinct itself.
- 2.6 To the west of the site forming the western boundary is an area of woodland and a number of trees are required to be removed to facilitate the upgraded precinct.

Planning History

- 2.7 The Meadway Precinct was opened in 1967 and since that time the precinct itself has only been the subject of planning applications since 2000. The Meadway Centre adopted Planning Brief identifies that in 2000 and 2001 a number of applications were submitted for a new retail unit on the rear car park site comprising a food retail store of between 1,000 and 1,500m². These applications are referenced 00/00241/FUL; 01/00097/FUL; 01/00101/OUT; and 01/00270/FUL. All of these applications were either withdrawn or subject to appeal against non-determination but with the appeals subsequently withdrawn.
- 2.8 In 2005, planning application reference 05/01183/FUL was submitted for an additional 1,500m² of retail and 39 additional residential units alongside the refurbishment of the existing precinct. This application was refused on the

grounds, inter alia, it was a poorly designed solution that did not enhance the existing precinct. A subsequent appeal was withdrawn. In 2007, planning application 07/00044/FUL was submitted for an additional 1,385m² of retail and 34 flats. Again, this application was withdrawn.

- 2.9 It is evident since 2000, a number of applications have sought to improve the retail offer of the Meadway Precinct and improve the precinct from a visual perspective but none appear to have been viable or deliverable.
- 2.10 It is maintained these planning applications are the most relevant in the context of these proposals to redevelop the Meadway Precinct.

3.0 Proposed Development

- 3.1 The proposals seek to regenerate and bring additional vitality and viability to the Meadway Precinct through the refurbishment and, in some cases, the enlargement of existing units within the precinct alongside 3,625m² of new retail floor space.
- 3.2 The proposed investment provides an opportunity to deliver a much more viable and attractive precinct which forms a major component of the Meadway District Centre. The precinct has become dated and unattractive to customers and these development proposals seek to enhance provision on the site to provide retail floor space for modern retailer requirements associated with trading from a District Centre.
- 3.3 Attached as Appendix A is the proposed Schedule of Accommodation and which is highlighted within this text for ease of reference.
- 3.4 The proposed site layout plan annotates the units and which shows Units 1-3, 10-13, 16-23, 25-28 and Unit 32 as being retained as existing.
- 3.5 Within the existing precinct itself, Units 4/5, 6/7, 8/9 and 14/15 alongside Unit 24 are being extended to create a more customer friendly pedestrian access through the precinct and to provide larger retail units which will attract a wider range of proposed retail operators.
- 3.6 The new retail units are shown to the west of the existing precinct and are notated Units 1, 2a, 2b, 3, 4, 5, 6 and Unit 7. It is proposed that Units 2a, 5 and 7 have a flexible Use Class ranging from A1 to A2, A3, A4 and A5 to provide key District Centre uses whilst maintaining a high degree of retail floor space.
- 3.7 170 car parking spaces are provided with servicing to the new retail units via the existing access to the north of the existing precinct and with a new turning circle provided. Full details of issues pursuant to highways and transport are set out in the accompanying Transport Assessment.
- 3.8 Bin stores are to be located to the rear of the existing and new retail units and all are shown on the site layout plan.
- 3.9 The existing 24 residential apartments will be retained and shared parking provided.
- 3.10 Aside from the provision of new retail units and the extended units within the precinct, it is also the intention to aesthetically improve the precinct by enhancing the central entrance core to the precinct with the removal of the cross canopy. There will also be a new security/management suite to be located as a first floor extension to the western unit to oversee the site and provide comprehensive CCTV coverage to improve the security of residents and shoppers.

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- 3.11 Boots are to remain in situ in Unit 32 and the new elevational approach will adopt the aesthetics of the extended units and upgraded canopies to create a rhythmic courtyard of new shops overlooking the rationalised public car park.
 - 3.12 The submitted elevations show how a modern well-designed scheme can be created through the refurbishment and extension of the existing precinct and the delivery of modern retail units of a size that will appeal to a range of prospective retail operators.

4.0 Planning Policy Review

Statutory Development Plan

4.1 The Statutory Development Plan comprises the Core Strategy which was adopted in 2008 and the Sites and Detailed Policies document adopted in 2012.

4.2 The relevant Core Strategy policies, as set out in The Meadway Centre Planning Brief includes the following: -

- CS1: Sustainable Design and Construction
- CS3: Social Inclusion and Diversity
- CS4: Accessibility and the Intensity of Development
- CS7: Design and the Public Realm
- CS9: Infrastructure, services, resources and amenities
- CS15: Location, Accessibility, Density and Housing Mix
- CS16: Affordable Housing
- CS17: Protecting the Existing Housing Stock
- CS22: Transport Assessments
- CS23: Sustainable Travel and Travel Plans
- CS24: Car/Cycle Parking
- CS26: Network and Hierarchy of Centres
- CS27: Retail Character of Centres
- CS31: Additional and Existing Community Facilities
- CS34: Pollution and Water Resources
- CS36: Biodiversity and Geology
- CS37: Major Landscape Features and Strategic Open Space
- CS38: Trees, Hedges and Woodland

4.3 Insofar as the Sites and Detailed Policies document is concerned, the following policies, as highlighted in the Planning Brief, are relevant: -

- DM1: Adaptation to Climate Change
- DM2: Decentralised Energy
- DM3: Infrastructure
- DM4: Safeguarding Amenity
- DM5: Housing Mix
- DM12: Access, Transport and Highways Related Matters
- DM13: Vitality and Viability of Smaller Centres
- DM15: Protection of Leisure Facilities and Public Houses
- DM17: Green Network
- DM18: Tree Planting
- DM19: Air Quality
- SA14: Cycle Routes
- SA15: District and Local Centres

National Planning Policy Framework NPPF)

- 4.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (“NPPF”) is a key output from the Plan for Growth and the Government’s actions to reform the planning system. Published in March 2012 it replaced virtually all previous national planning policy and guidance.
- 4.5 Paragraph 7 highlights that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and advises there are three dimensions to sustainable development which 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.”**
- 4.6 Paragraph 8 advises these three dimensions cannot be considered in isolation. It states:
- “These roles should not be undertaken in isolation, because they are mutually dependent. Economic growth can secure higher social and environmental standards, and well-designed buildings and places can improve the lives of people and communities. Therefore, to achieve sustainable development, economic, social and environmental gains should be sought jointly and simultaneously through the planning system.”**
- 4.7 At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 14), which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking. For decision taking this means:
- **“Approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; and**
 - **Where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, granting permission unless:**

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- Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole; or
 - Specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted.”

4.8 Paragraph 17 sets out 12 key principles which planning should seek to adhere to. These include, amongst other things:

- Proactively drive and support sustainable economic development;
- Seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity;
- Encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land); and
- Actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable.

4.9 Paragraph 18 confirms the Government’s commitment to securing economic growth in order to create jobs and prosperity.

4.10 Paragraph 19 confirms the Government’s commitment to ensuring the planning system does everything it can to support sustainable economic growth and:

“Therefore significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system.”

4.11 Paragraph 20 states that to help achieve economic growth, local planning authorities should plan proactively to meet the development needs of business and support an economy fit for the 21st century.

4.12 Paragraph 24 of the NPPF indicates that local planning authorities should apply a sequential test to planning applications for main town centre uses that are not in an existing centre and are not in accordance with an up-to-date Local Plan.

4.13 Under paragraph 26, impact assessments are required for retail development outside town centres which are not in accordance with an up to date Local Plan and for developments over a threshold of 2,500m² unless there is a locally set threshold. In this instance there is no local threshold set out in local planning policy.

4.14 The NPPF sets out the requirements for impact assessments which should include an assessment of:

- The impact of the proposal on existing, committed and planned public and private investment in a centre or centres in the catchment area of the proposal; and
- The impact of the proposal on town centre vitality and viability, including local consumer choice and trade in the town centre and wider area, up to five years from the time the application is made.

4.15 Paragraph 27 states that where an application fails to satisfy the sequential test or is likely to have significant adverse impact on one or more of the factors in paragraph 26, it should be refused.

4.16 Paragraph 32 confirms that all developments that generate significant amounts of movement should be supported by a Transport Statement or Transport Assessment. In determining an application:

- **“.....Development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe.”**

4.17 The NPPF also considers design matters and confirms that the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment (paragraph 56) although planning policy and decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes (paragraph 60).

4.18 Paragraph 58 sets out a list of design criteria which Local Planning Authorities should ensure developments address.

Pre-application Discussions

4.19 Paragraph 188 of the NPPF advises:-

“Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality pre-application discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community.”

4.20 Significant pre-application negotiation has taken place and in particular with Mark Worringham in the planning authority. Full details of the pre-application process is advanced in the next section of this statement.

Other Material Planning Considerations

The Meadway Centre Planning Brief – Supplementary Planning Document adopted November 2013

4.21 The Meadway Centre Planning Brief was adopted by Reading Borough Council on the 20th November 2013. It highlights the fact the District Centre location for the local area is important and the brief therefore sets down broad principles for the form that such development should take. It provides guidance which supplements policies in the Core Strategy and the Sites and Details Policies document.

5.0 Planning Assessment

- 5.1 As summarised at paragraph 11 of the NPPF under Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.2 The Development Plan for Reading comprises: -
- The Reading Core Strategy adopted 2008
 - The Reading Sites and Detailed Policies Document adopted 2012
- 5.3 Also important in the context of this planning assessment is The Meadway Centre Planning Brief which is a Supplementary Planning document adopted in November 2013 which sets parameters and guidance for the partial redevelopment of the centre.
- 5.4 Key material considerations include the NPPF which highlights the importance of sustainable development.

Sustainable Development

- 5.5 The NPPF identifies three dimensions to sustainable development including an economic, social and environmental role. In our view the application proposals contribute to all three roles.
- 5.6 In relation to “**economic**” factors, the proposal will regenerate a dated and tired, unattractive precinct, characterised by vacant units, into beneficial use. By refurbishing existing units, and increasing the size of some of the original retail units within the precinct alongside the new build premises, this will attract significant inward investment from national multiple operators which, in turn, will provide new employment opportunities in the Tilehurst area to the benefit of local residents.
- 5.7 The Meadway Centre is designated a District Centre which has a significant role to play in terms of providing a key community hub to the local area.
- 5.8 This private sector inward investment will also contribute to creating an attractive environment within the heart of a significant area of residential properties. The redevelopment will represent a clear sign of new investment in the locality.
- 5.9 The proposals will provide an important “**social**” role. Provision of new employment opportunities, many of which would suit local residents given the nature of the work and the ability for job opportunities in retail to fit around an individual's availability. This would lead to gainful employment with national retail organisations with training programmes in place providing good career opportunities. There will also be a number of construction jobs associated with the redevelopment which again has the spin off effect in terms of the contribution these jobs bring to the local community and existing retailers.

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- 5.10 The proposal would also provide an “**environmental**” role in that it would regenerate and revitalise this unattractive precinct which ought properly be the focus for the local community in terms of retailing and social connections. The ability to attract national multiple retailers by providing a range and size of units to meet all needs will act as a catalyst to improving the vacancy rate within the precinct itself through new retail opportunities being created. This would therefore improve the visual amenity of the local area. The site is also accessible by a choice of transport mode and within walking distance of significant residential areas.
- 5.11 In light of the above, the proposal would therefore provide “*sustainable development*” within the meaning of the NPPF.

Core Strategy Policies

- 5.12 In relation to the land use allocation of the Meadway Centre, the application site is identified in the adopted Core Strategy as being one of only eight District Centres which sit below the Regional Centre of Reading. Policy CS26 is of particular relevance and will be referred to later in this statement.
- 5.13 Policy CS1 deals with sustainable design and construction and stipulates development should be sustainable in nature, use resources efficiently, and meet a number of more specific requirements. The redevelopment of the precinct site is sustainable, having due regard to the parameters of the NPPF, in that it is a brownfield site where the focus for retail redevelopment should be centred.
- 5.14 Policy CS3 requires social inclusion and diversity. Clearly the recognition the Meadway Centre performs a District Centre role being in a sustainable location accessible by public transport ensures social inclusion. The fact the precinct will deliver a diverse range of retail outlets through a choice and mix of size of retail units to attract national multiples would also mean the aspirations of social inclusion will be delivered through this project. Although a number of the precinct units are vacant, at the front of the entrance to the precinct, there is a restaurant, licensed betting shop and fish and chip shop. The development proposals advocate further non-retail uses proportionate to the scale of retail development being proposed and therefore the range and offer of uses appropriate to the District Centre status are inclusive and diverse.
- 5.15 In relation to Policy CS4 in relation to the accessibility and the intensity of development, it is maintained the District Centre by virtue of its central location within the core residential area of West Reading provides a sustainable location accessible by a choice and means of transport. A full Transport Assessment has been prepared and which should be read in conjunction with this Planning Statement.
- 5.16 Policy CS7 on Design and the Public Realm requires a quality of design that reflects principles such as high quality public realm, permeability and safe environments. It is clear from the application drawings the development is looking to significantly improve the quality of the public realm and ensure a

safe environment by creating better permeability and spaces throughout the precinct that will encourage vitality and vibrancy. These in itself will act to promote a safe environment. This issue is reflected in the Design and Access Statement which accompanies the application.

- 5.17 Insofar as Policy CS9 on Infrastructure, Services, Resources and Amenities is concerned, this development seeks to build upon existing infrastructure and services, utilising existing access and egress points and reconfiguring car parking arrangements.
- 5.18 Policy CS17 seeks to protect the existing housing stock. This policy is acknowledged and there is no loss of housing as a result of this development proposal.
- 5.19 CS22 requires Transport Assessments to be submitted to ensure an adequate level of accessibility and safety. The submitted Transport Assessment has been scoped with senior highways officers at Reading Council and concludes highway safety and accessibility is not compromised by this development proposal.
- 5.20 Policy CS23 encourages sustainable travel and Travel Plans and due regard has to be had to the Transport Assessment and the sustainable location within which the District Centre is located.
- 5.21 Policy CS24 addresses car and cycle parking. The proposal includes a total of 204 spaces of which 170 will be dedicated to customers, 30 to staff and 21 to local residents. Four public motorcycle bays will be provided alongside 77 cycle parking spaces, 50 of which will be for the retail (34 customer and 16 staff) alongside 27 for the apartments. The level of cycle parking provision demonstrably seeks to encourage alternative means of transport to and from the District Centre by cycle.
- 5.22 Policy CS26, referred to earlier in this statement, is the principal policy pursuant to the Meadway Centre.
- 5.23 This policy states: -

“Network and Hierarch of Centres

The following network of centres is identified: -

Regional Centre: Reading Centre

District Centres: Caversham, Cemetery Junction, Emmer Green, Meadway, Oxford Road West, Shinfield Road, Tilehurst Triangle, Whitley Street, Wokingham Road

Local Centres: Basingstoke Road North, Christchurch Road, Coronation Square, Erleigh Road, Dee Park, Northumberland Avenue North, Wensley Road, Whitley Wood

The vitality and viability of these centres should be maintained and enhanced. This will include widening the range of uses, environmental enhancements and improvements to access.

Development for main town centre uses in or adjoining these centres should be of an appropriate scale. Where proposed levels of development would be of a greater scale, it should be clearly demonstrated that the catchment of the development will serve is in keeping with the role of the centre.”

- 5.24 Clearly the redevelopment proposals will enhance the vitality and viability of the Meadway Centre. It will include a wider range of uses, environmental enhancements and improvements to access. Therefore in all respects, the development proposal is compliant with the aims and aspirations of Policy CS26.
- 5.25 Policy CS27 seeks to maintain the retail character of centres and it will be noted that the majority of units being applied for are within Use Class A1, albeit to enhance and broaden the variety of uses, some other uses are being applied for which include A2, A3, A4 and A5.
- 5.26 Policy CS34 relates to pollution and water resources. A Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy accompanies this application and confirms there will be no pollution or impact on the water resources such that development cannot take place.
- 5.27 Policy CS36 seeks to protect sites with biodiversity or geological value including local wildlife sites. As part of this comprehensive planning submission, an Ecology Report is submitted and which confirms there is negligible to low impact on the majority of species surveyed. This is all set out in the conclusions and recommendations section of the report.
- 5.28 Policies CS37 and CS38 seek to maintain major landscape features, trees, hedges and woodland. It is acknowledged a number of trees need to be removed as part of this application proposal but these are at the bottom end of a steep embankment and do not encroach into the wildlife corridor. The area is currently unkempt, is overgrown and does not provide an attractive woodland corridor within the vicinity of the application site. The Arboricultural Assessment notes a number of trees are to be retained at the upper levels of the bank but in order to facilitate the quantum of development that will ensure this scheme remains viable and attractive to inward investors, it is necessary to remove some Category B trees, although the character of the woodland will be maintained within the wildlife site.

Site and Detailed Policies Document Adopted 2012

- 5.29 Policies DM1 and DM2 deal with issues surrounding climate change and decentralised energy. Consideration will be given during the application process in respect of renewable initiatives.
- 5.30 Policy DM3 deals with infrastructure and in particular a requirement to source funding from the Community Infrastructure Levy, again an issue to be discussed with the Planning Authority.
- 5.31 Policy DM4 seeks to safeguard residential amenity and in this regard a Noise Report has been commissioned by the applicant which demonstrates the

reorientation of the car park and new servicing arrangements will not have a detrimental impact on existing residents.

- 5.32 Policy DM12 relates to access, transport and highways related matters. This planning application is accompanied by a Transport Assessment which concludes that both on and offsite, highway safety will not be compromised as a result of this development proposal.
- 5.33 Policy DM13 considers vitality and viability of smaller centres and advises that no less than 50% of any given frontage will be an A1 use. It is clear from the application drawings the intention is to maximise the amount of retail floor space within Use Class A1 whilst paying due regard to the fact a choice and mix of uses also contributes to the vitality and viability of a District Centre. To that end, the aims and aspirations of Policy DM13 are met by this development proposal.
- 5.34 Policy DM17 on Green Networks seeks to retain existing and potential areas of biodiversity significance and in this regard it is recognised in the Ecology Report the main area of ecological significance is towards the upper ends of the embankment to the west and north of the site. This area will not be impacted upon by the development proposal and there is still a large swathe of green network within the vicinity of the application site.
- 5.35 Policy DM18 requires development to increase tree planting in the area. Although a number of trees need to be removed to facilitate the development, it is maintained further tree planting could be delivered through the implementation of a tree planting and management plan to be agreed with the Council as part of any proposed planning conditions.
- 5.36 Policy DM19 deals with air quality. It is evident from the Planning Brief for the Meadway Centre, the area that is to be the subject of the redevelopment proposals principally falls outwith the air quality management area corridor which centres along the Meadway in an east-west direction. It is therefore maintained there is no requirement to mitigate in respect of this development proposal.
- 5.37 Policy SA14 relates to cycle routes and the desire to protect these routes when considering planning applications. The routes identified from the Planning Brief will not be impacted upon by this development proposal.
- 5.38 Policy SA15 centres on District and Local Centres and states the following: -

“SA15: District and Local Centres

The following District, Major Local and Local Centres, as identified in the Core Strategy, are defined on the Proposals Map:.....District Centres:.....Meadway,

Although some intensification of town centre uses within all centres will be acceptable, the centres which will be the main focus for intensification, change and additional community facilities will be the Meadway and Whitley District Centres, and Dee Park Local Centre.

The following improvements will be acceptable in all centres:

- **Accessibility and transport improvements;**
- **Broadening range of facilities; and**
- **Environmental enhancements”**

- 5.39 Having due regard to the Site and Detailed Policies document, it is maintained the development proposals meet the broad requirements to improve the retail offer at the Meadway Centre to bring about additional vitality and viability to an ageing precinct.
- 5.40 In order to crystallise the aspirations of the Council as regards the redevelopment of the Meadway Centre, the Council adopted a Supplementary Planning Document in November 2013 entitled “The Meadway Centre Planning Brief”.
- 5.41 This document is considered in the next section of this report.

6.0 The Meadway Centre Planning Brief

- 7.1 The Meadway Centre Planning Brief, adopted by the Council in November 2013, provides detailed guidance as to the aims and aspirations of the Council as regards enhancing the retail offer, viability and vibrancy of the centre, given the importance of the District Centre location for the local area.
- 7.2 The brief was prepared in response to interest in the full or partial redevelopment of the Meadway Precinct which is highlighted in the Planning History section of this supporting document.
- 7.3 Section 3 of the Planning Brief sets the policy context and highlights relevant policies which are summarised in the previous section of this supporting document. However, and in the context of the brief, the relevant policies are summarised in the table associated with paragraph 3.3 and attached as Appendix _____ to this statement.
- 7.4 The table highlights key principles in relation to land use, layout and design, transport and movement, natural environment and community.
- 7.5 In relation to **land use**, bullet points 1 and 2 suggest that development should result in an expanded, rather than contracted, offer of centre uses such as retail, leisure and community uses, retaining a strong retail character. The response of this application is to respond exactly to bullet point 1, the development proposals retaining a strong retail character whilst expanding the centre such that the vibrancy and vitality can be brought back, centring around national multiple occupiers through a viable redevelopment of the precinct. In relation to bullet point 2, it is maintained there will be no loss of housing as all of the flats will be retained.
- 7.6 In relation to **layout and design**, bullet point 4 requires a high quality design which considers and emphasises safety, quality public realm and permeability as well as protecting existing and residential amenity. The Design and Access Statement is comprehensive and highlights the design process that has evolved to ensure the precinct offers the highest quality of environment both in terms of public realm, permeability, but importantly, customer safety. Sharp ninety degree corners have been removed where possible to allow the precinct to flow in a more open and customer friendly environment. This is evident from the application drawings that accompany the application. Residential amenity is also protected as evidenced by the accompanying Noise Report.
- 7.7 Bullet point 5 requires the intensity of development to reflect accessibility and character meaning that a District Centre location could be developed relatively intensely. The development seeks to maximise the quantum and size of retail units such that they prove attractive to national multiples of whom several have expressed interest in the site. All of the operators who are considering leasing retail units are ones that customers would expect to be associated and representative in District Centres, widening the retail choice.

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- 7.8 In relation to **transport and movement**, existing access points will be utilised off Honey End Lane, sustainable modes of transport will be encouraged, particularly as the District Centre is accessible to a wide residential area and is close to existing bus stops. 57 cycle bays are being provided to encourage non-car borne traffic.
- 7.9 In relation to adequate levels of car parking, the Transport Assessment which accompanies this application highlights the 170 spaces for customers is sufficient and would not compromise highway safety.
- 7.10 As regards the **natural environment**, it is the case a number of trees need to be removed to facilitate the development proposals. The Meadway Precinct has been the subject of planning applications which have not progressed, principally due to viability issues and the lack of providing a range and choice of retail unit size to cater for national multiple interest. The area of woodland to the north of the precinct remains relatively untouched and as part of the tree removal programme, a scheme for an improved woodland management could be prepared as part of this application. The areas within the woodland are unkempt and have been the subject of fly tipping and litter accumulates in significant areas. The area is unattractive and unappealing and could be significantly enhanced off the back of this development proposal.
- 7.11 In relation to **community**, it is recognised the development will trigger a Community Infrastructure Levy payment which is to be agreed with the Council as the application progresses.
- 7.12 Section 4 in the draft Planning Brief sets the vision for the Meadway and in the context of this supporting statement, it is considered appropriate to cite this vision in full such that it is clear the application proposals meet that vision in all respects.
- 7.13 The vision states: -

“The Meadway Centre will be developed to provide a high quality, thriving and inclusive District Centre for this part of West Reading. It will serve a number of vital different, but complementary roles:

- It will provide a widened range of services and facilities for the local community;
- It will act as a much needed community hub for the local area, providing somewhere that local residents can meet, and serving all residents of all ages;
- It will be a desirable place for people, including families, to live;
- It will be easy and safe to move around for pedestrians, including people with disabilities, and will connect well to the surrounding areas by all modes of transport, including foot, cycle and public transport;
- It will be designed and laid out in a way that attracts visitors, connects well to its surroundings, provides high quality public realm and is sustainable and durable; and

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- **It will take any opportunities to help address deprivation issues within the local area.**

Redevelopment and regeneration of the Meadway Centre is an important objective for the local community and for the Council. To that end, the Council will work positively and proactively with any landowner or developer seeking to progress a proposal that will improve the way that this site serves its local community and which fulfils the vision and principles for the site.”

7.14 Having due regard to the six bullet points, it is clear: -

- The development proposal does provide a wider range of potential services and facilities for the local community given the range of size of units being proposed of which three of the new units could be A1, A2, A3, A4 or A5.
- The reconfigured precinct allows for much more user friendly external meeting/seating areas which will encourage coffee shop owners and retailers to take advantage of the pedestrian friendly environment such that local residents can view the Meadway Centre as a community hub which will prove attractive to all ages.
- The scheme retains residential on site and clearly the increase in facilities means an increase in the desirability of the area as a whole.
- As referred to above, the precinct will be pedestrian friendly and will cater for people with disabilities as well as connecting well to the surrounding areas by all modes of transport. The Transport Statement which accompanies the application clearly demonstrates the desire to reduce reliance upon the private motor vehicle, encouraging public transport and cycling as well as walking to the centre.
- As evidenced in the Design and Access Statement, the overall design of the redevelopment of the precinct encourages connectivity to relate to the adjacent Asda such that the District Centre can be read genuinely as one destination with good permeability throughout. Visitors to the centre will recognise the improved precinct, new retail facilities and Asda work as a District Centre together and should not be seen as two separate parts of the District Centre. By improving the retail offer, this will attract residents such that the vibrancy and vitality can be brought back into the precinct.
- In terms of addressing deprivation issues within the local area, unfortunately the precinct itself is suffering from deprivation and is in dire need of regeneration. This proposal will not only deliver viable retail units on a size and scale to meet the market demand for retail occupiers that one would expect to see in a District Centre, but will also improve the existing precinct from a visual perspective.

7.15 Therefore, in terms of the vision for the Meadway Centre, this development proposal adheres to the vision to return the Meadway Centre to the community hub associated with the precinct several years ago.

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- 7.16 In relation to Section 5 of the Planning Brief, development principles are established referring to the amount of development, land use, layout and design, landscape, density and mix, scale, height and massing, architectural details and materials, sustainability, safety and security, transport and movement, natural environment, community and social role and management and maintenance. Taking these in turn, the following comments are made: -

Amount of Development

- 7.17 It is recognised there is a requirement to increase the overall floor space of the development to ensure the scheme is viable. The applicant has worked very closely with retail agents and retailers direct to ensure the quantum of floor space being delivered meets the range and size of units that are likely to prove attractive in the marketplace. To that end, there has been considerable interest from retailers in relation to the additional units being provided.

Land Use

- 7.18 It will be noted from the application drawings and the accommodation schedule it is the intention to maintain a strong emphasis on retail whilst allowing a degree of flexibility in terms of the use of four of the units at the outset for uses ranging from A1, A2, A3, A4 or A5. This will ensure a healthy mix of uses that one would expect to be found in a District Centre such that the vibrancy and vitality of the centre can be maintained.

Layout and Design

- 7.19 This issue is fully addressed in the comprehensive Design & Access Statement prepared by Accord Architecture.

Density and Mix

- 7.20 This issue is fully addressed in the comprehensive Design & Access Statement prepared by Accord Architecture.

Scale, Height and Massing

- 7.21 This issue is fully addressed in the comprehensive Design & Access Statement prepared by Accord Architecture.

Architectural Details and Materials

- 7.22 This issue is fully addressed in the comprehensive Design & Access Statement prepared by Accord Architecture.

Safety and Security

- 7.23 Safety and security is key consideration and it will be noted from the Design & Access Statement CCTV is to be included as part of the proposal. The areas of public car parking are highly visible with natural surveillance from all of the retail units and indeed the residential properties above. The service yards and bin/storage areas will be secured and in relation to the public toilets

which are mentioned in the Planning Brief, these are to remain in situ. To that end, safety and security has been taken into consideration as part of this development proposal.

Transport and Movement

- 7.24 In relation to transport and movement, a detailed Transport Assessment has been prepared which concludes sufficient car parking has been provided alongside cycle parking with good connectivity to bus stops and local residential areas with good pedestrian circulation space throughout the precinct.

Natural Environment

- 7.25 The natural environment has been given full consideration in the preparation of the redevelopment proposals and in particular, a full Ecology Report accompanies the application alongside an Arboricultural Report. Whilst there is a requirement to lose trees at the lower end of the embankment to the west of the site, this will be mitigated by replacement planting and the improvement of the woodland setting towards the north of the embankment. There is negligible to low impact on the species surveyed and as referred to earlier in this statement, this is all set out in the Conclusions and Recommendations section of the Ecology Report

Community and Social Role

- 7.26 Again, as referred to earlier in this statement, the Meadway Centre and in particular the precinct should act as a community hub which, at present, it fails to do so. This redevelopment proposal has a very important community and social role by bringing about additional vitality and vibrancy to the precinct that will encourage active use and significantly enhance its role as a District Centre. As evidenced by the Statement of Community Involvement, local residents are very keen to see positive redevelopment proposals happen such that the precinct can perform the role it did thirty years ago as a focal point for the community. To that end, this aim and objective of the development principle is adhered to.

Management and Maintenance

- 7.27 A new security and management suite will be located centrally as a first floor extension to the western unit to oversee the site and provide comprehensive CCTV coverage to improve the security of residents and shoppers. Again, the issue of management and maintenance as a development principle has been adhered to as part of this proposal.

Summary

- 7.28 Having due regard to The Meadway Centre Planning Brief and the development principles as set out in that document, it is maintained this development proposal reflects and respects the aims and aspirations of the Council to deliver a viable and vibrant District Centre to support the needs of the wider West Reading population.

8.0 Conclusion

- 8.1 This Planning, Retail and Sustainability Statement has been produced following instructions from Chillingham Ltd to support the full planning application for the partial redevelopment of the Meadway Centre, principally focusing on the Meadway precinct and the delivery of a high quality District Centre which will bring about additional vitality and vibrancy to this part of West Reading.
- 8.2 The proposal has a number of significant benefits deriving from it and should be supported by the Local Planning Authority for the following reasons: -
- The proposal makes efficient use of this sustainably located site which is identified as a District Centre in need of refurbishment.
 - The proposal comprises sustainable development.
 - The redevelopment complies with the aims and objectives of The Meadway District Centre Planning Brief which seeks to encourage additional vitality and vibrancy in a centre which is important to local residents of West Reading.
 - The redevelopment will provide a quantum of new retail floor space that will prove attractive to retail occupiers, including national multiples, and in particular those that one would expect to be located within a District Centre.
- 8.3 In view of the above, it is considered the scheme satisfies both National and Local Planning Policy and represents a viable and deliverable redevelopment proposal in accordance with The Meadway District Centre Planning Brief. In this context, the proposals satisfy Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and we would invite the Local Planning Authority to assess the application and to grant planning permission for the proposed redevelopment proposals.