

DELEGATED PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Norcot

App Ref: 231812/FUL

Address: Unit G, Reading Retail Park, Oxford Road, Reading RG30 1PR

Proposals: Alterations to existing retail unit (Class E) including alterations to car parking, new shopfront and associated works

Case Officer: Mr Gary Miles

Date received (valid from): 12 January 2024

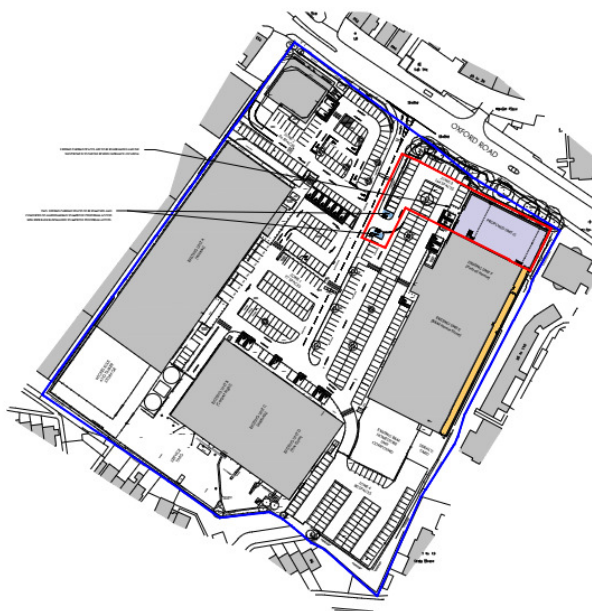
Target Decision date: 8 March 2024

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The site forms part of Reading Retail Park on Oxford Road. Unit G is located at the northeasterly end of the retail park, closest to the Oxford Road, the unit is currently unoccupied but was occupied by Wren Living. The adjacent Unit F is currently occupied by Pets at Home, and is not within the red line boundary of the site. An area of parking is included in the application, identified as Zone 3 and includes 164 spaces. The adjacent area is mixed retail space and adjacent to the unit but on the opposite side of the road is a mix of residential and commercial properties.

Site visit date: 18th January 2024

Site Location Plan



2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

This application consists of the refurbishment of the former Wren Living Unit, Unit G, Reading Retail Park. The works will allow the unit to be refurbished to standard expected of a modern retail unit and to allow re-occupation of the unit. Halfords, who currently trade from Unit C, will relocate into Unit G.

The proposals will result in the reuse and refurbishment of existing floorspace, rather than the creation of new building. The proposals will reposition the existing pedestrian entrance and there will be a reduction in two car parking spaces due to the improved pedestrian access.

Unit G extends to 1,227 square metres inclusive of a mezzanine floor measuring 458 square metres. The mezzanine floor will be reconfigured resulting in an increase of 23 square metres from 458 square metres to 481 square metres. It should be noted that this will be used as a storage area. There will be no change to the net sales area.

Servicing to Unit G is to take place along a long-service-corridor with the access point in the south eastern corner of the terrace as per the existing arrangements.

Plans considered

Drawing No: 15044-2 1001 - Location Plan - dated 11/23
Drawing No: 15044-2 1002 - Existing Site Plan - dated 11/23
Drawing No: 15044-2 1011 rev P03 - Proposed Site Plan - dated 11/23 superseded
Drawing No: 15044-2 1003 - Existing Ground Floor Plan - dated 11/23
Drawing No: 15044-2 1012 rev P02 - Proposed Ground Floor Plan - dated 11/23 - Superseded
Drawing No: 15044-2 1001 - Existing Mezzanine Plan - dated 11/23
Drawing No: 15044-2 1011 rev P03 - Proposed Mezzanine Plan - dated 11/23 - Superseded
Drawing No: 15044-2 1001 - Existing Roof Plan - dated 11/23
Drawing No: 15044-2 1011 rev P02 - Proposed Roof Plan - dated 11/23 superseded
Drawing No: 15044-2 1001 - Existing Elevations - dated 11/23 - Superseded
Drawing No: 15044-2 1001 rev P04 - Proposed Elevations - dated 11/23 - superseded
Received by the Local Planning Authority on 14th December 2023

Drawing No: 15044-2 1001 rev P05 - Proposed Elevations - dated 11/23
Drawing No: 15044-2 1011 rev P03 - Proposed Roof Plan - dated 11/23
Drawing No: 15044-2 1011 rev P04 - Proposed Site Plan - dated 11/
Drawing No: 15044-2 1012 rev P04 - Proposed Ground Floor Plan - dated 11/23
Drawing No: 15044-2 1011 rev P04 - Proposed Mezzanine Plan - dated 11/23
Received by the Local Planning Authority on 18th January 2024

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

221100 Proposed use of Unit 2 and Unit 6 as a food-store (Class E) - Application permitted

4. CONSULTATIONS

The following addresses were consulted by letter.

Reading Retail Park, Oxford Road, Reading, RG30 1PR

No letters of representation have been received.

Equality Act 2010:

In determining this application the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. However, there is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning

application. Therefore in terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. The following local and national planning policy and guidance is relevant to this application:

National Policy and Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework

National Planning Practice Guidance

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC7: DESIGN AND THE PUBLIC REALM

CC8: SAFEGUARDING AMENITY

EN14: TREES, HEDGES AND WOODLAND

TR3: ACCESS, TRAFFIC AND HIGHWAY-RELATED MATTERS

The main issues to be considered are:

- a) Principle of development
- b) Design and impact on the character of the area
- c) Natural Environment
- d) Transport matters

a) Principle of development

Alterations to existing retail unit (Class E) including alterations to existing car parking to be rearranged, 2no.existing parking spaces to be removed and converted to hardstanding to improve pedestrian access. Revised shopfront location and associated internal works, including a new mezzanine floor for shop sales, ground floor sales space and internal alterations at the rear of the unit are generally considered acceptable based on the supplied documents as part of this application. The proposals are considered acceptable regarding design, scale, and not causing adverse impact to neighbouring properties.

b) Design and impact on the character of the area

Policy CC7 requires that all development be of a high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. Policy CC8 states an extension to a property will be acceptable where it will not cause a significant detrimental impact to the living environment of existing or new residential properties.

From the documents supplied it is not expected that the proposal will cause any adverse harm to the character and appearance of Unit G, the Retail Park itself or the wider area of Reading. The proposal is not considered to be harmful to the living environment of existing or new residential properties in the vicinity of the proposal. Advertising consent will be secured under a separate application - illuminated signage and lighting levels will be secured as part of that application.

c) Natural Environment

Policy EN14 states that individual trees, groups of trees, hedges and woodlands will be protected from damage or removal where they are of importance and vegetation cover will be extended.

Concerns were raised by the planning officer of works taking place in close proximity to a tree subject to a TPO, as well as other trees within the red site boundary. In an email dated 29th February 2024, the agent confirms the 2 parking spaces (shown on the plan) are being removed to accommodate hardstanding and dropped crossing points to improve pedestrian access, something that is being secured as part of the sister application (ref 221110) on the Reading Retail Park site. This has been recommended by Highways and agreed with the Transport officer. It has been shown on this drawing for consistency and included within the red line because it technically sits outside of the red line of the other application. There should be no further action required on this given it has already been agreed. The proposal does not include any other forms of landscaping or planting.

From the documents supplied, the proposal is not expected to have a detrimental effect on trees, hedges or woodlands. Trees, hedges and woodland must be properly protected throughout the construction of the development.

d) Transport

Whilst the proposal results in a small reduction of car parking, it is envisaged that the car park shall safely and suitably accommodate demand without resulting in overspill parking or disruption to the existing operation of the local highway network.

However, it is noted that the existing Halfords unit has an allocated customer service bay adjacent to the entrance. Therefore, the applicant should consider whether the service bay should be re-provided for and designed in to the parking layout.

The agent confirms the owners are going through a detailed layout and design process and as such the official service bay will not form part of this application although it may be sought at a later date.

The proposal complies with policies CC7, CC8, EN14 & TR3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

7. CONCLUSION

The proposed development has been assessed as set out above and is considered to be acceptable on that basis, subject to the following conditions.

8. RECOMMENDATION

GRANT

Recommended Conditions:

TL1
AP1
M3
DC1
L6