

DELEGATED PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Caversham

App Ref: 240292/FUL

Address: 53-55 Church Street, Caversham, Reading, RG4 8AX

Proposals: Change of use of first floor from Class E to Sui Generis (Tattoo Parlour).

Case Officer: Sian Hickey

Date received (valid from): 5 March 2024 **Target Decision date:** 30 April 2024

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site comprises an existing first floor office unit directly above the Waitrose store within the Caversham District Centre. The unit forms part of a three-storey building. The surrounding area is predominately commercial with some residential. The District centre is an identified key frontage. The site is also within the Air Quality Management Area. The property is not a listed building, nor does it fall within a conservation area.

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Planning permission is sought for a change from Class E use (office) to Sui Generis (tattoo parlour) at first floor level only. There are other no external changes proposed.

Plans considered:

Location Plan received 6th March 2024

Block Plan received 6th March 2024

Existing Floor Plan received 6th March 2024

Proposed Floor Plan received 22nd March 2024

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

050497 - Addition of refrigeration plant on the roof. PERMITTED

910435 - Non-illuminated display comprising of 2 sets of built up metal letters. Stove enamelled in white. PERMITTED

900260 - Non illuminated fascia sign. PERMITTED

900259 - Redevelopment behind existing facade to create retail extension to adjacent supermarket at ground floor with offices on first and second floors. PERMITTED

4. CONSULTATIONS

The following addresses were consulted by letter.

59 Church Street Caversham, Reading

51a Church Street, Caversham, Reading, RG4 8AX

57 Church Street, Caversham, Reading, RG4 8AX

53 Church Street, Caversham, Reading

51 Church Street, Caversham, Reading, RG4 8AY
53-55 Church Street, Caversham, Reading, RG4 8AX

One letter of representation was received from the second floor office unit within the same site with concerns regarding security, noise, fire escapes, and disabled access.

External Consultations:

CADRA

CADRA shares the concerns over internal security and noise disturbance [as set out within the neighbour consultation response] and considers this an inappropriate location for the purpose.

Internal Consultations:

Transport

The application site is located in Zone 2, Primary Core Area, of the Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD and lies in the centre of Caversham and is in a highly sustainable location in terms of proximity to local services, transport links and easy access to the wider community. Church Street and the surrounding highway network all have parking restrictions preventing on-street parking.

The site is located above Waitrose Super Market. The application seeks a change of use from Class E use to a tattoo parlour. The site area measures 88.9sqm and is currently vacant. The size of the unit does not warrant dedicated parking provision, however as stated above there is a privately operated car park associated with St Martin's Centre. Parking controls are in place within the private car park for short stay parking only. In addition to this, there is a public car park adjacent to the site as well as another one located in nearby Chester Street.

Confirmation is required where the refuse bins will be stored and collected from.

Officer note: The applicant confirmed that she will be putting the clinical waste bins in the room where there is a sink, and every 2 weeks there will be a collection day where she will need to bring the bin bags down and hand them over to the collection person.

The Transport Officer confirmed this is acceptable and that there are no objections to this application.

Environmental Protection

Further information is required regarding whether there is residential property adjoining the use, and if so, what the sound insulation properties of the party wall are, as I understand that the use of tattoo equipment creates noise which may cause disturbance to adjoining residents if the sound insulation is not adequate.

Officer note: There are no residential properties within the building, however, following the noise concerns raised from the second floor office and CADRA, further information was requested from the applicant with regards to equipment that the tattoo parlour will be using.

The applicant confirmed that the artists will use pen machines, which have a very low decibel value of 40-50dB. No filtration system needs to be installed.

The environmental health officer confirmed this is acceptable and that there are no objections to this application.

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)

Policy CC1 - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
Policy CC7 - Design and the Public Realm
Policy CC8 - Safeguarding Amenity
Policy EN15 - Air Quality
Policy EN17 - Noise Generating Equipment
Policy TR3 - Access, Traffic and Highway Related Matters
Policy RL2 - Scale and Location of Retail, Leisure and Culture Development
Policy RL3 - Vitality and Viability of Smaller Centres

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6. APPRAISAL

The main issues to be considered are:

- a) Principle of development
- b) Design and impact on the character of the area
- c) Impact on amenity
- d) Parking

a) Principle of development

Policy RL3 states “*Within the Key Frontages (identified on the Proposals Map), development involving a net loss of A1 retail or A2ⁱ financial and professional to other ‘centre uses’ will only be permitted where:*

- *There would be no more than 3 consecutive units which are not in A1 or A2 retail use; and*

- *The proportion of the total length of the Key Frontage within the centre that is in A1 or A2 use would exceed the relevant proportion below:*
 - *Caversham District Centre ; 60%*

Within district, major local and local centres, development will be permitted provided that:

- *There would be no more than 2 consecutive A5 takeaways, and no more than 30% of the length of the Key Frontage would be in takeaway use; and*
- *There would be no net loss of ‘centre uses’ for ‘non-centre uses’ at the ground floor (apart from entrances to upper floors) except in exceptional circumstances. On upper floors, other uses including residential (‘living over the shops’) will be acceptable.*

Within and adjacent to district, major local and local centres, all new development should provide some ‘centre uses’ at the ground floor, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that this would not be possible or appropriate.”

The proposed change of use to a tattoo parlour (sui generis) is considered acceptable as the proposed use fits into the definition of a town centre use and would, therefore, not be at odds with the character of the District centre.

The proposal would comply with policies RL2 and RL3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

b) Design and impact on the character of the area

Policy CC7 states *“all development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located.”*

The proposal is for a change of use only. The proposal does not include any alterations to the existing shop front or the existing entrance door. Therefore, the proposal does not cause any harm to the existing external appearance of the property, or the street scene and wider area.

c) Impact on amenity

Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) states that *“Development will not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties.*

The site is located within a predominantly commercial area, the floor above is office use and the floor below is a shop. It is not considered that the proposed change of use would cause any significant additional harm to neighbouring properties. The applicant has confirmed the opening hours would be Tuesday - Saturday 10am - 8pm which is considered reasonable, however, in a statement from the applicant, it was noted that the tattoo artists usually finish by 6pm. The tattoo parlour will operate strictly on an ‘Appointment ONLY’ basis, and will not accept walk-in clients.

With respect to the concerns raised with regards to the safety and security of the second floor office, the applicant has confirmed that they do not propose to install a new buzzer system so they will not be able to buzz clients in. The only way for clients to enter the building will be for the occupants of the tattoo parlour to let the clients in through the main entrance door on the ground floor and escort them to the first floor, they will also escort the clients out when they leave the building. The ground floor entrance door will remain locked as per the existing arrangement at the site. Therefore, members of the public cannot enter the building unless they have been let in.

d) Parking

The site is located within an area which provides numerous local facilities including a public carpark to the rear of the site. There are no parking spaces allocated to the premises and customers would need rely on local parking facilities or walk/cycle to the site. There is also a bus stop within walking distance. In view of this, the proposal is considered acceptable in terms of transport matters and confirmed by RBC Transport Department.

7. CONCLUSION

The proposed change of use has been assessed against the relevant policies and is considered acceptable.

8. RECOMMENDATION - GRANT
