

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward:

App Ref: PL/24/1329 Full planning permission

Address: Reading Gateway Premier Inn, Gateway Proctor End South, Reading, RG2 0GG.

Proposal: External alterations to the existing hotel and Sui Generis (Drinking Establishment with expanded food provision) building to provide additional hotel bedrooms, reconfigured ancillary hotel restaurant and all associated works

Applicant: N/A

Received date: 07/10/2024

Target Decision date: 11/12/2024

Case Officer: Anthony Scholes

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

This application is submitted in relation to the Premier Inn hotel at Gateway Proctor End South, Reading. The site forms the commercial, convenience, and light industrial portion of the 'Worton Grange' development (140936) for "A Hybrid application seeking outline planning permission for the development of up to 175 new homes, including affordable housing(with all matters reserved apart from access), and full planning permission for the development of 12 commercial units in flexible use within Classes B1(c), B2 and B8, two car showrooms with MOT and servicing(Sui Generis), three retail warehouse units (Class A1), 120 bed hotel (Class C1), pub with restaurant facility (Class A4), coffee shop (Class A1), restaurant (Class A3), and bank (Class A2). New vehicular access from Basingstoke Road and Imperial Way. Bus stop facilities, hard and soft landscaping and other ancillary development(Summarised Description)."

The Premier Inn forms a key building within the site, and fronts the A33. Internal, the site adjoins the large shared carparking for the wider site, and is more immediately adjacent to a drive-thru coffee shop.



2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The proposal seeks permission for the change of use of the Sui Generis (Drinking establishment with expanded food provision) (trading as Beefeater) to additional hotel rooms at ground floor, and re-provision of a restaurant which would only serve guests. The proposal required additional ground floor windows to the A33, which would be in line with those above. The ground floor fronting the car parking area, would also include alterations, with the existing access to the 'Beefeater' being closed up, additional windows for the proposed bedrooms, and reduction in size of other existing windows, and infilling with similar materials.

3. CONSULTATIONS

The following were consulted:

- Transport Development Control
- Ecology Consultations
- Environmental Protection Consultations

No objections were received relating to the proposed development from internal or external consultees.

4. EQUALITY ACT

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'. However, the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making.

Accordingly, the National Planning Policy Framework and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

National Planning Policy Framework 2021
National Planning Guidance 2014 onwards

The relevant sections of the NPPF are:

Section 2 – Achieving Sustainable Development
Section 8 – Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities
Section 9 – Promoting Sustainable Transport
Section 11 – Making Effective Use of Land
Section 12 – Achieving Well-Designed Places
Section 15 - Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment

Reading Borough Local Plan 2019

CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction
CC3: Adaptation to Climate Change
CC5: Waste Minimisation and Storage
CC7: Design and the Public Realm
CC8: Safeguarding Amenity
EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network
EN15: Air Quality
TR1: Achieving the Transport Strategy
TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging
RL6: Protection of Leisure Facilities and Public Houses

Supplementary Planning Guidance
Affordable Housing SPD (2021)
Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011)
Revised SPD on Planning Obligations under Section 106 (2019)
Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2019)
Biodiversity Action Plan (2021)

6. APPRAISAL

Principle of Development

NPPF states (para. 97): *“To provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should:*

a) plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments ...”

Policy RL6 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) states:

“Existing leisure facilities or public houses will generally be retained, and there is a strong presumption in favour of retaining leisure facilities or public houses where they are the only facility of their type in a district, major local or local centre. Developments that would result in the loss of a leisure facility or a public house will not be permitted unless it can be clearly demonstrated that:

- a. There is no need for this type of facility in this area; or*
- b. The function of the facility can be adequately fulfilled by an existing facility, or a facility proposed as part of the development, where that facility would be at least as accessible to the same catchment; or*
- c. Unless the site is a sports or recreation facility, the impacts on amenity of residents or on crime and security of retaining the facility could not be dealt with through other measures, and would be so severe as to outweigh the benefits to the wider community of retaining the facility.”*

The existing ‘Beefeater’ was permitted as a ‘pub with restaurant facility (Class A4)’, following a change in the use classes order, the use would currently be classified as a Sui Generis Use. Therefore, the loss of the public house must demonstrate the one of the above criteria is met. The applicant has reported that the facility has limited demand, which has in part informed a decision to expand the hotel provision. Limited evidence of the business operation has been supplied to meet criteria a above.

With regards to criteria b above, the applicant has outlined that there is sufficient provision of public houses within a similar catchment. It is noted that the site may be predominantly a drive-up catchment, given the proximity of residential to the site. The applicant has provided the following sites which they have stated would serve a similar catchment:

- *The Holiday Inn (Reading South M4) is a 7-minute walk from the site and has a bar open to non-hotel guests;*
- *The Sportsman and The World Turned Upside Down pubs;*
- *The Six Bells, Shinfield Arms and The Swan*

These alternatives, are considered to have a similar level of accessibility for the catchment surrounding the site. As such, the loss of the public house would be acceptable. The provision of additional hotel rooms within an existing building, is also considered acceptable.

Design Considerations

Policy CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) 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 various components of development form, including: -

- *Layout: urban structure and urban grain;*
- *Landscape;*
- *Density and mix;*
- *Scale: height and massing; and*
- *Architectural detail and materials”*

The existing site, fronting the A33, includes a rendered wall, with vertically aligned windows on all floors, with the ground floor including only an emergency exit and is painted a different colour to the remainder of the building. Internal to the site, the public house includes a single storey structure extending toward the shared carparking area. This is clad in linear material, with timber and metallic appearance. This gives some visual interest to the car park side of the development. Various signage associated with the public house was removed prior to a site visit. The wider site, is a fairly stark, open carparking area, with limited trees, or other softening features.

The proposal, has fairly limited external alterations, with the A33 side proposal being implementation of additional in line windows to serve individual proposed hotel rooms. To the internal portion of the site, there would be the infilling of existing large window openings with matching materials, and provision of windows for each hotel room. The proposal, as viewed from the A33 would be similar, and in keeping with the appearance of the building. Internally, though some visual interest would be removed by the reduction of windows, and opening, this would not be materially different, nor harmful to the appearance of the building as viewed from the car parking areas.

Amenity

With regard to the quality of accommodation provided for future hotel occupiers, it is considered that a suitable quality of accommodation is provided for this C1 use at ground floor. In order that the hotel use is retained solely in C1 use, it is considered necessary to secure control over its occupation via condition. The proposal contains a mix of room sizes. Each of the rooms is naturally lit by a window with a single aspect outlook to the east or west. Sufficient outlook is considered to be provided for the hotel use.

Sustainability

The proposal including predominantly minor external changes and an internal fitout. Policy CC2 requires all development to: *“Proposals for new development, including the construction of new buildings and the redevelopment and refurbishment of existing building stock, will be acceptable where the design of buildings and site layouts use energy, water, minerals, materials and other natural resources appropriately, efficiently and with care and take account of the effects of climate change.”* The applicant has submitted a sustainability statement which outlines measures in place for the conversion, which subject to a condition securing a 5% reduction of the Target Emission Rate, would be acceptable.

Ecology and Landscaping

The proposals are predominantly internal, with minor alterations to the exterior frontage of the building which are unlikely to affect protected species.

Furthermore, the site comprises entirely built form with no on-site habitats and would therefore not be subject to mandatory BNG. However, the site is located on a Green Link as per Policy EN12 which reads:

b) On all sites, development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity and geodiversity, and should provide a net gain for biodiversity wherever possible. Development should:

[...]

* Provide new tree planting, wildlife friendly landscaping and ecological enhancements (such as wildlife ponds, bird and bat boxes) wherever practicable.

As such, it is recommended that a condition be set to ensure that some enhancements for wildlife are provided (such as bird and bat boxes and wildlife friendly planting).

Other Matters

Transport and Parking

The proposal has not included additional parking. The site is well served by public transport along the A33 and Imperial Way to the north. The site would also likely balance its new parking demand through removal of the public house.

Noise

The applicant has submitted a noise impact assessment which demonstrated that the rooms would be provided with noise attenuation in line with the Council's requirements. Implementation will be secured through condition.

7. CONCLUSION

The minor works to the building would be either not overly prominent, nor harmful to the character and appearance of the area. The use would re-use existing floor space which is demonstrated as not being required for a public house. The proposal would therefore be acceptable and is recommended for approval.