

Planning Statement

Proposed External Alterations, Reading Link
Retail Park, Rose Kiln Lane, Reading, RG2 0SN

May 2025

Turley

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Client
Sorbon Estates

Our reference
02551

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Turley on behalf of Sorbon Estates in support of an application for full planning permission at Units C1, C2, C3 and Unit D of Reading Link Retail Park for the following:

External alterations to Units C1, C2, C3 and Unit D comprising new shopfronts on front elevation and installation of roller shutter doors on rear elevation

- 1.2 Reading Link Retail Park was originally constructed in the late 1980s. Over the last 30 years a series of ad hoc amendments have been made to the retail park to facilitate retailer and operator requirements as units, but these have primarily related to the western end of the retail terrace
- 1.3 It is considered the overall appearance of the retail terrace frontage is dated, with an opportunity to update shopfronts at the eastern end of the terrace to be consistent with the modernised units at the western end and to meet expected requirements of prospective occupiers.
- 1.4 The proposals for refurbishment and external alterations sought through this planning application will see the modernisation of the existing building, in line with other investments to both the site and the wider retail park, to support the continued success of the retail park and the wider local economy. The works will also create additional shopfronts in association with the proposed subdivision of Unit D, and additional roller shutter doors on the rear elevation to provide dedicated servicing access for the newly created units.
- 1.5 This Planning Statement supports the application and provides additional information on the scheme in the context of the adopted development plan and other material considerations.
- 1.6 The remainder of this Planning Statement is structured as follows:
- **Section Two** – Brief description of the site and its surroundings
 - **Section Three** – Outline of the relevant planning history associated with the site
 - **Section Four** – Details of the proposed development
 - **Section Five** – Planning policy context
 - **Section Six** – Assessment of key principles of the proposed development
 - **Section Seven** – Conclusion

2. Site and Surrounding Area

Reading Link Retail Park

- 2.1 Reading Link Retail Park (“the Retail Park”) is located within the Reading Urban Area, adjacent to the A33, a key vehicular route running between the town centre and M4 Motorway.
- 2.2 The retail park takes vehicular access to its car park from Rose Kiln Lane. Servicing access is shared, via Rose Kiln Lane, with a dedicated service yard to the rear of the retail terrace. Access to the service yard is from the west of the units.
- 2.3 Constructed in the late-1980s, Reading Link Park is a large, linear-style development, originally intended to be focused on bulky goods retailing, with the unit layout and sizes reflecting this. Over the last 30 years, the park has been subject to a number of changes in terms of occupiers and unit composition, reflecting changing retail demands and operator requirements. The planning history is summarised in Section 3 of this Statement.

The Application Site

- 2.4 The application site comprises Units C1, C2, C3 and Unit D of the retail terrace as identified on the site location plan.

Statutory Designations

- 2.5 A review of the Reading Borough Council Proposals map identified the following:
- The site is located within an Air Quality Management Area
 - The site is within an area of archaeological potential
- 2.6 A review of the Government’s Flood Risk Map for planning as being sited in Flood Zone 1, the lowest category of flood risk.
- 2.7 A review of Historic England’s online database confirms that there are no listed buildings on-site, or in close proximity, that would otherwise be affected by the proposed development.
- 2.8 The site has no other statutory designations.

3. Planning History

- 3.1 A review of the Council's online public planning records shows that the site has been subject of extensive applications since its construction to facilitate and 'tailor' uses, size and floorspace to suit occupier requirements and adapt to changing market conditions.
- 3.2 A summary is set out below with a full list of permissions pertinent to the wider retail park provided in Appendix 1. :

Application Ref.	Description	Decision
87/TP/536	Non-food retail warehousing on land south of Holy Brook and light industrial buildings for high-tech uses including ancillary offices and storage on land north of Holy Brook with parking, servicing and landscaping	refused, allowed on appeal
87/TP/537	Non-food retail warehousing on land north of Holy Brook and residential units on land north of Holy Brook, with parking, servicing and landscaping	Refused, allowed on appeal
99/00235/FUL	Subdivision of existing retail unit and introduction of new doors	Permitted
00/00083/FUL	Addition of new entrance to retail unit, and alterations to existing glazing	Permitted
151032	Application for removal or variation of a condition following grant of planning permission.	Permitted

4. Proposed Development

4.1 This section of the Planning Statement summarises the development proposals for which planning permission is sought.

4.2 Full planning permission is sought for:

“External alterations to Units C1, C2, C3 and Unit D comprising new shopfronts on front elevation and installation of roller shutter doors on rear elevation”

4.3 The key development objectives for this refurbishment will be to deliver a retail units that modern day consumer demands. Internally, this is to be achieved by providing well designed flexible spaces.

4.4 This includes providing new shopfronts for the sub-divided units to be in keeping with the wider retail park. Planning permission is not required for the internal arrangements of the unit and as identified in Section 3 of this Statement, there are no conditions preventing sub-division of units or requiring minimum unit size.

4.5 Externally, there are elevational changes proposed to the building, to accommodate a revised internal layout and enhanced shopfront entrance features that will create an enhanced reception space to meet modern occupier’s demands and ensure that the entrance is visible upon first approach.

4.6 This will be achieved by:

- Creating a uniform frontage that assimilates the units with neighbouring occupiers within the Retail Park, removing the existing façade and accompanying metal cladding panels, trims and frames so as to modernise the current, dated appearance.
- Creation of new shopfronts to serve each of the units created through the sub-division of Unit D, designed to create a modern and attractive appearance for occupiers and visitors to the retail park.
- The curtain walling of the units will be replaced with additional glazing adjacent to new entrance features providing additional natural light into the unit, and activation of the shopfront.

4.7 To the rear of the retail park, it is proposed that each new unit be serviced through the installation of roller shutter doors along the rear elevation in a safe and efficient manner. This will further the operational efficiency of the building and compliment the ongoing success of the retail park.

5. Planning Policy

- 5.1 This section outlines the key planning policy considerations relevant to the proposed development at a national and local level.
- 5.2 It follows Section 54(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act (1990), as amended by Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, which states that Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) should determine planning applications in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The Development Plan

- 5.3 The Local Development Plan Reading Borough Council is formed of:
- Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019)
 - Proposals Map (November 2019)
- 5.4 The site is not situated within an area with a 'made' Neighbourhood Plan area.
- 5.5 At a national level, relevant planning policy and guidance is set out within the National Planning Policy Framework ('the Framework' / 'the NPPF') published in December 2024 and the Planning Practice Guidance ('the PPG') in 2014 and updated as an online resource. These form a further material consideration.
- 5.6 There are a number of documents that are SPD's/SPG's the determination of this planning application, these are as follows:
- Design Guide to Shopfronts SPD (January 2022);

Reading Borough Local Plan

- 5.7 The Reading Local Plan was adopted in November 2019 to guide development in Reading up to 2036. The following policies that are of relevance are set out as follows:
- **Policy CC1: presumption in favour of sustainable development:** A positive approach to considering development proposals will be taken that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Where appropriate, the Council will work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible
 - **Policy CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction:** 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

- **CC7: Design and the Public Realm:** 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.
- **TR3: Access, Traffic, and highways-related matters:** In determining proposals involving a new or altered access onto the transport network, improvement works to the transport network, the creation of new transport infrastructure or the generation of additional trips on the transport network, consideration will be given to the effect on safety, congestion and the environment.
- **Policy OU5: Shopfront and Cash Machines:** Shopfronts, individual features of shopfronts and cash machines will respect the character of the building on which they are located and their surroundings, as well as the wider street, in terms of design, colours, materials, lighting, and location. Features that positively contribute to the character of the building and street will be retained and, where possible, restored.

Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework

- 5.8 The most recent update to the Framework was published in December 2024 and its content is a material consideration in the determination of this application.
- 5.9 The following paragraphs of the Framework are considered relevant to this application:
- Paragraph 10 states that at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development.
 - Paragraph 11 sets out that, for decision-taking, this means:
“c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay”
 - Paragraph 39 states that local planning authorities should “should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way”. They should work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area.
 - Paragraph 48 of the Framework reiterates that “planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.”
 - Paragraph 131 sets out that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities

Reading Local Plan Partial Update

- 5.10 The Council are currently in the process preparing their new Local Plan. Most recently, a Pre-Submission Draft of the Partial Update was subject to public consultation in December 2024. The Council’s most recent Local Development Scheme published in

June 2024 outlines that the emerging Local Plan be submitted for examination in June 2025 for adoption in Q4 2025.

- 5.11 Within the emerging Local Plan, the application site forms part of strategic allocation 'Policy SR4g Reading Link Retail Park, Rose Kiln Lane' for residential uses. The emerging Local Plan acknowledges that this is a long-term proposal anticipated for delivery between 2033 and 2041.

Supplementary Planning Documents

- 5.12 The following Supplementary Planning Documents are relevant to the proposed development:
- **Design Guide to Shopfronts SPD (January 2022)** – The guidance within this document will apply to all shopfronts within Reading Borough, both historic and traditional as well as modern frontage.

6. Planning Assessment

Principle of Development

- 6.1 The site currently comprises Units C1, C2, C3 and Unit D of Reading Link Retail Park. The application proposes the refurbishment and modernisation of the existing shopfront elevation, retaining its current use as well as the installation of roller shutter doors along the rear elevation of the retail park to facilitate the operational efficiency of these units and the servicing and delivery requirements. The proposed development is therefor considered to be firmly in accordance with Policy CC1 and RL2.
- 6.2 The proposed shopfront amendments will create a uniform character across the retail park, raising the character of the design to market standards expected from occupiers. In a similar manner, the proposed development makes provision for additional roller shutter doors across the northern (rear) elevation of the retail park to compliment the operational efficiency and enable the continued success of the retail park.
- 6.3 The principle of the sub-dividing the existing units within the retail park is not for assessment, or a material consideration in the determination of the application, as internal arrangements and changes do not require planning permission. The internal sub-division of the unit comprises works internal to the building and does not comprise development. Then go onto say the key considerations are design and highways safety, in so far as it relates to delivery arrangements to the rear of the building
- 6.4 It is necessary to also consider whether the proposed development as described and assessed in the application documents is acceptable in terms of potential impacts which relevant planning policies seek to minimise or avoid. The main matters for consideration are discussed below and include:
- Design
 - Highways – Servicing arrangements

Design, layout and appearance of the area

- 6.5 The proposed development comprises external alterations to existing retail terrace in order to create additional shopfronts to service the sub-divided floorspace and modernise the appearance of the units, bringing the units up to expected standards from retailers and occupiers.
- 6.6 In order to do so, the appearance of the building (including its materials and design) has been carefully considered in the context of the Reading Link Retail Park, and the requirements of prospective tenants, with a character befitting of its location. This includes an assessment against the general design principles within the Shopfront SPD (2022), namely:

No.	Principle	Application Response
1	Respect or enhance key features of any historic interest, aiming to enhance and improve upon any original features through repair in the first instance, rather than replacement	The site is outside of any identified conservation area and not within the setting of any scheduled monuments or historic assets.
2	Respect the character of the building and the wider area in terms of design, colours, materials, lighting and location	The proposed development will ensure all the retail units are of consistent architectural design, and will align with the retail units at the western end of the terrace which have been previously updated. The scheme adopts the same material and colour palette as the remaining retail units. The proposed design is fully in keeping with the existing retail park use of the site and the wider commercial locality.
3	Employ signage that enhances the street scene and does not detract	The proposed signage areas and frontage design will align with the neighbouring units across the retail park to create a uniformed and consistent approach. Whilst signage zones are identified on the plans, separate applications for advertisement consent will be submitted in due course by occupiers.
4	Provide safe and inclusive access for all	All of the unit shopfronts will be 'at grade' level to ensure safe and inclusive access for all visitors to the retail park. The proposed shopfronts are legible, to ensure ease of navigation across the park for all users.
5	In the case of conversions from shopfront to residential or non-retail uses, retain original shopfront features to the greatest extent possible	Not applicable.
6	Present an active frontage to the street at all times and minimise any opaque coverings that obscure the shop window	The proposed alterations seek to increase glazing along the retail park frontage, providing greater natural light into the units and enhancing activation of the frontages. The applicant, as owner and asset manager of the retail park, will work closely with tenants to ensure appropriate shopfront design across the units. .

- 6.7 To summarise, the proposed external alterations to Units C1, C2, C3 and Unit D to update existing shopfronts and create new shopfronts to serve newly created units, modernises the existing form and massing, whilst enabling the reoccupation of the existing retail units by new occupiers. The proposed design brings the subject units in line with the remaining retail units on the park, creating a cohesive and consistent architectural approach across the retail park. The new shopfronts modernise and enhance the appearance of the buildings, and demonstrate compliance with the requirements of Policy CC7 and OU5 of the Local Plan.

Highways - Servicing

- 6.8 The planning application makes provision for roller shutter doors across the northern (rear) of the retail park to enable the safe and efficient servicing arrangement for the units. Advice has been sought from Transport Consultant on the servicing arrangements for the newly created units.
- 6.9 Existing servicing arrangements facilitate deliveries from the east of the units, and it is proposed that this approach be continued across the northern elevation through the introduction of additional roller shutter doors. All delivery vehicles will continue to utilise the existing service yard area to the rear of the units, with goods to the two easterly most units taken by trolley from the delivery vehicle to the rear service doors on the units.
- 6.10 It is noted that existing parking spaces are currently marked out to the rear of the units. These spaces will be remarked using painted hatching as 'loading areas', resulting in the loss of 4 no. spaces in total. It is considered the loss of these spaces, from the rear of the retail units, will not have a material impact upon parking availability nor adversely impact upon the operation of the wider retail park car park area.
- 6.11 Overall, the principle of the servicing arrangements to the retail park remains as the current situation, with all units serviced from the rear (northern) elevation.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 Full planning permission is sought for external alterations to Units C1, C2, C3 and Unit D at Reading Link Retail Park.
- 7.2 The application proposals are associated with works being undertaken internal to the units, to sub-divide the space. Planning permission is not required for these internal works, however planning permission is sought for the associated new shopfronts and additional servicing doors proposed to ensure each unit has dedicated shopfront and servicing point.
- 7.3 As part of the sub-division works, the applicant has reviewed the retail terrace frontage, recognising the design has remain largely unaltered since the construction of the units over 30 years ago.
- 7.4 Accordingly, an alternative modern shopfront design is proposed for the newly created units, and it is proposed to extend this design along the retail terrace to provide a uniform and modern frontage to the units. This refurbishment of the shopfronts will create an attractive and modern setting to the retail park that responds well to its surroundings and will enhance the character of the retail park.
- 7.5 It has been demonstrated that the additional servicing doors to the rear elevation of the retail park, can be adequately accessed by servicing vehicles through utilising the existing servicing area. The proposal would not result in issues of highway safety.
- 7.6 The proposal therefore complies with the policies found within the adopted Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Appendix 1: Planning History

Application Ref.	Description	Decision
87/TP/536	Non-food retail warehousing on land south of Holy Brook and light industrial buildings for high-tech uses including ancillary offices and storage on land north of Holy Brook with parking, servicing and landscaping	Refused, allowed on appeal
87/TP/537	Non-food retail warehousing on land north of Holy Brook and residential units on land north of Holy Brook, with parking, servicing and landscaping	Refused, allowed on appeal
93/00409/VC	Removal of condition 13 of planning consents 87/TP/536 and 87/TP/537 resulting in there being no restriction on goods sold from retail unit A	Permitted
99/00235/FUL	Subdivision of existing retail unit and introduction of new doors	Permitted
99/00549/VARIAT	Variation of Condition 14 of Planning Consent 87/TP/536/7 to amend the upper limit of gross retail floorspace from 6,500 square metres to 7,100 square metres	Permitted
99/00709/VARIAT	Variation of condition 13 of planning consents 87/TP/536 and 537 to extend the range of goods that can be retailed from Unit C3	Permitted
00/00083/FUL	Addition of new entrance to retail unit, and alterations to existing glazing	Permitted
00/00935/VARIAT	Variation of condition 14 of planning permissions 87TP536 and 87TP537 to amend the upper limit of gross retail floorspace from 7,100 square metres to 7,860 square metres by the insertion of a mezzanine floor within unit D	Permitted
01/00873/VARIAT	Variation of condition 14 of consents 87TP536 and 87TP537 to amend the upper limit of gross retail floorspace from 7,860 square metres to 9,230 square metres by the insertion of a mezzanine floor within unit B1	Permitted

Application Ref.	Description	Decision
11/00983/VARIAT	Operation of outline permission for Residential and Retail and retail development on land west of Rose Kiln Lane as permitted by 01/00873/VARIAT (the original permission) without complying with condition 13 of the original planning permission to allow for the sale of an extended range of Class A1 retail products in Unit C2.	Permitted
141216	Operation of outline permission for Residential and Retail and retail development on land west of Rose Kiln Lane without complying with condition 13 of 01/00873/VARIAT (as amended by 11/0098/VARIAT) to allow for an extended range of goods that can be sold from Units 1A, 1B and 1C Reading Retail Park.	Permitted
151032	Application for removal or variation of a condition following grant of planning permission.	Permitted
210406	Operation of outline permission for Residential and Retail and retail development on land west of Rose Kiln Lane without complying with condition 13(d) of 01/00873/VARIAT (as amended by 11/00983/VARIAT and 141216/VAR) to allow an extended range goods and services that can be sold from and carried out at Unit 1A Reading Link Retail Park.	Permitted
211418	Operation of outline permission for Residential and Retail and retail development on land west of Rose Kiln Lane without complying with condition 12 of 01/00873/VARIAT (as amended by 11/00983/VARIAT, 141216/VAR and 210406/VAR) to enable the operation of a 24 hour gym at Unit 1A Reading Link Retail Park	Permitted

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