

3 West Street,
Reading,
RG1 1TT

Design and Access Statement

Applicant(s)

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Design and Access Statement has been prepared in support of a planning application for the installation of security shutters at 3 West Street, Reading. The property forms part of a continuous terrace of commercial units within a busy town centre environment. The unit is currently in active retail use under use Class E and, like many businesses in the locality, faces challenges relating to crime and security after trading hours.

1.2 The purpose of the proposal is to provide a secure, robust, and visually sympathetic means of protecting the premises, whilst ensuring that the appearance of the shopfront and wider street scene is preserved. This design and access statement sets out the design rationale behind the proposed shutters, explains how it has been selected to respond positively to the character of West Street, and demonstrates compliance with the relevant policies of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

2.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

2.1 The proposal seeks planning permission for the installation of a roller shutter system to the shopfront of 3 West Street, Reading. The shutter will provide enhanced security for the premises outside trading hours while maintaining a sympathetic appearance to the existing frontage.

2.2 The design selected is a perforated, colour-coated shutter, finished in black. The shutter box will be compact and integrated neatly with the shopfront to minimise visual impact. The overall approach has been chosen to balance the operational need for security with the requirement to preserve and enhance the character and vitality of West Street.

2.0 THE PLANNING CONTEXT

3.1.1 The application site at 3 West Street, Reading, lies within a busy commercial frontage forming part of Reading town centre. Proposals are assessed against the policies of the Reading Borough Local Plan, the guidance set out in the Shopfronts Supplementary Planning Document, and the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework are a material consideration.

Key policies in the Local Plan are:

- Policy CC7 – Design and the Public Realm: requires development to contribute positively to the public realm and to be visually attractive.
- Policy CR2 – Design in Central Reading: requires high standards of design which respond to the character of central Reading.
- Policy CR7 – Primary and Secondary Frontages: seeks to maintain active, engaging frontages that support the vitality of shopping areas.

The Shopfronts SPD also provides detailed design guidance for alterations to shopfronts and in particular discusses security measures.

National Planning Policy Framework emphasises the importance of good design (Section 12) and the need to ensure that town centres remain attractive, vibrant, and safe.

3.1.2 In this context, the proposed shutter design has been selected to meet the operational need for security while remaining consistent with policy and SPD guidance aimed at safeguarding the character and vitality of Reading town centre.

3.1.3 The Council is currently preparing a new Local Plan, which reached Regulation 19 consultation stage in November 2024. While the plan has not yet been adopted, its policies are a material consideration. The emerging draft continues the established approach of seeking high-quality, active frontages within the town centre, and is broadly consistent in substance with the adopted Local Plan policies relevant to this proposal.

4.0 DEVELOPMENT ASSESSMENT

4.1.1 The proposal has been designed to accord with Policy CC7 by providing a shutter system that is visually discreet, colour-coated, and integrated with the existing shopfront materials. Although the shutter is not perforated, it has been carefully selected to minimise visual impact and to present a neat, well-finished appearance that avoids clutter or obtrusiveness within the street scene. The compact housing ensures minimal impact on scale and architectural detail, while the use of a high-quality finish helps the development respond positively to its local context and reinforce the established character of West Street. By addressing the pressing operational need for security, the proposal also contributes to community safety and resilience against crime, aligning with CC7's objectives of creating secure, attractive, and adaptable frontages that maintain the overall quality of the public realm in Reading town centre.

4.1.2 The proposed shutter system complies with Policy CR2 by ensuring that the shopfront maintains a high-quality, well-integrated appearance at ground level. Although the shutter does not allow views into the unit when closed, it has been designed to be compact, colour-coated, and visually discreet by blending seamlessly with the colour finish of the shop front, avoiding unnecessary intrusion or harm to the established character of West Street. The design respects the form and materials of the frontage, with the shutter box integrated neatly to minimise visual impact. By adopting a robust, high-quality finish, the proposal supports the long-term adaptability and safe functioning of the unit, while addressing community safety through improved security. In this way, the development aligns with the policy objective of ensuring Central Reading frontages remain attractive, resilient, and consistent with the identity of the wider area.

4.1.3 Reading Borough Council is in the process of updating the Reading Local Plan, and the draft wording for Policy CR7 continues to emphasise the importance of maintaining active, high-quality frontages within designated primary frontages. Although the terminology has been updated to reflect the revised Use Class Order (with ground floor uses now framed around Classes C1, E, F1, F2 and related sui generis uses), the substance of the policy remains consistent with the adopted plan: ensuring active, engaging and visually attractive shopfronts that contribute to the vibrancy of the town centre. The proposed development fully accords with both the adopted and emerging policy approaches. The design is compact and

unobtrusive, avoiding any obstruction to pedestrian movement or creation of safety risks, thereby delivering a frontage that aligns with the intent of both the existing and emerging policy framework.

4.1.4 The proposal has been carefully designed to reflect the approach set out in the Design Guide for Shopfronts SPD. Security measures have been limited to the minimum necessary, in line with paragraph 4.39 of the SPD, recognising that the premises operates as a jewellers, where a higher level of protection is essential due to the nature and value of goods on display. The shutter system has been selected so the housing is designed to sit discreetly below the fascia, presenting as a slimline box that is visually comparable to the shop sign. This ensures that when the shutter is raised during trading hours, the housing is barely perceptible and the fully glazed frontage remains active and engaging. While the SPD advises that laminated glass or internal grilles are generally preferable, these measures would not provide sufficient deterrence or resistance in this specific context. The proposed shutter therefore represents the minimum proportionate measure to address the security risks faced by the unit, whilst its compact, well-integrated design preserves the visual character and quality of the shopfront and the wider West Street frontage.

4.1.5 There are a number of other material considerations which support the proposal. Security is of particular importance given that the premises operates as a jewellers, where a higher level of protection is essential and the shutter represents the minimum necessary measure to address those risks. Furthermore, approximately half of the shopfronts along this stretch of West Street already incorporate external shutters of varying age and quality, and indeed shutters are prevalent throughout the town centre (See appendix 1). In this context, the introduction of a modern, discreet and well-finished design would not appear out of character and, indeed, has the potential to raise the overall quality of the frontage compared to some existing examples. The shutter will be visible only outside trading hours, with the compact housing sitting neatly below the fascia, ensuring that during the day the shopfront remains fully glazed and active. Importantly, national policy in the NPPF (paragraph 135f) recognises that planning should create safe environments where crime and the fear of crime do not undermine quality of life. The proposal therefore represents a proportionate and necessary balance between protecting the viability of a town centre business and safeguarding the visual character of West Street.

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 In conclusion, the proposed shutter system has been carefully designed to balance the operational security requirements of a jewellers with the objectives of the Local Plan, emerging policies, and the Shopfronts SPD. While external shutters are generally discouraged, in this instance the measure is both proportionate and necessary, and has been integrated discreetly to minimise visual impact. The design is of a high quality, with the compact housing located neatly below the fascia, ensuring the shopfront remains fully active and engaging during trading hours. When considered alongside the prevalence of shutters in the immediate vicinity, the proposal would not appear out of character and, in fact, offers a more sympathetic and modern solution than many existing examples. Importantly, the scheme also responds to national policy in promoting community safety and supporting the continued vitality of the town centre. On balance, the proposal represents a justified and well-designed intervention

that secures the future viability of the premises while preserving the character and appearance of West Street.

Appendix 1.



















