

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Whitley

App Ref: PL/25/0790 Full planning permission

Address: UNIT 2B, READING GATE RETAIL PARK, READING, RG2 0QG

Proposal: Creation of plant compound to rear of retail unit 2B

Applicant: Next PLC

Received date: 28/05/2025

Target Decision date: 04/09/2025

Case Officer: Alison Amoah

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is part of Reading Gate Retail Park and recently secured permission for the insertion of a mezzanine floor with external elevational alterations (ref: PL/25/0171 – works are currently in progress) for the operator Next (formerly the store was occupied by Carpet Right).



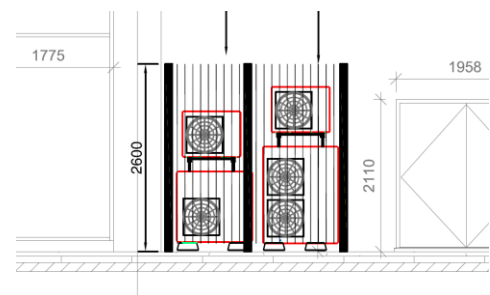
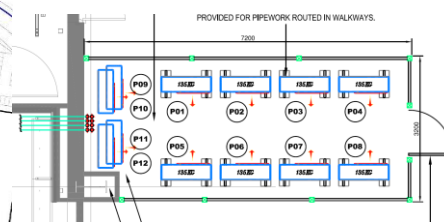
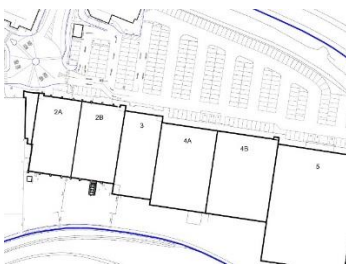
2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Creation of plant compound 7.2 m deep, 3.2m wide and 2.6m high to rear of retail unit 2B with new heat pump system external condensing units with palisade fencing and weld mesh roof.

Plans and other information considered as received 28th May 2025:

- Location plan
- Drawing no: 1475-100-M-04-Rev P1, dated April 2025 – Ground Floor Level Proposed HVAC External Plant. Plan Layout and Elevation Detail.
- Standard Inverter/ Inverter Outdoor Units: Outdoor Unit Product Dimensions

Proposed Compound



3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

95/0824/OA - Mixed use development for sports/ leisure and retail purposes comprising land reclamation works; a 25,000 seat multi-purpose sports stadium; car parking including Park & Ride facility; community sports facilities; non-food retail warehousing; A3 uses; access form A33 relief road - Approved 4th March 1997 - for the whole of the Reading Gate Retail Park (as varied by permissions 98/0827, 01/01086, 11/01651, 11/01652 and 12/00661) –

4. CONSULTATIONS

The following were consulted:

- **Transport Development Control** – The location of the proposed compound retains the existing loading bay and delivery vehicles will still be able to access the loading door. There are no objections to this application.

A site notice was erected on 16th July 2025:



No letters of representation have been received.

Discussions with the agent

Further detail was sought regarding confirmation that the rear area would have sufficient space for a turning area for delivery vehicles (including the largest vehicles), i.e. a tracking diagram for this and adjacent units, and whether the rear area has any marked/ allocated car parking spaces for employees.

The agent provided images of existing units and their plant compounds to the rear and confirmed that the rear area is a service yard and not a car parking area and in addition there is a separate access road with ample manoeuvring space



Image of rear of unit 4a TK Maxx Compound and service through road



Image of compound at rear of Unit 5 Curry's

It was agreed that a tracking diagram would not be required in this instance.

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

National Planning Policy Framework (Dec 2024)

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

Policy CC7 - Design and the Public Realm

Policy TR3 – Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters

Policy RL2 – Scale and Location of Retail, Leisure and Culture Development

Local Plan Partial Update

The current version of the Local Plan turned five years old on 5th November 2024. The Local Plan was reviewed in March 2023 and around half of the policies in the plan are considered still up-to-date. However, the rest need to be considered for updating to reflect changing circumstances and national policy. A consultation version of the draft updated version of the Local Plan was published on 6th November 2024 and the submission draft submitted to the Planning Inspectorate on 9th May 2025.

Although there is a five-year period for carrying out a review of a plan after it is adopted, nothing in the NPPF or elsewhere says that policies automatically become out of date when they are five years old. It is a matter of planning judgement rather than legal fact whether a plan or policies within it are out-of-date. This will depend on whether they have been overtaken by things that have happened since the plan was adopted, either on the ground or through changes in national policy, for example.

Officer advice in respect of the Local Plan policies pertinent to this pre-application is that they remain in accordance with national policy. Of those listed above Policies CC7 and RL2 are proposed for amendment, but the objectives of those policies remain very similar in the draft updated Local Plan, and although at present they have some weight in the decision making process the current policies can continue to be afforded weight in the appraisal below and are not considered to be 'out of date'.

6. APPRAISAL

The relevant matters are as follows:

- a) Principle
- b) Design
- c) Transport

a) Principle

The proposal would support the bringing back into use of an existing retail unit and meet operator requirements. The proposal is for a modestly scaled rear plant compound similar to existing plant compounds at adjacent units. The principle of the proposal is, therefore, considered acceptable.

b) Design

Policy CC7 requires that *“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 would be to the rear of a large retail unit and its scale, appearance and materials would be wholly acceptable within this commercial context.

c) Transport

Policy TR3 requires developments to not have a detrimental effect on safety, congestion and the environment.

The proposed compound will not have an effect on the operation of the service yard where sufficient space for manoeuvring of service vehicles would be maintained.

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

Application Permitted

Recommended Conditions:

- Standard time limit
- Approved plans

Informatives:

- Terms and conditions
- Complaints about construction
- Building Control
- Positive and proactive