

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

SITE ADDRESS: Reading Link Retail Park, Rose Kiln Lane, Reading , RG2 0SN

APPLICATION NUMBER: PL/25/0787

PROPOSAL: External alterations including replacement shopfront and associated roof works on south elevation, provision of five freestanding structures adjacent to the south elevation, installation of three roller shutter doors on north elevation and associated works (amended description).

APPLICANT: Sorbon Estates

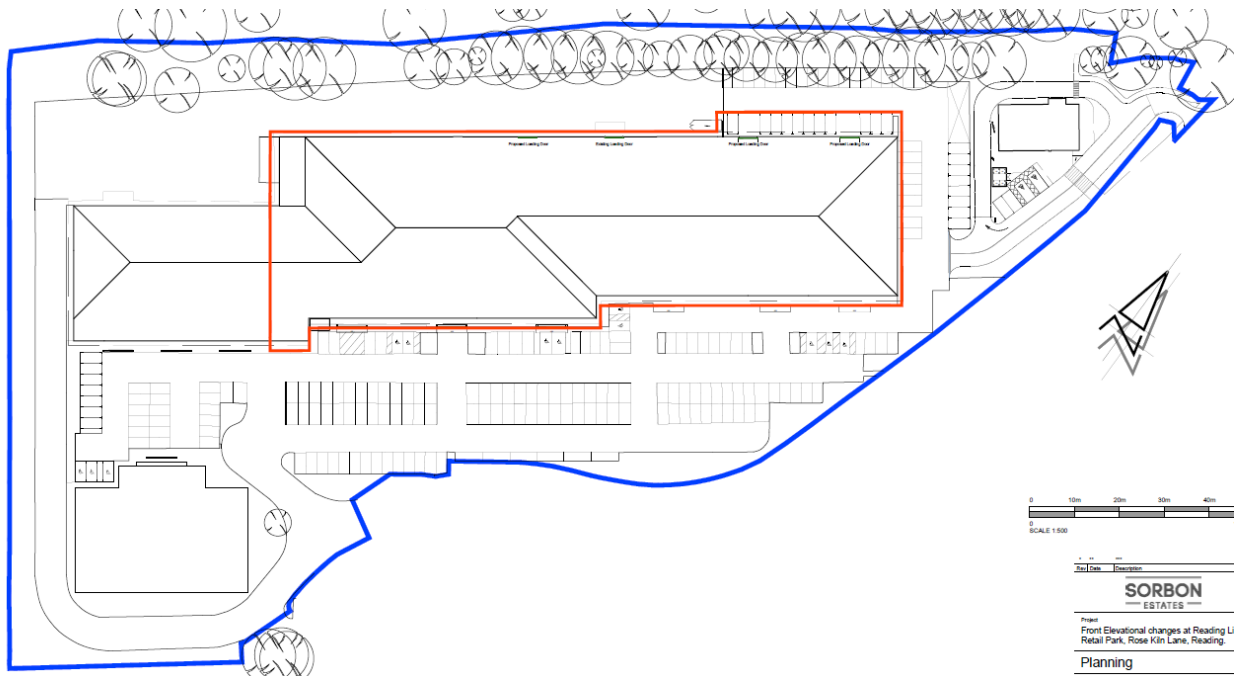
VALIDATION DATE: 28/05/2025

DETERMINATION DATE: Originally 23/07/2025, but an extension of time was subsequently agreed until 05/11/2025

CASE OFFICER: Jonathan Markwell

1. Site Description and Surrounding Area

- 1.1 The application site comprises part of the Reading Link Retail Park site, as shown on the plan below. More specifically, it comprises the units currently occupied by The Food Warehouse (Unit C1), Home Bargains (Unit C2) and Matalan (Unit C3&D), the spaces immediate to the front (south) of these units and some car parking spaces to the rear of the Matalan unit. Outside of the red line boundary of the application site, but elsewhere within the retail park site are: to the west units occupied by Bensons for Beds (Unit 1A), Magnet Kitchens (Unit 1B) and the Sports Bike Shop (Unit 1C); to the east is a Starbucks drive-thru coffee shop; to the south-west a gym is presently under construction (scheduled to be operated by JD Gyms as of December 2025). In addition, servicing space is to the north of the site, with car parking to the east and south.



Above: Extract of the car park plan showing the site boundary. The blue line indicates other nearby land the applicant has an interest in.

- 1.2 The retail park is located to the south-west of Reading Town Centre, is accessed off Rose Kiln Lane and is adjacent to the A33 (both of which are part of the classified highway

network), which is a key vehicular route running between the town centre (to the north) and M4 Motorway (to the south). The site is within an air quality management area and an area of archaeological potential. To the north of the site is the Holy Brook, which is an area of identified biodiversity interest, while to the west the Kennet and Holy Brook Meadows are a major landscape feature. The application site building is not listed, nor is it located within a conservation area.



Above: Unaccompanied officer site visit photographs on 23/09/2025



Above: Aerial view accessed via Google Maps (prior to construction of Starbucks & JD Gyms)

2. Proposal

2.1 Planning permission is sought for various external alterations, including:

- replacement shopfronts and associated roof works on south elevation to omit the existing gable features and provide a unified sloping roof and shopfront design with that already existing for the units at the western end of the parade,
- the provision of five freestanding structures adjacent to the south elevation. In practice, these will replicate the existing structures which already exist for the units at the western end of the parade.
- the installation of three roller shutter doors on the north elevation and associated works, such as the reduction in 4 car parking spaces at this point.

2.2 The floor plans also indicate the internal sub-division of Unit D into three separate units. This tallies with the shopfront and external works proposed. Planning permission is not required for internal alterations, with the latest permission relating to the whole retail park site being permission 210406, with no restriction regarding the sub-division of units being included on that permission.

2.3 The rationale for the works, as stated by the applicant (as per the planning statement submitted), are as follows:

- The key development objectives for this refurbishment will be to deliver retail units that modern day consumer demands.
- New shopfronts are to be in keeping with the wider retail park.
- External elevational changes are 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.
- 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.
- The creation of new shopfronts to serve each of the units created through the sub-division of Unit D are 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, to provide additional natural light into each unit and to activate the shopfront.
 - To the rear, each resultant unit will be serviced through the installation of roller shutter doors along the rear elevation, to assist the operational efficiency of the building.
- 2.4 During the application a number of revised / additional plans were sought and received to fully and accurately demonstrate the proposed works. This also accurately showed the existing parking arrangements, with those originally submitted being inaccurate.
- 2.5 Plans and documents considered:
- RLRP_LOC-MTLN_001 – Site Location Plan
 - RLRP_PLN-MTLN_002 – Existing and Proposed Floor Plans
 - Planning Statement - Proposed External Alterations, Reading Link Retail Park, Rose Kiln Lane, Reading, RG2 0SN, by Turley, Ref 02551, dated May 2025
 - Supporting Letter by Turley, dated 22/05/2025
As all received on 27/05/2025
 - RLRP_PLN-MTLN_001 – Existing Site Plan
 - RLRP_PLN-MTLN_001.1 – Proposed Site Plan
 - RLRP_PLN-MTLN_003 – Existing and Proposed Part Front and Rear Elevations
 - RLRP_PLN-MTLN_003.1 – Proposed Detailed Elevations & Sections
 - RLRP_PLN-MTLN_005 – Existing and Proposed Roof Plan
 - RLRP_PLN-UNT-C3&D-002 – Ground Floor Plan – Unit C3 & D
 - RLRP_PLN-MTLN_006 – Proposed Car Park Plan
As all received on 22/10/2025
- 2.6 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) – A CIL form has been submitted with the application, which indicate that the proposals will not be CIL liable. This is confirmed to be the case, owing to the nature of the proposals.

3. Relevant Planning History

- 3.1 The site was originally developed for bulky good retail purposes in the late 1980's based upon planning permissions (ref. 87TP536 and 87TP537, as allowed on appeal in August 1988). Since then the site has been subject to a variety of applications, with the following considered to be particularly pertinent in the context of the current proposals:
- 3.2 99/00235/FUL (PL/99/1935) – Subdivision of existing retail unit and introduction of new doors. Granted 02/06/1999.
- 3.3 99/00549/VARIAT (PL/99/1449) - 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. Granted following completion of Legal Agreement 20/10/2000.
- 3.4 99/00709/VARIAT (PL/99/2558) - 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 – Granted 25/11/1999. (Essentially enabled Matalan at unit D to extend their operations into unit C3).

- 3.5 00/00083/FUL (PL/00/0154) - Addition of new entrance to retail unit, and alterations to existing glazing. Granted 09/03/2000 (relating to the Matalan unit).
- 3.6 00/00935/VARIAT (PL/00/0677) - 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. Granted 21/11/2001.
- 3.7 01/00873/VARIAT (PL/01/1285) - 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. Granted 05/12/2002.
- 3.8 210406 (PL/21/0406) - 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. Granted 21/06/2021.
- 3.9 PL/25/0459 - Certificate of Lawful Use to confirm the proposed use of Unit C3 of Reading Link Retail Park within all sub-categories of Use Class E of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Refused 22/10/2025.

4 CONSULTATION AND PUBLICITY

- 4.1 RBC Transport Planning: This application is for the creation of new shopfronts to serve each of the units created through the sub-division of Unit D. The proposals include 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. It is stated that planning permission is not required for the internal arrangements of the unit as there are no conditions preventing sub-division of units.
- 4.2 In transport terms, the main consideration is the servicing arrangements for the sub-divided units. It is stated that the principle of the servicing arrangements to the retail park remains as the current situation, with all units serviced from the rear (northern) elevation. 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 i.e. there will be no extension of the current service yard area. There may be a minor increase in deliveries but this is considered acceptable given that the site is located in a shopping retail park.
- 4.3 The introduction of two additional roller shutter doors will result in loss of 4no. spaces in total. These spaces will be remarked using painted hatching as 'loading areas'. It is not considered that the loss of these spaces will have a material impact upon parking availability nor adversely impact upon the operation of the wider retail park car park area as they are located to the rear of the buildings and not widely used by customers.
- 4.4 In summary, there are no transport objections to this application.
- 4.5 GS Ecology (RBC's Ecology consultants) were informally consulted during the application, given the proposals involved roof alterations (omitting two gable features) in a location close to the Holy Brook and two tree corridors (all outside of the red line boundary). It was confirmed

that the risk of bats being affected by the proposals is minimal and there is no need to formally consult GS Ecology on the application.

- 4.6 Public Consultation – A site notice was erected in June 2025, with this still in place at the site during an unaccompanied officer site visit on 23/09/2025.



- 4.7 No responses have been received.

5. Equality Act 2010:

- 5.1 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.

6. Relevant Planning Policy and Guidance

- 6.1 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 (NPPF paragraph 12). In this case the development plan consists of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.
- 6.2 In this regard, the NPPF states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the Local Plan 2019 according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).

- 6.3 Accordingly, the National Planning Policy Framework and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:
- 6.4 National Policy and Guidance
- National Planning Policy Framework December 2024 (and update February 2025)
- 2. Achieving sustainable development
 - 4. Decision-making
 - 6. Building a strong, competitive economy
 - 11. Making effective use of land
 - 12. Achieving well-designed places
- National Planning Practice Guidance (2014 onwards) (PPG)
- 6.5 Reading Borough Local Plan 2019
- CC1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
 - CC7 Design and the Public Realm
 - CC8 Safeguarding Amenity
 - OU5 Shopfronts and Cash Machines
 - TR1 Achieving the Transport Strategy
 - TR3 Access, Traffic and Highways-Related Matters
- 6.6 Supplementary Planning Documents
- Design Guide for Shopfronts, Adopted January 2022
- 6.7 Other relevant documentation
- Reading Borough Local Plan Submission Draft Partial Update, May 2025
- 6.8 Local Plan Update
- 6.9 The current version of the Local Plan (adopted in November 2019) turned five years old on Tuesday 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. Subsequent to this consultation a submission draft was sent to the Secretary of State on 9th May 2025. At the time of writing, the examination-in-public of the partial update to the local plan is scheduled to take place in late 2025.
- 6.10 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.
- 6.11 Officer advice in respect of the Local Plan policies pertinent to this application is that they remain in accordance with national policy and that the objectives of those policies remains very similar in the submission draft updated Local Plan. Therefore, they can continue to be afforded weight in the determination of this planning application and are not considered to be ‘out of date’.

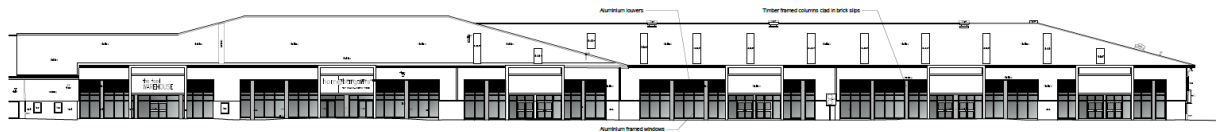
7. APPRAISAL

7.1 The main considerations are:

- Design
- Amenity
- Transport related matters
- Other matters

Design

7.2 Considering the shopfront alterations first, the proposals seek to provide increased amounts of glazing to this parade of units. These will be aluminium framed windows, complemented with louvres at upper levels and broken up with timber framed columns clad with brick slips. The proposals would result in the omission of the two existing gable features in the façade, which does not raise any particular design issues, with the proposed works being more contemporary in nature and assimilating coherently with the existing units at the western end of the parade. The applicant has specified the intended materials on the proposed plans, which are considered satisfactory, so no details will be required to be secured via condition on this occasion. Increased glazing will also improve natural surveillance and assist with legibility of the space. The proposals are considered to respect the character of the building as a whole and the wider area in terms of all design considerations. Therefore, the shopfront works are supported from a design perspective.



Part Proposed Front (SE) Elevation



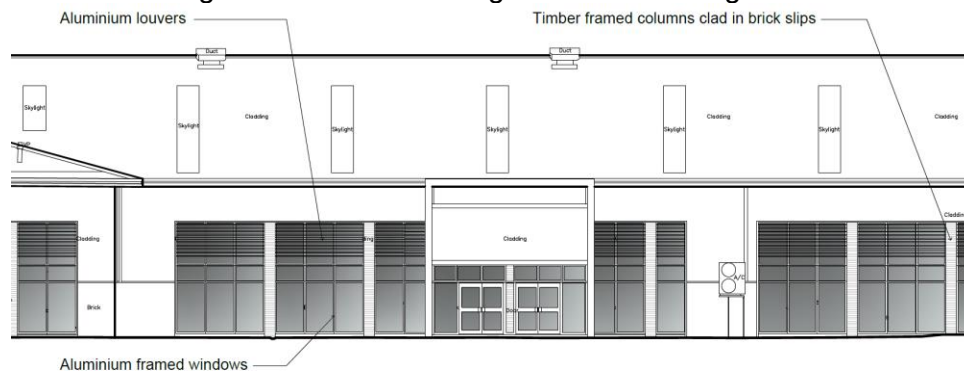
Part Existing Front (SE) Elevation



Above: Existing and proposed elevations, together with a site photograph.

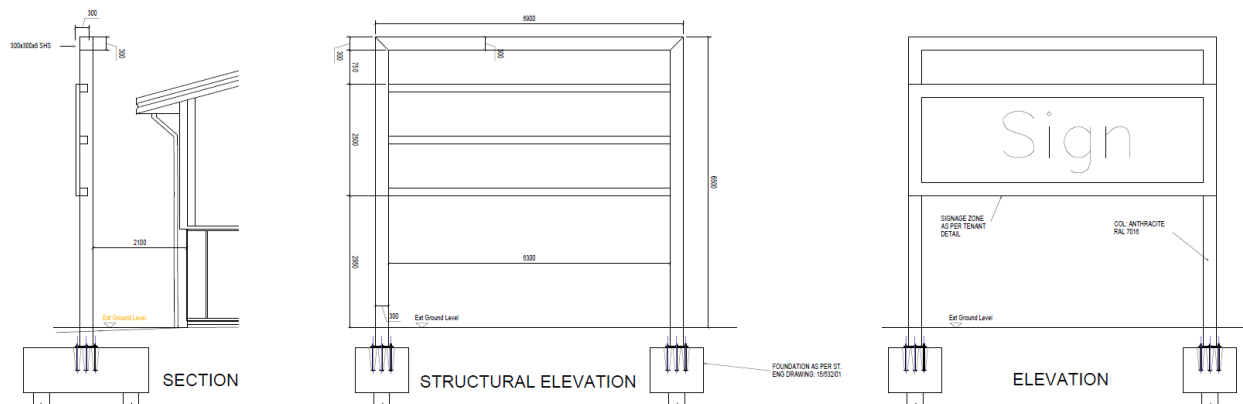


Left: As existing Matalan & Home Bargains elevation. Right: Units to the west of the site boundary.



Above: Detailed view of the proposed shopfront

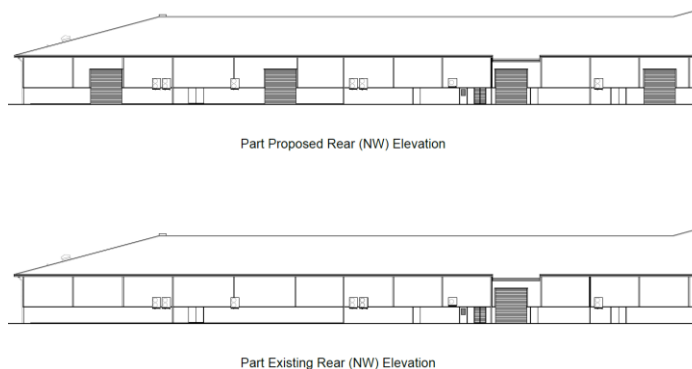
7.3 In terms of the five freestanding structures adjacent to the south elevation, these will effectively replicate the existing structures which already exist for the units at the western end of the parade (see photographs below). Accordingly, they align with the existing character and represent an improvement in visual terms. It is possible that current/future occupiers will require separate advertisement consent for the display of any future signs from these structures. Therefore, although the applicant already acknowledges this within the supporting statement, an informative to advise the applicant of this is recommended. The proposed plans indicate the grey colour of the structure, which matches those which already exist. Therefore, no design-based issues are raised with this component of the proposals.





Above: Photographs of the existing structures to the west of the application site boundary.

- 7.4 Finally, in terms of the works to the rear of the units, whilst roller shutters by their nature are utilitarian, the proposed design matches that of those which already exist at the site. Accordingly, a degree of uniformity is created on this rear elevation, which is not readily appreciated in public viewpoints. Hence, from a design perspective, no concerns are raised with these relatively minor works.



Left: Existing and proposed rear elevations. Right: Photograph of the existing arrangements.

Amenity

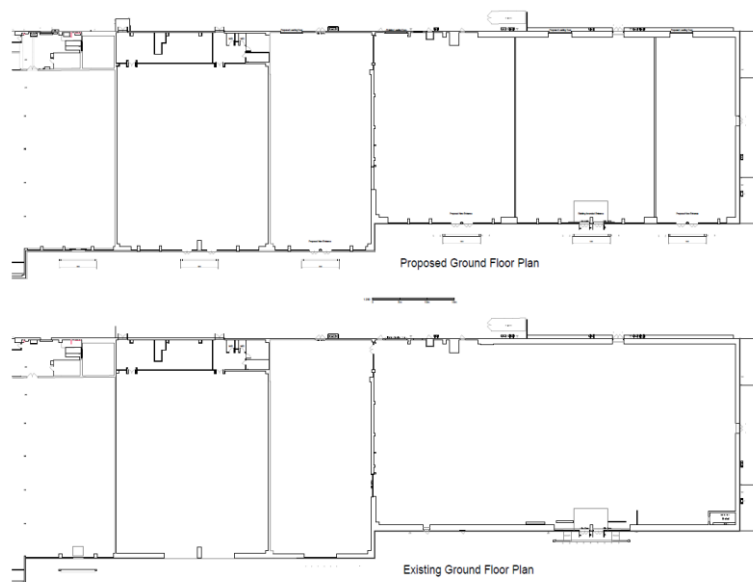
- 7.5 In terms of the shopfronts, these are shown to provide level access into the units, for the benefit of future customers. Furthermore, from a crime and safety perspective, the provision of greater expanses of glazing will assist natural surveillance and reduce the fear of crime around the units. To ensure this materialises in practice, and in doing so to comply with Policy OU5e, a compliance condition will prevent roller shutters and opaque coverings on shop windows being applied on the front elevation. The proposed freestanding structures are a sufficient distance from the entrances to minimise the risk of conflicts for customers (as existing further to the west). In overall terms no significantly adverse amenity impacts are envisaged as a result of the proposed works.

Transport matters

- 7.6 As per the RBC Transport observations at section 4 above, no concerns are raised in relation to deliveries, servicing or the reduction of 4 parking spaces to facilitate the roller shutter entrances to the rear.

Other matters

- 7.6 From a land use perspective, whilst it is acknowledged that the site is part of an emerging allocation for residential uses, these proposals are not considered to compromise that possible allocation coming forward in time. In addition, it is separately noted that the floor plans submitted (see below) also indicate the internal sub-division of Unit D into three separate units. This fits in with the shopfront and external works proposed. Planning permission is not required for internal alterations or the amalgamation of units, with the latest permission relating to the whole retail park site being permission 210406. This does not include any specific restriction on the sub-division of units, with it not considered necessary or relevant to impose any such condition within the context of this specific application.



- 7.7 In terms of biodiversity net gain, it is agreed that the development is subject to the de minimis exemption.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 On the basis of the above, it is considered that the application can be supported, with there being no conflicts with the development plan and the proposals being appropriate in design, amenity and all other regards.

Conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall begin no later than *three* years from the date of this planning permission.

Reason: In pursuance of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004) in order to prevent an accumulation of unimplemented planning permissions.

2. The development hereby permitted shall ONLY be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

- RLRP_PLN-MTLN_002 – Existing and Proposed Floor Plans
As received 27/05/2025
- RLRP_PLN-MTLN_001.1 – Proposed Site Plan
- RLRP_PLN-MTLN_003 – Existing and Proposed Part Front and Rear Elevations
- RLRP_PLN-MTLN_003.1 – Proposed Detailed Elevations & Sections
- RLRP_PLN-MTLN_005 – Existing and Proposed Roof Plan
- RLRP_PLN-UNT-C3&D-002 – Ground Floor Plan – Unit C3 & D
- RLRP_PLN-MTLN_006 – Proposed Car Park Plan
As all received on 22/10/2025

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is carried out and adhered to in accordance with the application form and associated details hereby approved.

3. The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of this development shall be as specified on the plans and application form.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and ensuring the new development responds positively to the local context and character in accordance with Policies CC7 and OU5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

4. Notwithstanding the provisions of Class 12 of Schedule 3 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007 (as amended), the replacement shopfronts hereby approved shall retain 'active window displays' along the length of the frontages at ground floor level, without the installation of window vinyls, roller shutters, or similar which would obscure visibility between the public realm and the units during the unit's operating hours.

Reason: In the interests of retaining a vibrant and attractive appearance in the vicinity of the site, integration with the public realm and improving active surveillance, in line with Policies CC7 and OU5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

Informatives

IF1 Positive and Proactive Working - approval

The Local Planning Authority has worked positively and proactively with the applicant to resolve relevant matters to allow permission to be granted within the agreed extended timescale for the decision to be issued.

IF3 Highways

- i) The attention of the applicant is drawn to Section 59 of the Highways Act 1980, which enables the Highway Authority to recover expenses due to damage caused by extraordinary traffic.
- ii) Any works affecting the Highway shall be in accordance with Reading Borough's Council's document "Guidance Notes for Activities on the Public Highway within the Borough of Reading". The applicant should note that compliance with this document is mandatory and licences to work

on the Highway will only be issued if the requirements contained within it are met. A copy can be obtained from the Council's website.

IF5 Terms

Your attention is drawn to the terms and conditions of this permission. Any development which is carried out but which differs materially from the approved plans and details, or does not comply with any condition(s) or planning obligation(s) attached to the permission may result in the Council taking action to remedy the breach of planning control. If you are in any doubt please contact the Council.

IF6 Building Control

A Building Regulations application may be required for the proposed development. Please go to our website for more advice.

<https://www.reading.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/building-control/apply-for-building-control/>

You can also find advice and submit an application using the Planning Portal.

IF7 Complaints about construction

Complaints are commonly received about noise and dust caused by construction and demolition works, particularly working outside reasonable hours and smoke from bonfires associated with the burning of waste on site. The developer is reminded that construction and demolition associated with the approved development will be subject to environmental health law.

Separate advertisement consent may be required

No advertisement consents are approved as part of this planning permission and you are advised that this permission is granted without prejudice to the possibility of requiring consent under the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended).