

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Abbey Ward

App Ref: PL/25/1617 Full planning permission

Address: 8, The Old Forge, Merchants Place, Reading, RG1 1DT

Proposal: Install a new window

Applicant: Ms Mahlah Catline

Received date: 11/11/2025

Target Decision date: 20/01/2026

Case Officer: Marcelina Rejwerska

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is a two-storey commercial building on the west side of Merchants Place, containing three separate commercial units. The application refers to the northern-most unit which was previously a hypnotherapy office. Merchants place is a short passageway between Friar Street and Garrard Street in the town centre. The site is part of the CR11 Major Opportunity Area (Station/River), and the primary shopping and office area. It is also part of the allocated development site CR11a (Station Hill).



Figure 1 Site photo taken by case officer on 8 December 2025.

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Planning permission is sought for the installation of one new window on the front elevation. The materials are proposed to match the existing, which are timber windows with aluminium frames and double glazing.



Figure 2 Indicative CGI taken from the submitted Design and Access Statement (not to scale).

2.1. Information submitted:

- Design and Access Statement
- Location Plan
- Existing Elevations
- Proposed Elevations

Received by the LPA on 11 November 2025

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- PL/95/0822 - Change of use from Blacksmith's workshop and showroom to restaurant. Application permitted.
- PL/96/0863 - Change of use from blacksmiths workshop and showroom to A1 retail plus ancillary sale of sandwiches and light refreshments. Application permitted.
- PL/99/1477 - Change of use from Retail/A3 Restaurant to A3 Restaurant on ground and first floor. Application permitted.

4. CONSULTATIONS

A site notice was displayed on site. No letters of representation were received.

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 (NPPF paragraph 12).

National Policy and Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework
National Planning Practice Guidance

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC1: PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
CC7: DESIGN AND THE PUBLIC REALM

Equality Act 2010:

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. APPRAISAL

Policy CC7 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 application site is an attractive part of Merchants Place and has a particularly positive contribution to the street scene. The proposed new window opening is not considered to detract from this, nor would it be harmful to the character of the site or the wider area. The proposed materials would match the existing.

7. CONCLUSION

The application has been assessed in line with national and locally adopted policies, and is considered to be in accordance with those policies.

8. RECOMMENDATION

GRANT PERMISSION

Recommended conditions:

1. Time Limit
2. Approved Plans
3. Materials to match