

Ward: Norcot

App No.: 221110/FUL

Address: Reading Retail Park, Oxford Road, Reading

Proposal: Proposed use of Unit 2 and Unit 6 as a foodstore (Class E) including rear extension, revised servicing arrangements, new shop front, trolley bay and covered cycle storage; and associated works

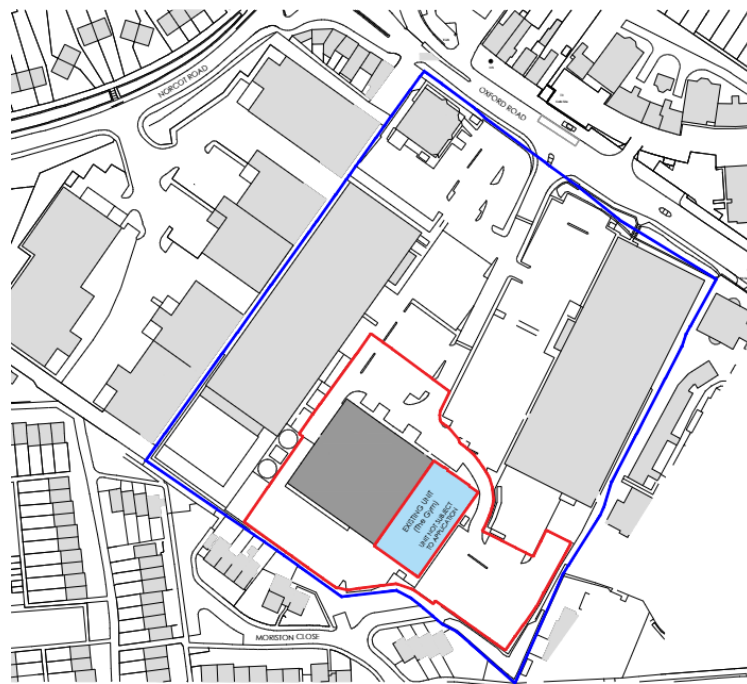
Applicant: Threadneedle UK Property Authorised Investment Fund

Deadline: 26/10/2022 - Extension of time 22/12/2023

INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The site forms part of Reading Retail Park on Oxford Road. Units B and C are within the southernmost block of the retail park, and are currently occupied by Carpetright and Halfords respectively. The adjacent Unit D is occupied by a gym, and is not within the red line boundary of the site.

Site Location Plan



2. PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The proposal is for the proposed use of Unit 2 and Unit 6 as a foodstore (current Use Class E) including rear extension, revised servicing arrangements, new shop front, trolley bay and covered cycle storage; and associated works.

- 2.2 The existing planning permission currently restricts the potential occupation of the floorspace to a limited range of non-food retailers only. Condition 8 of the original planning permission reference 06/00427/FUL states:

“The use of the retail floorspace falling within Class A1 of the Town & County Planning (Use Classes Order) 1987, shall not include the sale of food items, nor the sale of clothing, fashion accessories, shoes, sporting goods, books, stationery and toys, unless incidental to the primary retail activities undertaken therefrom.”

- 2.3 Submitted Plans and Documentation:

Plans

Design and Access Statement

Planning and Retail Assessment July 2022

Sustainability and Energy Statement

Transport Statement

Travel Plan

Technical Note: Pedestrian Infrastructure & Servicing Arrangements

Noise Impact Assessment 9360/BL Rev F

Tree Survey Report Rev B

- 2.4 Community Infrastructure levy (CIL):
In relation to the community infrastructure levy, the applicant has duly completed a CIL liability form with the submission.

3 PLANNING HISTORY

87/TP/975: Retail warehouse & external garden centre and fast food outlet. Permitted 3rd March 1988.

88/TP/313: Variation to condition 6 (87TP975) to allow Sunday trading (10:00 -18:00). Permitted 14th July 1988.

95/00424/FUL: Change of use of part of existing retail unit to car showroom. Permitted 3rd August 1995.

95/00694/FUL: Change of use of part of existing retail unit to car showroom. Permitted 19th October 1995.

01/01302/FUL: Alterations to rear elevation fire exit door. Permitted 30th November 2001.

04/01371/FUL: Refurbishment of existing retail park. Permitted 18th February 2005.

06/00427/FUL: Alterations and refurbishment of existing retail park. Permitted 22nd August 2006.

06/01118/FUL: Installation of additional mezzanine floorspace in Block 2, Unit C, Reading Retail Park. Permitted 18th December 2006.

07/00132/ADV: Internally illuminated fascia sign and non-illuminated panel sign. Permitted 5th April 2007.

08/00734/ADV: Erection of six non-illuminated poster frames. Permitted 15th August 2008.

08/00741/APPCON: Application to discharge conditions 14, 15 and 16 of planning consent 06/00427/FUL. Split decision 15th August 2008 (condition 14 discharged only).

08/00742/APPCON: Application for discharge of condition 2 of planning consent

06/00427/FUL. Condition discharged 6th August 2008.
 08/01149/MA: Minor amendments to planning consent 06/00427/FUL for the relocation of the sprinkler tanks. Agreed 25th September 2008.
 08/01150/APPCON: Discharge of conditions 15 and 16 of planning consent 06/00427/FUL. Conditions discharged 24th October 2008.
 08/01485/APPCON: Discharge of condition 19 of planning consent 06/00427/FUL. Condition discharged 23rd December 2008.
 09/00690/FUL: Replacement of external condensers. Permitted 7th July 2009.
 09/00994/APPCON: Discharge of condition 22 relating to permitted application 06/00427/FUL. Condition discharged 6th August 2009.
 09/00995/APPCON: Discharge of condition 5 relating to permitted application 06/01118/FUL. Condition discharged 6th August 2009.
 09/01331/APPCON: Discharge of condition 2 of permitted application 09/00690/FUL. Condition discharged 24th August 2009.
 09/01851/ADV: Illuminated fascia sign above entrance doors (relates to Carpetright unit). Permitted 7th January 2010.
 150355/FUL: Application for a change of use of floorspace from retail (class A1) to retail (class A1) and / or a health and fitness centre (class D2), and the creation of 428 sq m of additional floorspace at mezzanine level. Permitted 4th June 2015.
 151040/ADV: Fascia sign and window vinyls. Permitted 20th August 2015.
 211792/TPO: Proposed works to TPO tree. Split decision 7th December 2021.

4 CONSULTATIONS

Environmental Protection - the plant and delivery noise will be acceptable, provided the mitigation measures (plant enclosure and acoustic fence for delivery bay) are implemented. Detailed discussions on how the contaminated land conditions should be applied.

Highways - No objection (detailed discussion below, esp in relation to traffic generation)

Planning Policy Manager- There are no outstanding concerns relating to retail location policy for this application (see detailed assessment)

SUDS Officer - No objection.

Tree Officer - it is likely that the proposed development can be carried out without harm to existing trees. However, some amendments are necessary, as per my comments above, to the Tree Survey Report due to a number of inconsistencies or inaccuracies. Officers have secured an updated Tree Survey Report and AMS which confirms the retention of the trees.

Public

21 Moriston Close, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 2PW
 39 Moriston Close, Reading, RG30 2PW
 22 Moriston Close, Reading, RG30 2PW
 Unit 1, Reading Retail Park, Oxford Road, Reading, RG30 1PR
 Unit 4, Reading Retail Park, Oxford Road, Reading, RG30 1PR
 Unit 2, Reading Retail Park, Oxford Road, Reading, RG30 1PR

Unit 5, Reading Retail Park, Oxford Road, Reading, RG30 1PR
Unit 3, Reading Retail Park, Oxford Road, Reading
20 Moriston Close, Reading, RG30 2PW
26 Moriston Close, Reading, RG30 2PW

A site notice was displayed ON 25 October 2022.
No letters of representation have been received.

5 RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

- 5.1 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) which states at Paragraph 11 “Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development”. Sections on retail/commerce are also relevant.

- 5.2 The development plan for this Local Planning Authority is the Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019). The relevant policies are:

CC1: Presumption in favour of sustainable development
CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction
CC7: Design and the Public Realm
CC8: Safeguarding amenity
EN15: Air quality
EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodland
EN16: Pollution and water resources
EN17: Noise generating equipment
EN18: Flooding
TR1: Achieving the transport strategy
TR3: Access, traffic and highway-related matters
TR5: Car and cycle parking and electric vehicle charging
RL1: Network and hierarchy of centres
RL2: Scale and location of retail, leisure and culture development
RL5: Impact of main town centre uses
OU5: Shopfronts and cash machines

- 5.3 Relevant Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) are:

Sustainable Design & Construction SPD (2019)
Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011)

6 APPRAISAL

The main matters to be considered are

Land Use Principles
Transport

Design and Access
Safeguarding Amenity
Sustainable development
Natural Environment and Ecology
Air Quality
Pre-Commencement Conditions

Land Use Principles

- 6.2 The site is not within or on the edge of a defined centre identified in the Reading Borough Local Plan. Policy RL2 of the Local Plan directs all retail, leisure and culture development of over 2,500 sq m towards the centre of Reading. However, as the proposal is below this threshold, Policy RL2 states that “All development will comply with the relevant tests for retail, leisure and culture development set out in national policy”. Therefore, the principle of retail development in an out-of-centre location is dependent on demonstration of compliance with the relevant policy tests. Two particular tests are set out in national policy - the sequential approach and retail impact.
- 6.3 In terms of impact, paragraph 94 of the NPPF states that an impact assessment is required for applications for retail and leisure development outside town centres, which are not in accordance with an up-to-date plan, with a default threshold of 2,500 sq m of gross floorspace unless there is a locally-set threshold. This proposal falls below the national threshold. Policy RL5 of the Local Plan sets a lower threshold of 1,000 sq m, but only for “new or additional floorspace for main town centre uses in an edge-of-centre or out-of-centre location”. This proposal does not involve substantial new or additional floorspace, and as such policy does not require submission of an impact assessment.
- 6.4 Paragraph 87 of the NPPF states that “Local planning authorities should apply a sequential test to planning applications for main town centre uses which are neither in an existing centre nor in accordance with an up-to-date plan”. No size threshold is given. Demonstration of compliance with the sequential approach is therefore a policy requirement, and should be submitted at planning application stage.
- 6.5 The applicant has provided information to demonstrate compliance with the sequential approach, and this is detailed in the Planning Statement.
These are as follows:
- Sites capable of accommodating a discount foodstore comprising between 1,600 and 2,400 square metres of retail floorspace over a single level. This demonstrates flexibility being within 20% over and above the retail floorspace proposed (2,013 square metres);

- The ability to sell the full range of goods;
- Main road frontage / prominence;
- Immediately adjacent, at grade customer car parking with trolley bays; and
- Adequate servicing arrangements capable of receiving deliveries by large HGVs without customer conflict.

6.6 The main catchment of the proposed store is based on a five minute drive time, and it is within this area that sequentially preferable opportunities will be assessed. This is in line with similar proposals that the LPA has dealt with elsewhere within Reading and is considered to be appropriate. The four centres identified for the assessment (Oxford Road West, Meadway, Dee Park and Tilehurst Triangle) are therefore also considered to be appropriate.

6.7 The approach considers both existing units and potential development sites in or on the edge of the above centres. No sequentially preferable sites that would meet the above parameters are identified. The sites identified are not considered suitable or available. Officers agree that these sites are not suitable or available, and officers are not aware of any other available or suitable sites within or on the edge of the above centres. As a result officers consider that the requirement for the sequential approach has been fulfilled.

Transport

6.8 During the course of the application, discussions took place between the Council's Transport Development Control Team, the agent, and the applicant's Transport Planner. The application is supported by a Transport Statement, Travel Plan and a more detailed technical note was provided which contained details of the impact that the proposal would have on the junction capacity onto the A329 Oxford Road. In terms of the existing and forecast assessment scenarios, the results indicate that the Site Access / Oxford Road (A329) priority (T-) junction does and shall continue to operate within its capacity during the both the observed network weekday peak periods and the Saturday peak period with the development proposal. In relation to the existing and forecast assessment scenarios, the Technical report and assessment indicate that the Oxford Road (A329) / Wigmore Lane / Norcot Road junction (the Norcot Roundabout) does and shall continue to experience some operational issues with regards to localised arms. On this basis, in accordance with paragraph 111 of the NPPF, the scale of the 'residual cumulative impacts' of the development proposal on localised arms of the adjacent roundabout junction cannot be considered 'severe'. The Council's Highways Officer is satisfied that the proposal would not be prejudicial to highway safety.

6.9 In terms of parking, there is sufficient capacity within the existing car parking provision to accommodate any increases in parking

demand. Servicing area, RBC Transport is content that lorries can swing around the corner of the building (out of the red line, but within the blue line) to access the servicing ramp. Conditions are recommended to secure the implementation of pedestrian safety improvements as shown on Proposed Site Plan (15044-1-108) and car parking and 2 trailer parking spaces are to be provided in accordance with the plans hereby approved (pre-occupation). Cycle parking is effectively 'as existing' (covered and set to the front of the store) and seeing as there is no floorspace increase, this is acceptable.

6.10 Subject to conditions, the development is considered to be in accordance with Policies TR3 and TR5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

Design

6.11 Policy CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan requires all development to be of high quality design and maintain and enhance the character and appearance of the surrounding area. In this specific case; this concerns the following components:

- Layout
- Landscape
- Scale: height and massing; and
- Architectural detail and materials

6.12 As existing, Unit 2 and unit 6, Reading Retail Park appear as commercial buildings located within a retail estate. The refurbishment is designed to be in keeping with the surrounding uses at Reading Retail Park. The main façade will see the introduction of glazing, removing some of the existing cladding. New cladding will also be installed around the glazing which is considered to enhance the unit.

6.13 The location of the extension is to the rear of the property and will sit within the context of the existing building. This extends to 64 square metres and will not increase the overall height of the building. The proposals also include 66 square metre mezzanine installed which will be internal and non-trading. Given the extent of this, it is not considered necessary to consider any form of use controls on this floorplate.

6.14 The layout of the site will remain broadly similar with a slight reconfiguration of the car parking to the front of the unit, along with the introduction of a pedestrian crossing point comprising the majority of the changes. There is also the addition of staff parking to the rear. The proposals are considered to comply with the development plan, namely policies: CC7 and OU5.

Sustainable development

6.15 Policy CC2 requires that such proposals meet BREEAM 'Excellent' standards where possible. The Sustainable Design and Construction SPD

(2019) identifies that this includes refurbishment, although notes that consideration of whether the requirements are applicable needs to be undertaken on a case by case basis. In this instance, with a (minor) new extension, removal of internal walls and likely extensive internal fit out, it is considered that there is a need to comply with the policy requirement.

6.16 A Sustainability and Energy Statement, produced by Envision, is provided in support of the application. This outlines that the BREEAM Predictive Assessment made against Part 1 identifies that the development would achieve BREEAM Very Good.

6.17 The applicants have advised that the proposals at hand are a speculative project with no operator yet confirmed with the scope of the application involving relatively minor alterations to the external envelope and internal modifications and therefore the target of BREEAM Excellent is not practical. The proposals are modest in nature especially in relation to BREEAM and therefore a BREEAM Very Good has been targeted. An energy assessment has also been completed. This demonstrates how savings in annual carbon dioxide emissions of up to 68% could be expected and is aligned with local planning policy. Furthermore, the operational efficiency of the building is also expected to improve through the installation of efficient building services in line with Building Regulations 2022. The statement also outlines additional design measures which should be followed.

Overall, officers consider that given the relatively small additional floorspace and the overall upgrade of the building to BREEAM Very Good is appropriate in the circumstances and in this case, is suitable to satisfy Policy CC2. Conditions are required to achieve this.

Update: the applicant has advised that there is an issue regarding the trigger of these conditions. They have asked for flexibility that it would only relate to a Part 1 Assessment only given they do not have a committed tenant at this time. This assessment excludes the tenant. Other amendments relate to timing triggers given the BRE are taking much longer to assess applications now and we do not wish for any further delays on this application.

The case officer understands and accepts the extenuating circumstances above and the triggers are considered to be suitable in this instance.

Safeguarding Amenity

6.18 This proposal has also been assessed against Reading Borough Local Plan Policy CC8: Safeguarding Amenity, which states that proposals are acceptable where they will not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties with regard to:

- *Privacy and overlooking*
- *Access to sunlight and daylight*

- *Visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development*
- *Harm to outlook*

6.19 The rear of the existing building is close to residential properties on Moriston Close, some of which are between 30 and 40 metres away from the existing rear elevation and even closer to the parking and servicing areas. The overall scale and siting of the rear extension proposed is not considered to result in an undue loss of light, outlook or privacy to the occupants of these properties.

6.20 The application is supported by a Noise Impact Assessment. The currently permitted servicing hours at the site are 09:00 to 17:00 hours Monday to Friday. The proposed servicing hours for the food store are 0700 - 2300 Monday to Sunday including bank holidays. Mitigation is shown to be provided in the form of daytime deliveries only and a barrier to the delivery bay. Plant noise mitigation is also provided in the form of reduced plant noise levels or acoustic louvers/enclosure. A BS4142 assessment was undertaken which showed that with the mitigation there will be no adverse impact when comparing the noise from deliveries over the proposed extension of delivery hours. A BS4142 assessment was undertaken which showed that with the mitigation there is no adverse impact when comparing the noise from plant 24/7. The Council's Environmental Protection Team have raised no objection subject to the imposition of conditions to ensure the noise mitigation measures are provided.

Natural Environment and Ecology

6.21 A number of identified trees within the retail park are protected under Tree Preservation Order 122/09. The proposals retain all existing trees. There is 1 no. tree within the Application Site itself. The application is supported by a Tree Survey which confirms that this tree will be retained. The applicants have also submitted a landscaping plan to confirm the planting of 4 x trees within the staff parking area which will be secured by way of condition. The proposals therefore comply with Policy EN12 and EN14.

Equalities Impact

When determining an application for planning permission the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups as identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this 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 proposed development.

7 CONCLUSION

7.1 This proposal has been carefully considered in the context of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and supplementary planning documents. The recommendation is shown above.