



Matt Rodda MP
House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

Matthew Golledge, Acting Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection
Martin Lee, Safer Public Realm Team Leader

CC:
Micky Leng, Lead Councillor for Planning & Assets
Karen Rowland, Lead Councillor for Community Safety

3 November 2025

Dear Matthew and Martin,

I am writing on behalf of a number of businesses on Duke Street and Kings Road who are concerned about burglaries, vandalism, property damage, and about safety in this area of the town more broadly.

These businesses include, but are not limited to: Madoo, Carlito Hair Design, The Coconut Tree, Dukes Barbers, Elf's Bar Convenience Store, Nylon Hair Artists, Oxfam, GranLux Nail Spa, Amo Italian Street Food, Kings Grill, Amici Barbers, Aurora Family, Xpressions, Just Momo, Ryman's stationery, House of Flavours, Electric Hair, Madras Flavours, and The Thirsty Bear.

Many of these businesses have unfortunately been broken into, have had stock taken, and have had their windows broken or their premises vandalised on more than one occasion in the last few years. I met with representatives from some of these businesses in July alongside Councillor Karen Rowland to discuss the significant increase to the number of burglaries and attempted break-ins that had occurred in the preceding weeks. The business owners expressed that they were disappointed in the police response and the lack of investigation following these incidents. They also advised that they believe more needs to be done by the local authority to support and protect businesses in the town centre.

Following the repeated burglaries and attempted break-ins in the area, several of the businesses have installed shutters to protect their properties and stock; such security measures have also now become a requirement for many insurers. The businesses that are without shutters would now also like to install further security measures to protect their premises. However, as these businesses are in the Market Place/London Road conservation area, the owners have been told that they cannot currently install external roller shuttering and that those businesses that have already installed shuttering may now be subject to enforcement action.

The business owners understand that the council must carefully consider the visual impact of roller shuttering within the designated conservation area and that this could set a precedent for other areas in the town. However, they also contend that internal shuttering does not provide adequate protection against property damage and burglary, is prohibitively costly, and in many cases would require extensive remodelling of the internal structure of the business in order to be fitted. They would like to work with the planning team to meet a mutually satisfactory solution that provides the level of security that their businesses require without detracting from the heritage and visual appeal of the area.

Since our meeting in July, the business owners have been engaging with the council by attending meetings with councillors, planning officers, and the Town Centre Safer Neighbourhood Forum. They have also been providing the council with evidence of the burglaries and crime in the area, and have shared quotes and further information pertaining to the viability of the various security measures suggested by the council. The businesses have told me that they are open to working together to limit the amount of time that the shuttering is down and that they have ideas about how they could improve the aesthetic appeal of any shutters that are installed.

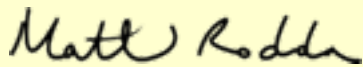
I am pleased that the local authority has been listening carefully to the businesses' concerns and that there has been positive engagement between the business owners and the council on this issue. However, I am aware that there is concern about the length of time that this is taking to resolve whilst many of the businesses remain vulnerable to further criminal activity, which in some cases may not be fully covered by their insurance.

I would be grateful if you could look into this issue and provide a response that I can share with these business owners that outlines the progress that is being made to provide clear guidance on the security measures that the council will permit.

Please could you also share some further information on what is being done to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour in the town centre, and to support small and independent businesses in Reading.

Thank you in anticipation.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matt Rodda'.

Matt Rodda MP