



PLANNING BY DESIGN

FROM CONCEPT TO COMPLETION

Planning, Design and Access Statement

Temporary Change of Use from Sui Generis (Ancillary Market Café) To Sui Generis (Community Support and Wellbeing Drop-In Centre)

Cattle Market Café, Great Knollys Street, Reading RG1 7HN

Prepared by Planning By Design on Behalf of Grace Gomez (The Way Ministry Reading)

Version	Date	Prepared by
1	11/02/2026	KE

Introduction

Planning By Design (the agent) has been instructed to act on behalf of Grace Gomez (The Way Ministry Reading) (the applicant) to submit a planning application to Reading Borough Council (the Local Planning Authority) for the temporary change of use from sui generis (ancillary market café) to sui generis (community support and wellbeing drop-in centre) (the proposal) at Cattle Market Café, Great Knollys Street, Reading RG1 7HN(the site).

In support of this application, the following Planning, Design and Access Statement has been constructed to demonstrate the suitability of this site for this proposal and evaluate its accordance with national and local planning policy, along with supplementary design guidance.

Site Context

The Cattle Market Café is located on Great Knollys Street, Reading (RG1 7HN), positioned immediately adjacent to the historic cattle market and auction site on the western side of the town centre. The site sits within an area characterised by a mix of commercial premises, trade-related uses and service yards, with direct access from the main thoroughfare and close proximity to Reading Station and the wider town centre functions.

In respect of the existing building and site, the original 1968 planning permission identifies the structure as having been constructed as a dining room for users of the cattle market. It subsequently operated as 'The Market Café', again serving primarily the needs of the market and auction activities primarily. The Council has confirmed that the lawful planning use of the premises is as an ancillary dining facility connected to the historic operation of the Cattle Market, classified as Sui Generis rather than Use Class E.

Importantly, the building is within Council ownership, and the café has not been operational for a minimum of two years. The building has been marketed since at least 2023 by the Council, with the formal marketing evidence (dated 2023) provided to the client on 9 September 2025. Despite this prolonged period of active marketing by the Council, no commercial operator has expressed interest in reoccupying the premises. This extended vacancy provides strong evidence that the former ancillary café function is no longer required.

Planning History

None found via the Council's online planning register.

The applicant engaged with the Council via formal pre-application discussions (ref. PL/25/1585). The Council advised that the building had originally been approved in 1968 as a dining room serving the cattle market and was therefore lawfully part of the wider sui generis market use rather than a Class E café, meaning any alternative use required planning permission. The proposed Community Support and Wellbeing Drop-In Centre was also considered a sui generis use, and the Council.

Key issues for any application included justifying the loss of the existing community-related market use under Policy OU1, demonstrating the public and community benefits of the proposal, and addressing the site's allocation for mixed use, now primarily residential development under Policy CR12a, which meant only a temporary permission was likely to be supported to avoid prejudicing redevelopment. The Council also highlighted the need to assess amenity, transport and security impacts, provide a Flood Risk Assessment due to the site's Flood Zone 2 location, and supply detailed operational information. Overall, officer support was considered possible, subject to addressing these matters, but only temporarily.

This application seeks to address these matters.

The Proposal

The proposal seeks the change of use of the former Market Café to accommodate the relocation of an existing and well-established Community Support and Wellbeing Drop In service currently operating from another premises in Reading. The charity already delivers a recognised and valued support offer for individuals and families experiencing food insecurity, financial hardship, poverty and homelessness, and the terminology used reflects both the breadth of its user base and the preventative, wellbeing-focused nature of its work. It also aligns with the organisation's registered objectives relating to poverty relief, social inclusion, food redistribution and community support.

The service already provides a comprehensive suite of support functions, including access to food through a community fridge, provision of hot meals, essential items, clothing and toiletries, as well as signposting, reintegration support and wider preventative assistance for people facing hardship. The facility is open to all individuals and families in need, regardless of background, and is not limited solely to those who are homeless. The service is inclusive, preventative and operates in partnership with a range of organisations. By offering a consistent and safe point of support, the proposal contributes directly to community cohesion and reduces pressure on statutory services such as adult social care, homelessness prevention teams and emergency support providers.

The proposed relocation will therefore allow an established community wellbeing and hardship support service to operate from a dedicated and more suitable building, ensuring continuity of provision and improved capacity to meet local need.

Description of Proposed Works

The accompanying drawings illustrate the proposed internal layout and external appearance of the building:

- Proposed Floor Plan (Drawing 26.CMC.P03v3) shows the proposed internal arrangement comprising a seating and dining area, kitchen, storage rooms, WC and shower room. The layout will support the operational needs of the drop-in centre, including food preparation, distribution, and private support functions.
- Proposed Elevations (Drawing 26.CMC.P04v3) present the south (front), east (side), north (rear) and west (side) elevations. These confirm that no significant external

alterations are proposed beyond minor repairs and maintenance. The building retains its existing form and appearance.

The organisation currently operates from the Fairview Community Centre at 90b Great Knollys Street, a Council-managed facility. The proposal will not introduce a new activity into the area but instead will relocate and consolidate existing operations into a dedicated building.

This relocation will provide several benefits:

- It will release space within the community centre for alternative community uses.
- It will reduce operational inefficiencies associated with split-site storage, preparation and delivery.
- It will enable the Council-managed community centre to accommodate a wider range of functions without being constrained by high-footfall weekly activities.

The relocation, therefore, strengthens the overall network of community facilities in the area and represents an enhancement rather than a displacement of existing provision.

Context of Proposal

The applicant has provided the following in support of the application:

The Way Ministry Reading's vision is to provide a safe, welcoming, and dignified community space that supports individuals and families experiencing food insecurity, poverty, and social isolation within Reading.

The proposed centre will focus on addressing food insecurity through the distribution of free surplus food to people in need, helping to ensure access to nutritious food for those who may otherwise struggle. The Way Ministry Reading will work with food redistribution organisations, local retailers, and community partners to source surplus food that would otherwise go to waste.

By redistributing surplus food, the centre will deliver significant social and environmental benefits. These include reducing food waste sent to landfill, lowering associated carbon emissions, and promoting a more sustainable and responsible use of resources. At the same time, the service will provide practical support to vulnerable members of the community and help reduce financial pressure on households facing hardship.

Services and activities offered will include:

- *Distribution of free surplus food to individuals and families experiencing food insecurity*
- *Provision of meals and refreshments where appropriate*
- *Signposting and referrals to other support services*
- *Partnership working with local authorities, charities, and community organisations*

Through this approach, The Way Ministry Reading aims to strengthen community resilience, reduce waste, and provide compassionate, practical support to those most in need.

Site Search and Alternatives Considered

The Way Ministry Reading undertook a site-finding process that included reviewing multiple properties across Reading. Several sites were discounted due to factors such as unsuitable layout, insufficient space, lack of accessibility, proximity to sensitive uses, high cost, or inability to meet safeguarding and operational requirements. This site was identified as the most appropriate option that balances operational need, community impact, and feasibility.

Reason for Choosing the Site and Its Benefits

This site has been selected due to its suitability in terms of size, layout, accessibility, and location for the proposed community use. The building provides an appropriate internal configuration that allows activities to be managed safely and efficiently, without the need for significant external alterations.

The Way Ministry Reading is currently operating from a rented property owned by Reading Borough Council on the same road. This proposal, therefore, represents a change of location rather than the introduction of a new use to the area, allowing continuity of service provision within a familiar and established setting.

The site is well located within Reading and is accessible to residents while remaining compatible with surrounding uses. Services will operate primarily indoors, supporting good management, safeguarding, and supervision.

The relocation to this site will also enable the charity to expand the range of services offered, including the distribution of free clothing and providing access to laptops, printers, and other resources for people in need. This will allow the centre to provide additional practical support and digital inclusion opportunities alongside its core food support services.

Overall, this site represents a suitable and balanced choice that meets operational needs while respecting the character and amenity of the surrounding area and allowing for service expansion to benefit the local community.

Partnership Working

The Way Ministry Reading works in partnership with a range of local and national organisations to ensure effective, responsible, and well-coordinated community support. These partnerships help strengthen service delivery, avoid duplication, and ensure best practices.

In particular, the charity works with FareShare and other food redistribution organisations to source surplus food that would otherwise go to waste. These partnerships enable the centre to provide free food to people experiencing food insecurity while contributing to environmental sustainability through the reduction of food waste.

The Way Ministry Reading also collaborates with other voluntary and community organisations to provide signposting and referrals to additional services where appropriate, including advice, wellbeing support, and specialist assistance. This partnership-led approach

ensures individuals and families are connected to wider support networks beyond the services provided on site.

Necessity for the Centre and Local Need

There is a demonstrable need for this centre within Reading, reflecting levels of poverty, financial hardship, and food insecurity identified across parts of the borough. Reading Borough Council's deprivation data shows that while Reading is an economically diverse town, it contains areas with significant pockets of deprivation, including households experiencing low incomes, rising living costs, and limited financial resilience.

Local and national evidence indicate that food insecurity has increased in recent years, driven by higher food prices, energy costs, and housing pressures. Council-aligned assessments and third-sector data show growing demand for food support services across Reading, particularly among families, single adults, and individuals on fixed or low incomes.

The proposed centre will respond directly to this identified local need by providing access to free surplus food, helping households manage short-term food shortages and reduce financial pressure. This approach aligns with wider council and community objectives around supporting vulnerable residents, promoting community resilience, and reducing inequality, while also contributing to environmental goals through the redistribution of surplus food that would otherwise go to waste.

By operating as a community-based food support hub, the centre will complement existing voluntary provision in Reading and help address an ongoing and well-documented need within the borough.

Opening Hours

The centre will operate at varying times throughout the week to ensure it complements existing services and covers gaps in current provision. By offering a flexible schedule, the charity will be able to meet local demand when other food support services are not available, providing timely access for individuals and families experiencing food insecurity.

Opening times will primarily be during daytime and early evening hours, with specific sessions allocated to food collection, distribution, and support activities. The varied hours will be carefully managed to minimise impact on neighbouring properties, with arrivals, departures, and activities primarily taking place indoors.

This flexible approach ensures the service is accessible to those who need it most while maintaining good management, safeguarding, and respect for the local community.

Staffing and Management

The centre will be staffed by experienced team leaders and supported by committed volunteers at all times when it is operating. Volunteers will receive appropriate training in areas such as safeguarding, health and safety, food handling, and working with vulnerable adults and families.

Clear policies and procedures are in place to ensure the safe and effective operation of the centre, covering areas such as safeguarding, behaviour management, emergency procedures, and confidentiality. Volunteers will work alongside team leaders and trustees under supervision, ensuring consistency in service delivery and adherence to the centre's standards.

This combination of experienced team leaders, trustees, dedicated volunteers, and robust operational policies will ensure that all activities are conducted safely, efficiently, and in line with best practice, while providing a welcoming and supportive environment for all service users.

Access, Transport and Parking

The site is accessible by foot and public transport, reducing reliance on private vehicles. Service users are unlikely to arrive by car. Staff and volunteers will be encouraged to use public transport where possible. Any limited parking requirements will be managed responsibly and in line with local arrangements.

Impact on Neighbouring Amenity

The Way Ministry Reading is committed to being a responsible neighbour. The use will be carefully managed to ensure there is no adverse impact on neighbouring amenity. Noise will be minimal, with activities taking place indoors. Clear rules will be in place for service users, and staff will actively manage arrivals, departures, and behaviour to prevent disturbance.

Conclusion

The proposed change of use represents a necessary, compassionate, and well-managed response to a clear local need. The Way Ministry Reading believes the proposal will deliver significant social benefit while respecting and protecting the character and amenity of the surrounding area.

Planning Policy

The following planning policy and guidance documents are recognised as material considerations for the assessment of this application.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF – 2024)

- Section 2: Achieving sustainable development
- Section 8: Promoting healthy and safe communities
- Section 9: Promoting sustainable transport
- Section 11: Making effective use of land
- Section 12: Achieving well-designed and beautiful places
- Section 14: Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

Local Development Plan (2019)

- Policy OU1 – New and Existing Community Facilities
- Policy CR12a – Cattle Market (within the West Side Major Opportunity Area)

- Policy CR12 – West Side Major Opportunity Area
- Policy H1 – Provision of Housing
- Policy TR3 – Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
- Policy CC6 – Accessibility and the Intensity of Development
- Policy CC8 – Safeguarding Amenity
- Policy EN18 – Flooding and Sustainable Drainage Systems

Assessment

The following section will evaluate the proposals in accordance with the relevant policies and supplementary design guidance of the Council to demonstrate why the proposal should be considered as acceptable in principle and in strict accordance with the Council's development.

Principle of Development

The proposal seeks the temporary change of use of the former Market Café to a Community Support and Wellbeing Drop-In Centre, providing a vital, inclusive and preventative support service for individuals and families experiencing food insecurity, financial hardship, poverty and related vulnerabilities within Reading. The principle of development is strongly aligned with the NPPF (2024) and the Local Development Plan (2019).

As noted above, the proposal seeks the temporary change of use of a long-vacant ancillary market café to a Community Support and Wellbeing Drop-In Centre, a use that directly responds to identified local need while ensuring that the long-term redevelopment aspirations for the wider Cattle Market allocation remain fully protected. The existing lawful use is unique to the historic cattle market function and has been redundant for several years. The café has not operated since at least 2023, and the Council, as landowner, has undertaken a sustained and genuine marketing campaign for at least two years without securing any interest from commercial operators. The formal marketing evidence provided to the applicant confirms that the property was actively promoted yet attracted no viable reoccupation. This prolonged vacancy, combined with the cessation of the cattle market's operational dining requirements, demonstrates conclusively that the former café use is no longer required, viable or capable of being reinstated. Policy OU1 requires applicants to demonstrate redundancy of the existing community-related use before alternative provision is considered. The Council's own marketing evidence, the duration of vacancy and the absence of any market-related demand provide a clear and robust basis for concluding that the former use has no reasonable prospect of returning. Policy OU1 also supports the introduction of new community facilities where they meet a demonstrable local need and deliver public benefit. The proposed use does precisely this, replacing an obsolete and unused function with a modern, inclusive and preventative community service that addresses food insecurity, poverty, social isolation, financial hardship and the risk of homelessness. These are acute and well-documented issues within Reading, and the proposed service directly contributes to the borough's wider objectives for community wellbeing, resilience and social inclusion.

The proposal also aligns with the strategic direction of Policies CR12 and CR12a, which identify the wider Cattle Market site as part of the West Side Major Opportunity Area and set out a long-term vision for residential-led redevelopment. The proposed use is temporary, reversible and requires no structural alterations that could impede or complicate future redevelopment. It will occupy only the floorspace available for lease and will cease once the Council brings forward the wider site for redevelopment. This ensures that the proposal does not prejudice the delivery of the allocation or undermine the residential aspirations for the area. Policy H1, which prioritises housing delivery, is therefore fully respected, as the temporary use maintains active occupation of a vacant building without constraining future housing development. In this context, the proposal represents an appropriate and efficient interim use that supports the Council's objectives for meanwhile activation of underused land while preserving the long-term redevelopment potential of the site.

The nature of the proposed use ensures compatibility with surrounding activities and compliance with Policies CC6 and CC8, which require development to safeguard amenity and ensure appropriate intensity of use. Activities will take place indoors, within daytime and early evening hours, and will be managed by experienced staff and volunteers operating under clear safeguarding, behaviour management and operational procedures. The site is accessible by foot and public transport, and the service is not expected to generate significant vehicle movements, ensuring compliance with Policy TR3. Although the building lies within Flood Zone 2, the accompanying Flood Risk Assessment demonstrates that the vulnerability of the proposed use is appropriate and that any risks can be mitigated in accordance with Policy EN18.

The proposal will also be fully consistent with the NPPF. Section 2 requires planning decisions to pursue sustainable development across economic, social and environmental objectives, and the proposal will contribute positively to all three. It will bring a vacant building back into active use and work with local contractors, will deliver substantial community value and will support environmentally responsible redistribution of surplus food. Section 8 emphasises the importance of promoting healthy, inclusive and safe communities, and the proposed centre will directly advance this objective by providing essential support to vulnerable households, reducing social isolation and strengthening community cohesion. Section 9 seeks to promote sustainable transport, and the proposal will align with this by operating in a highly accessible location where most users will arrive on foot or by public transport, with minimal reliance on private vehicles. Section 11 encourages the effective use of land, particularly previously developed and underused sites, and the reuse of a long vacant Council-owned building for a socially beneficial purpose will represent a clear example of making efficient use of land. Section 12 emphasises achieving well-designed and beautiful places; while the proposal will not involve external alterations, it will ensure that the building is actively used, well-maintained and able to contribute positively to the character and function of the area.

Taken together, the proposal represents a sustainable, policy-compliant and socially valuable temporary use of a vacant building. It meets a clear and growing local need, enhances community infrastructure, and does so without undermining the long-term redevelopment strategy for the Cattle Market site. The principle of development is therefore acceptable and strongly aligned with the intended outcomes of the NPPF and the Local Development Plan.

Wellbeing and Community Benefit

As noted above, the proposal will deliver clear wellbeing and community benefits by providing a safe and welcoming space where individuals and families experiencing food insecurity, financial hardship and social isolation will be able to access practical and preventative support. The organisation already supports up to 75 individuals and families each week and is recognised locally for its long-standing contribution to community wellbeing. Its activities include the redistribution of more than 80 tonnes of surplus food and the equivalent of over 190,619 meals, which represents significant social value, as well as environmental benefits through reduced waste.

The centre will also provide essential items and signposting to wider services, which will help reduce pressure on households with limited financial resilience and support early intervention before issues escalate. By relocating an existing and well-used service into a dedicated building, the proposal will strengthen the local network of community facilities and allow the organisation to operate more efficiently while freeing space within the Fairview Community Centre for other community uses. The inclusive nature of the service means it will be open to all who need it, and its partnership working with local authorities and voluntary organisations will ensure that users are connected to appropriate support.

The proposal will therefore align with Section 8 of the NPPF, which promotes healthy and safe communities, and with Policy OU1, which supports new community facilities where there is a demonstrable need. Overall, the proposal will provide a meaningful and accessible community resource that will contribute positively to local well-being.

Loss of Commercial Premise

The proposal will not result in the harmful loss of a commercial premises. The building has been vacant since at least 2023 and has been subject to an extended period of active Council-led marketing without attracting any interest from commercial operators. The former café use was tied specifically to the historic cattle market function and no longer represents a viable or deliverable commercial opportunity. Given the clear evidence of redundancy and the absence of market demand, the proposal will not displace an active or viable commercial use. The temporary nature of the proposed use ensures that the building will remain available for commercial or redevelopment opportunities in the future, while allowing it to be brought back into productive community use in the interim in a manner that aligns with national and local policy objectives for making effective use of land.

Design and Access Considerations

The design of the proposal has been developed to ensure that the building can operate as an inclusive, safe and welcoming community facility while maintaining the existing character and appearance of the site. No external alterations are proposed, and the building will retain its established form, scale and materials. As a result, the visual impact of the proposal is minimal, and the appearance of the building within the streetscape will remain unchanged. The existing structure is modest in height and massing and sits comfortably within an area characterised by a mixture of commercial premises, trade-related uses and service yards. The continued use of the building in its current form ensures that its visual relationship with neighbouring properties is preserved, and the proposal will not introduce any features that would alter the established character of Great Knollys Street. By maintaining the existing elevations and avoiding any external additions, the proposal accords with the principles of good design set out in Section 12 of the NPPF, which emphasises the importance of development that is visually sympathetic, well-integrated and respectful of local character.

Internally, the layout has been arranged to support clear circulation, intuitive wayfinding and safe movement throughout the building. The single-storey configuration provides level access from the street and allows users to move easily between the seating and dining area, kitchen, storage rooms and welfare facilities. This arrangement ensures that the building can be used safely and comfortably by individuals and families of all ages and abilities, reflecting the inclusive ethos of the service. The provision of a WC and shower room supports the dignity and wellbeing of users who may be experiencing hardship, and the internal configuration ensures privacy and safeguarding while maintaining good visibility and supervision for staff and volunteers. Although the proposal does not involve physical alterations to the exterior, the internal design approach places strong emphasis on accessibility, inclusivity and the creation of a welcoming environment, consistent with the aims of Section 8 of the NPPF and Policies CC6 and CC8, which require development to provide safe, accessible and appropriately managed spaces that safeguard amenity.

The proposal also ensures that the building remains visually well-maintained and actively used, preventing further deterioration associated with prolonged vacancy. Bringing the building back into beneficial use will contribute positively to the appearance and vitality of the area, avoiding the negative visual effects that can arise from long-term disuse. The absence of external alterations means that the proposal will not introduce any visual clutter, signage, plant or equipment that could detract from the character of the area or impact neighbouring properties. The building will continue to read as a modest, functional structure that sits comfortably within its mixed-use context.

Overall, the design, accessibility and visual impact considerations demonstrate that the proposal is entirely appropriate for its context. It preserves the existing appearance of the building, maintains the character of the streetscene, provides an inclusive and accessible internal environment, and ensures that the building continues to make a positive contribution to the area while remaining fully compatible with the long-term redevelopment aspirations for the wider site.

Impact on Amenity

The proposal will not give rise to any adverse impact on neighbouring amenity. The building will continue to sit within an established mixed-use environment characterised by commercial premises, and the nature and scale of the proposed use will remain entirely compatible with this context. All operations associated with the Community Support and Wellbeing Drop-In Centre will take place wholly within the building, ensuring that noise, activity and general comings and goings will remain contained and unobtrusive. The service will operate during daytime and early evening hours only, avoiding any late-night activity that could result in disturbance. The organisation already operates successfully nearby with similar levels of footfall, demonstrating that the scale and nature of the use will be inherently low-impact and appropriate for the surrounding area.

The proposal will not involve any external alterations, plant, equipment or lighting that could affect the visual or acoustic environment. Arrivals and departures will be supervised by experienced staff and volunteers, with clear safeguarding and behaviour management procedures in place to ensure that the centre will operate in a calm, orderly and respectful manner. Users will typically arrive on foot, and the service will not generate significant vehicle movements, meaning there will be no material impact on traffic, parking or highway safety. The absence of outdoor activity, amplified sound, or external congregation will further ensure that the proposal will not affect the amenity of neighbouring occupiers.

In this context, the proposal will fully accord with Policies CC6 and CC8, which require development to safeguard amenity and ensure that the intensity of use is appropriate to its surroundings. The controlled, indoor and daytime-focused nature of the service will ensure that the building continues to operate at a modest and compatible level of activity, with no adverse noise, disturbance, visual impact or operational effects. The proposal will therefore represent a well-managed, low-impact and entirely appropriate use of the site that will preserve the amenity of neighbouring properties and the wider area.

Highway and Sustainable Transport

The proposal will not give rise to any adverse impacts in relation to highways, parking or sustainable travel. The site is located within an accessible urban area on Great Knollys Street, close to Reading Station and well served by public transport, pedestrian routes and local cycle connections. The nature of the Community Support and Wellbeing Drop In Centre means that the vast majority of users will arrive by active travel, as is the case with the organisation's existing operations nearby. The service will not rely on car-borne trips, and the proposal will therefore not generate any material increase in vehicle movements or parking demand. Staff and volunteers will be encouraged to travel sustainably, and the operational model based on scheduled sessions, supervised access and a steady flow of visitors rather than peak time surges will ensure that activity remains modest and well managed throughout the day.

The proposal will not introduce any new vehicular access points, alterations to the highway or changes to the existing parking arrangements. The building will continue to be accessed in the same way as its historic café use, and the intensity of use will remain low and compatible with the surrounding commercial and trade-related environment. The absence of external

activity, loading operations or deliveries associated with the proposed use further ensures that there will be no impact on the free flow of traffic or the safe operation of the local highway network. The organisation already operates successfully from a nearby Council-managed facility with similar levels of activity, demonstrating that the scale and nature of the use will be inherently low impact and easily accommodated within the existing transport context.

In this respect, the proposal will fully accord with Policy TR3, which requires development to demonstrate safe and sustainable access and to avoid unacceptable impacts on the highway network. The site's accessible location, the predominantly pedestrian nature of the use and the absence of any operational need for parking or servicing ensure that the proposal will operate in a manner that is entirely consistent with sustainable travel principles. The proposal will also align with Section 9 of the NPPF, which seeks to promote sustainable transport, reduce reliance on private vehicles and ensure that development is located where it can be accessed by a choice of transport modes.

Flooding

The site is located within Flood Zone 2 according to the Environment Agency Flood Map for Planning, which represents a medium probability of flooding. The submitted Flood Risk Assessment confirms that the building will remain at low risk from all identified sources of flooding, including fluvial, surface water and sewer flooding. Available mapping and the findings of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment indicate that the site has no recorded history of flooding and that surface water ponding is unlikely due to the existing hardstanding and established urban drainage network. The proposed use is classified as less vulnerable and is therefore appropriate for this location.

The proposal will not involve any external alterations or changes to site levels that could increase flood risk on the site or elsewhere. Finished floor levels will remain at or above existing ground levels, and routine maintenance of drains, gutters and paved areas will be undertaken to ensure effective drainage. Staff will be trained in basic flood awareness and will monitor Environment Agency alerts as part of standard operational procedures. These measures will ensure that any residual risk is safely managed.

The proposal will therefore comply with Section 14 of the NPPF, which requires development to be safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere, and with Policy EN18, which seeks appropriate mitigation and management of flood risk. Given the low level of risk identified and the absence of any physical works, the proposal will not have any adverse impact on neighbouring properties or the wider area in relation to flooding.

Planning Balance

The proposal for the temporary change of use of the former Market Café to a Community Support and Wellbeing Drop-In Centre represents a clear example of sustainable development when assessed against the NPPF and the Local Development Plan as a whole. It will make effective use of an existing vacant building in a highly accessible urban location, consistent with the NPPF's emphasis on optimising the use of previously developed land. The

building has been unused for several years and has been subject to an extended period of unsuccessful Council-led marketing, confirming that the former ancillary café use is no longer viable or required. Bringing the building back into active use temporarily to serve the community will therefore secure an efficient and appropriate interim use without prejudicing the long-term redevelopment aspirations for the wider Cattle Market allocation.

Economically, the proposal will support a functioning community organisation that already contributes to local social infrastructure and operates in partnership with a range of agencies. The relocation will allow the service to operate more efficiently and will sustain volunteer roles and part-time staffing, ensuring that the building contributes positively to local activity rather than remaining vacant.

Socially, the proposal will deliver substantial public benefit by providing essential support to individuals and families experiencing food insecurity, financial hardship and social isolation. The service is well established, well used and recognised locally for its preventative and inclusive approach. Relocating the centre to this building will ensure continuity of provision in a dedicated space that is better suited to operational needs. These outcomes directly support the NPPF's objective of fostering healthy, inclusive and safe communities and align with Policy OU1, which encourages the provision of community facilities where there is a demonstrable need.

Environmentally, the proposal will reuse an existing building without requiring external alterations, thereby preserving the character of the area and avoiding any additional visual impact. The site is sustainably located, with most users arriving on foot or by public transport, and the modest scale and indoor nature of the activities ensure that the use will not give rise to adverse effects on amenity, transport or the local environment. The accompanying Flood Risk Assessment confirms that the site is suitable for the proposed use and that any residual risk can be safely managed.

Overall, the proposal will deliver clear economic, social and environmental benefits, make efficient use of existing floorspace, and integrate sensitively into its mixed-use surroundings. There is no identifiable harm that would outweigh these benefits, and the temporary nature of the use ensures that the long-term redevelopment potential of the site remains fully protected. The planning balance therefore weighs decisively in favour of granting temporary planning permission.

Conclusion

Overall, the proposal presents an appropriate use that will not lead to any adverse impact on the surrounding area. The proposal is in line with local and national planning policy and guidance. The proposal will deliver significant social and economic benefits to the applicants and the local community, while not resulting in any detrimental harm to the surrounding area, neighbouring occupiers and uses or the town centre.

We kindly request that the Council support this application.