

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Abbey

App Ref: PL/26/0315 Full planning permission

Address: CATTLE MARKET CAFE, GREAT KNOLLYS STREET, READING, RG1 7HL

Proposal: Temporary Change of Use from Sui Generis (Ancillary Market Café) To Sui Generis (Community Support and Wellbeing Drop-In Centre) for up to 5 years.

Applicant: Grace Gomez

Received date: 10 Marh 2026

Target Decision date: 22 May 2026 (Agreed Extension of Time)

Case Officer: Anthony Scholes

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is part of the 'Cattle Market' site on the northern side of Great Knollys Street, within the Reading Central Area. Specifically, the 'Cattle Market Café' building, which is a relatively small portion of the overall cattle market site, being approximately 200m².

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The proposed development seeks temporary planning permission for the change of use to a Sui Generis (Community Support and Wellbeing Drop-In Centre) for up to 5 years. The proposal does not include any external alterations to the building or the site based on the temporary nature of the development. Internally, the building would need significant works, though these do not need planning permission.

The following plans and documents were provided with the application:

CIL Form

Application form

'The Way Ministry Reading' Flood Risk Assessment

Drawing No: 26.CMC.P01v3 – Existing floor plans

Drawing No: 26.CMC.P02v3 – Existing elevations

Drawing No: 26.CMC.P05v3 – Existing and Proposed Block Plans

Drawing No: 26.CMC.P06v3 – Location and Block Plans

Drawing No: 26.CMC.P04v3 – Proposed Elevations

Drawing No: 26.CMC.P03v3 – Proposed floor plans

As received by the Local Planning Authority on 10 March 2026

3. CONSULTATIONS

The following were consulted:

- RBC Environmental Protection – No comments
- Transport Development Control – No objection
- Thames Valley Police Designing Out Crime Officer – No objection.
- Environment Agency EA – No objection, follow standing advice.

A site notice was placed on site, no comments have been received.

4. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

None applicable to the subject site.

5. EQUALITY ACT

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. 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.

Accordingly, the National Planning Policy Framework and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

National Planning Policy Framework (2024)
National Planning Policy Guidance

Reading Borough Local Plan 2019

CC1: PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
CC2: SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION
CC3: ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE
CC5: WASTE MINIMISATION AND STORAGE
CC6: ACCESSIBILITY AND THE INTENSITY OF DEVELOPMENT
CC8: SAFEGUARDING AMENITY
EN15: AIR QUALITY
EN16: POLLUTION AND WATER RESOURCES
EN18: FLOODING AND SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE SYSTEMS
TR3: ACCESS, TRAFFIC AND HIGHWAY-RELATED MATTERS
TR5: CAR AND CYCLE PARKING AND ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING
RL1: NETWORK AND HIERARCHY OF CENTRES
OU1: NEW AND EXISTING COMMUNITY FACILITIES
CR1: DEFINITION OF CENTRAL READING
CR2: DESIGN IN CENTRAL READING
CR3: PUBLIC REALM IN CENTRAL READING
CR12a: WEST SIDE MAJOR OPPORTUNITY AREA – CATTLE MARKET

Supplementary Planning Documents

Sustainable Design and Construction SPD 2019
Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD 2011

7. APPRAISAL

Principle of Development

The site is located within the West Side Major Opportunity Area of the Town Centre as designated by Policy CR12. This policy sets out the overarching principles that development in this area will achieve and includes, contributing towards a mix of uses, facilitating greater pedestrian and cycle permeability, providing additional open space, careful consideration of the transition between low and

high density areas and the enhancement of listed buildings and conservation areas and their setting and demonstrating a comprehensive approach to development which would not preclude neighbouring sites from achieving the aims of the policy.

The site is also located within the Cattle Market sub-area of the West Side Major Opportunity Area under Policy CR12e which identifies an indicative development potential of the sub-area for 330-490 dwellings and 10,000-15,000sqm of retail floor space. The sub-area policy covered an area of 2.46ha, and seeks edge-of-centre retail uses (including bulky goods), residential development and a public carpark.

At 0.02 ha the application site is a very small parcel of land in the context of the size of the area covered by both the Cattle Market sub-area and the wider West Side Major Opportunity Area designations. The unique use proposed does not necessarily provide any uses which are envisaged by Policies CR12 and CR12a. However, the proposed development is only sought for a temporary period of 5 years, without any improvements or contribution to the public realm, or street. The use is not a permanent proposal, and would require a returning of the site to its current use following cessation of that use.

It is acknowledged that the West Side Major Opportunity Area is currently in a transitional phase with the Chatham Place redevelopment having been completed and a major redevelopment of Broad Street Mall having a resolution to approve endorsed at Planning Applications Committee. Limited recent developments have been approved within the vicinity, with the recently constructed 45 Caversham Road (the former car rental site) being the sole development north of Weldale Street. The proposed development would allow the opportunity of compatible uses, create a degree of animation of a vacant site within the town centre during this transitional phase, whilst more comprehensive plans for redevelopment of the area progress. On this basis it is considered that a temporary planning permission for up to five years would be appropriate in this instance.

The proposal, as a 'Community support and wellbeing centre' would also be considered a community use under Policy OU1 (as per supporting text 4.7.2). New community uses are supported and located where there is a choice of means of travel and within centres. The site is within the Reading Central Area, and is provided with the highest level of accessibility by all modes within the Borough. As such, the location would be appropriate for a community use, and is supported by Policy OU1.

It is noted that the proposed use, does not appear to be a 'centre use' as listed within the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019, nor a 'Main town centre use' as listed within the NPPF (2024). Policy RL3 seeks that there should be no net loss of centre use for non-centre use. In this instance, the proposal is the change from one Sui Generis non-centre use, to another. Therefore, is acceptable with regard to Policy RL3.

In terms of the existing use of the site, the existing site as a café associated with the cattle market is unused, and has been vacant for some time. The principle of the proposed development is accepted on the basis of a temporary planning permission. The following sections of the report assess the proposals in the context of the relevant more detailed policy and material planning considerations.

Flood Risk Assessment

Policy EN18 (Flooding and Sustainable Drainage) requires development to be directed to and consider the flood risk on the development throughout its lifetime.

The type of development would be classified as 'less vulnerable' as defined within the Environment Agency (EA) Guidance. The applicant has provided a flood risk assessment document in support of the

application. The application has been considered against the EA's flood risk assessment guidance for local planning authorities.

The development would not be subject to the sequential or exemption test as a change of use. The flood risk assessment is considered to provide sufficient information to meet the EA flood risk assessment guidance.

The site is located wholly within flood zone 2. Though, the flood levels for the site are not particularly high. However, it is considered that the evacuation routes would need to consider a distance away from the site which has not been done. It is considered reasonable to require a flood management and evacuation plan by condition.

Amenity Considerations

The proposed development would re-use an existing building within an established area for a non-residential use. The Sui Generis use is seeking to be a community hub for members of the public to visit as required, for support with food security assistance, poverty and social isolation issues. The operator sources various types of food which would otherwise go to waste (i.e. via supermarkets, takeaways, and other food businesses). The operator also provides meals, and works with other services (including LPA's, charities, and community groups) to refer and assist with providing those services. There would not be any food cooking or extensive food preparation on site. There would also not be overnight accommodation, and the use would be limited to 8am-9pm daily.

Policy CC8 seeks to protect the amenity of existing residents. The site is located opposite existing commercial/industrial uses, with the nearest residents located ~58m from the site at Lion Court to the south-east of the site. The proposed use is not considered to result in significant noise or disturbance, nor significant off site movements that may result in disturbance to those residents. Without cooking, or overnight accommodation, it is not considered that the use would create any additional noise or disturbance to neighbouring uses, and is likely to be lesser in its impacts than its lawful planning use. As such, is considered acceptable in this regard.

Design Considerations

The proposed use does not include alterations to the existing building, nor the area to the front of the building. Policy CC7 and CR2 seeks that development would be of a high quality that maintains and enhances the character of the area. The use, as a temporary use, would contribute to the character of the area through reactivation of the building through its use, rather than improving the front of the site or the building. It is not considered reasonable to require landscaping of the site, or similar for a temporary use, as these works would be required to be removed by condition. As such, the reactivation of the building is sufficient in the short term to enable and not prohibit the future development of the site.

The site is provided with an existing step free access, and therefore would provide good level of accessibility. The internal arrangements could also be provided with wheelchair accessibility in mind, though this would be covered under separate legislation (i.e. building regulations).

Sustainability

Policy CC2, CC3, and CC5 seek to ensure development considers the impacts of climate change, minimises waste, and are refurbished appropriately. The application site would re-use a building in a state of disrepair, for only a temporary period. The building would no doubt need some repair in order to be re-used, though it would be expected that this would be limited in scope. As such, the provision of a BREEAM assessment as required by Policy CC2 would not be considered reasonable in this instance.

The use of the existing building would minimise the use of new materials and therefore enjoy support from Policy CC4.

Air Quality

The application site is located within an air quality management area (AQMA), Policy EN15 requires development to have regard to air quality. The development is not considered to have a significant demand that would have significant impacts on local air quality (nor provide a use which is particularly susceptible in terms of air quality), and is therefore acceptable in this regard.

Transport matters

The proposal does not include car, or cycle parking. The site is located in a highly accessible area and car parking is not required. Whilst customers of the use may cycle, the majority probably will not and the provision of formal cycle parking is considered to be an excessive requirement for the temporary duration of the use.

8. CONCLUSION

The proposal would use an existing building located on a site designated for mixed use development including significant housing provision. The proposal would be a temporary use, which would not prejudice the long term aims of the site allocation, and therefore would be acceptable. Whilst land ownership is not normally a planning in this instance the controller of the land is the Council, meaning that it retains the ability to cease the use (via the lease) in the event that the wider Cattle Market site needs to be brought forward for redevelopment. This therefore provides further assurance that the proposal will not hinder the ability of the local plan allocation site from coming forward for redevelopment.

9. RECOMMENDATION

Approve.