

Angel Bar & Supper Club, 18 Prospect Street, Caversham, Reading, RG4 8JG

Change of use of ground floor from restaurant (Class E)
to mixed food & drink establishment and drinking
establishment (Sui Generis).

Applicant:

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Project:

Change of use of ground floor from restaurant (Class E) to mixed food & drink establishment and drinking establishment (Sui Generis)

Site Address:

18 Prospect Street, Caversham, Reading, RG4 8JG

Client:

Ms Meena Arch

Prepared By:

Pyramid Planning

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Pyramid Planning on behalf of the applicant in support of a retrospective planning application seeking permission for the change of use of the premises from a ground floor from restaurant (Class E) to mixed food & drink establishment and drinking establishment (Sui Generis) at Angel Bar, 18 Prospect Street, Caversham, Reading, RG4 8JG (hereafter referred to as 'the application site').

1.2 The application has been submitted following discussions with Reading Borough Council during the determination of application PL/25/0345, regarding the planning status of the existing operation. Whilst the applicant does not accept that the current operation necessarily constitutes a material change of use requiring planning permission, this application has been submitted on a without prejudice basis in order to regularise the planning position should the Local Planning Authority ultimately conclude that planning permission is required.

1.3 The purpose of this Planning Statement is to provide an overview of the application site and the existing business, describe the nature of the current operation, consider the relevant planning policy framework and demonstrate that the proposed mixed use would not give rise to any unacceptable planning impacts. The statement concludes that the development accords with the Development Plan when read as a whole and that planning permission should therefore be granted.

1.4 The application site occupies a prominent commercial unit within Caversham Local Centre and has operated as an established hospitality venue for a number of years. The premises provides a substantial food offering alongside the sale of alcoholic beverages in a managed environment, contributing positively to the vitality and viability of the local centre and supporting the evening economy. As demonstrated throughout this statement, the existing operation has not resulted in unacceptable harm to the character of the area or the amenities of neighbouring occupiers, and any planning impacts are capable of being appropriately managed through the planning system.

2.0 Without Prejudice Position

2.1 This application is submitted on a without prejudice basis and should not be taken as an acceptance by the applicant that a material change of use has occurred, nor that planning permission is required for the existing operation of the premises.

2.2 The applicant maintains that the existing operation continues to provide a substantial food and drink offer and does not accept that the planning status of the premises is as asserted by the Local Planning Authority. However, in the interests of resolving the matter pragmatically and avoiding the need for protracted planning enforcement proceedings, this application has been submitted to enable the Local Planning Authority to consider the acceptability of the existing operation on its planning merits.

2.3 Accordingly, the submission of this application should not be interpreted as an admission that a breach of planning control has occurred, nor should the description of development be construed as an acceptance of the Local Planning Authority's interpretation of the lawful planning use. The application has been drafted in a manner that reflects the Local Planning Authority's stated concerns, solely for the purposes of enabling the application to be determined.

2.4 This Planning Statement therefore focuses on demonstrating that, irrespective of the planning status of the existing operation, the current use of the premises does not give rise to unacceptable planning harm and is fully capable of being supported through the grant of planning permission.

3.0 The Application Site and Surroundings

3.1 The application site comprises a ground floor commercial unit known as Angel Bar, situated at 18 Prospect Street, Caversham, Reading. The premises occupies a prominent position on the north-west side of Prospect Street within Caversham Local Centre and has operated as an established hospitality venue for a number of years. The business currently trades as a food and drink establishment offering a menu of freshly prepared food alongside alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages. The premises also accommodates pre-booked private functions and events outside of its normal advertised trading hours.

3.2 Prospect Street forms part of the principal commercial centre within Caversham and is characterised by a wide variety of retail, leisure, food and drink, and service-based businesses. The street plays an important role as the focal point of the local centre and experiences activity throughout both the daytime and evening periods. The application site forms part of a continuous parade of commercial premises, with adjoining and nearby units occupied by a diverse range of businesses including cafés, restaurants, public houses, drinking establishments, convenience retail, professional services and other town centre uses.

3.3 The application site benefits from a highly sustainable location within Caversham Local Centre. The premises is readily accessible by foot, cycle and public transport, whilst public car parks and on-street parking facilities serve the wider centre. The site is therefore well placed to accommodate a hospitality use and benefits from the level of accessibility expected of a town centre location.

3.4 Whilst residential properties are present within the wider area, the immediate surroundings are predominantly commercial in character. Ground floor units within this section of Prospect Street are almost exclusively occupied by commercial uses, with many upper floor premises similarly occupied by commercial or ancillary business accommodation. The only residential accommodation immediately associated with the application site is the first-floor flat directly above the premises.

3.5 The premises operates entirely from within the existing building envelope and does not benefit from any external customer seating or drinking areas to either the front or rear. Customer activity is therefore contained within the envelope of the building itself, with patrons entering and leaving directly onto Prospect Street. There are no physical alterations proposed to the building as part of this application.

3.6 The surrounding area already supports an established evening economy, with a number of nearby hospitality businesses operating into the evening. The application site therefore forms part of an existing cluster of food, drink and leisure uses that collectively contribute to the vitality and viability of Caversham Local Centre.

4.0 Planning and Enforcement History

4.1 The application site has a long-established planning history relating to its commercial use. The planning permissions and enforcement history most relevant to the current application are set out below.

Planning History

4.2 Prior Approval – PL/16/0183 – On the 29th March 2016, Reading Borough Council granted Prior Approval under application reference PL/16/0183 for the change of use of the premises from a Class A1 retail shop to a Class A3 restaurant under Schedule 2, Part 3, Class C of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015. The prior approval established the lawful planning use of the premises as a restaurant, subject to a number of planning conditions, including restrictions relating to the permitted hours of operation. Following amendments to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order in September 2020, the former Class A3 restaurant use became incorporated within the wider Class E use class. Accordingly, the lawful planning use of the premises is now recognised as Class E.

4.3 Variation of Condition Application – PL/25/0345 – On the 5th March 2025, the applicant submitted an application under Section 73 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 seeking to vary Condition 2 attached to planning permission PL/16/0183 to permit extended opening hours. Planning permission was subsequently granted on the 4th June 2025.

4.4 The premises has operated as a licensed food and drink venue for a substantial period and across a succession of businesses. The premises was previously occupied by Topsy Bean and subsequently Chapter Caffeine and Cocktails, before Angel Bar commenced operating from the site at Easter 2022. Whilst the precise nature and operation of each business has varied, the premises has therefore accommodated food and drink uses for approximately a decade.

4.5 Angel Bar has naturally continued this established pattern of activity at the premises. The current operation has not introduced a wholly new form of commercial activity to the site but represents the latest food and drink business to occupy the premises. The applicant retains table booking records and photographic evidence dating from the commencement of Angel Bar's operation in 2022, demonstrating that the preparation and service of food has consistently formed a substantive component of the business.

4.6 Whilst the applicant does not accept the Local Planning Authority's interpretation of the planning status of the premises, and maintains that the existing operation remains lawful, this application has been submitted on a without prejudice basis in order that the acceptability of the existing operation may be considered on its planning merits. The submission of this application should not be construed as an admission that a breach of planning control has occurred.

Enforcement History

4.7 During consideration of the Section 73 application, and following subsequent discussions with the Local Planning Authority, the Council expressed the view that the existing operation of the premises may extend beyond the authorised Class E use from a restaurant (Class E) to mixed food & drink establishment and drinking establishment (Sui Generis).

The Council subsequently invited the applicant to submit a retrospective planning application to regularise the planning position.

4.8 The applicant is not aware of any other planning enforcement investigations relating to the application site or the operation of the business, save for the matter which forms the subject of this application. Furthermore, so far as the applicant is aware, the operation of the premises has not resulted in any substantiated complaints having been made in relation to noise, odour, disturbance, anti-social behaviour or any other amenity impacts arising from the operation of the premises. It is considered that this reflects the responsible manner in which the business has been operated and supports the conclusion that the existing use has not resulted in any unacceptable impacts on the amenities of neighbouring occupiers.

5.0 Description of the Existing Business

5.1 The application site is occupied by Angel Bar, an independently owned and operated hospitality business situated within Caversham Local Centre. The business has become an established destination within the local area, offering customers a high-quality food and drink experience within a managed indoor environment.

Nature of Business

5.2 Angel Bar is an independently owned and operated hospitality business located within Caversham Local Centre. The premises provides a high-quality food and drink offering within a managed, table-serviced environment, catering for a broad range of customers including couples, families, friends, local businesses and organised groups.

5.3 The business has established itself as a popular destination within Caversham, offering customers the opportunity to dine, enjoy drinks and attend organised events in a relaxed setting.

5.4 The following sections describe the principal elements of the business and demonstrate the manner in which the premises currently operates.

Food Offering

5.5 The premises provides a substantial and varied food offering which forms an integral component of the overall business model. The menu extends well beyond light bar snacks and includes freshly prepared pizzas, cheese and charcuterie boards, mixed sharing platters and a range of seasonal and promotional food offerings.

5.6 Food is available throughout the principal trading hours and is actively promoted as a core element of the customer experience. The business regularly offers food-led promotions, including pizza and wine packages, sharing board offers and themed dining evenings.

5.7 The premises also operates a supper club, which enables the business to diversify and regularly refresh its food offering, whilst drawing upon the culinary experience and expertise of external food providers. This approach allows the business to offer varied dining experiences and manage food provision efficiently, including by reducing unnecessary food waste.

5.8 The premises operates as a fully table-serviced venue. There is no requirement for customers to purchase alcoholic beverages, and the premises offers an extensive selection of non-alcoholic drinks alongside its food menu. Food also forms an integral part of the premises' private function offer, with all private party bookings required to include a food order.

5.9 The food offering is further enhanced through the sourcing of many ingredients from local suppliers, reflecting the business's emphasis on providing a high-quality food and drink experience. The breadth of the menu, the prominence given to food within the operation of

the business and the manner in which the premises is marketed demonstrate that food forms a substantial and important component of the existing operation, rather than being merely incidental or ancillary to the sale of alcohol.

Drinks Offering

5.10 Alongside its extensive food menu, the premises offers a comprehensive range of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages. The drinks menu includes a wide selection of wines, beers, ciders, spirits, cocktails, premium soft drinks, teas and coffees, enabling the business to cater for a broad range of customer preferences and occasions.

5.11 The sale of alcoholic beverages forms an important component of the business; however, customers are under no obligation to purchase alcohol. The premises actively caters for those wishing to dine without consuming alcohol, those choosing non-alcoholic beverages and those attending organised social occasions where food and drink are enjoyed together. The drinks offering has been developed to complement the food menu, with wines, cocktails and other beverages intended to accompany the dining experience.

5.12 The manner in which the premises operates further distinguishes it from a traditional drinking establishment. Angel Bar is a managed, table-service venue where customers are encouraged to reserve tables in advance and remain seated throughout their visit. The emphasis is on providing a relaxed dining and social environment rather than facilitating the consumption of alcohol in isolation. The premises does not operate as a standing or 'vertical drinking' venue.

5.13 This approach is reflected in the way the business is promoted and operated. Food-led offers, including pizza and wine packages, sharing boards, charcuterie platters and themed tapas evenings, are regularly advertised and form an integral part of the customer experience. Collectively, these characteristics demonstrate that the premises provides a balanced food and drink offer in which the preparation and service of food is a fundamental component of the business rather than merely ancillary to the sale of alcohol.

Business Operation

5.14 The applicant has provided operational information relating to the day-to-day operation of the business, including data extracted directly from the premises' reservation system. This information provides an objective indication of the scale and nature of the existing operation and demonstrates that the premises functions as an established and well-managed food and drink venue.

5.15 The reservation system records 3,481 table bookings comprising 13,056 guests between 1st April 2022 and 30th September 2026 (including booking to September 2026). More recent data covering the period between 1st March 2026 and 30th September 2026 records 324 bookings comprising 1,267 guests. The figures relate to reservations recorded through the

business's booking system and demonstrate the significant role of advance table bookings within the operation of the premises.

5.16 In addition to standard table reservations, the premises has accommodated approximately 200 pre-paid private venue hire bookings. The applicant advises that these bookings can accommodate up to approximately 60 guests and collectively account for a significant number of additional customers. Food forms an integral part of this aspect of the business, with all private party bookings required to include a food order alongside any drinks consumed. These private bookings therefore further demonstrate that the preparation and service of food is embedded within the wider operation of the premises.

5.17 The business operates primarily on a reservation and table-service basis, although walk-in customers are also accommodated where capacity allows. The operational data demonstrates that the premises functions as an organised and managed venue with a substantial reliance on advance bookings and seated customer visits. When considered alongside the extensive food offering, table-service model and requirement for private functions to include food, the applicant considers that this evidence provides an accurate representation of the scale and character of the business and should assist the Local Planning Authority in assessing the current operation of the premises.

Hours of Operation

5.18 The premises currently advertises the following opening hours:

- Monday, Closed
- Tuesday, Closed
- Wednesday, 4:00pm – 11:00pm
- Thursday, 4:00pm – 11:00pm
- Friday, 12:00pm – 11:00pm
- Saturday, 12:00pm – 11:00pm
- Sunday, Closed

However, planning permission PL/25/0345 authorises the premises to operate between 08:00 and 23:00 Sundays to Thursdays and between 08:00 and midnight on Fridays and Saturdays. The Planning Portal application form groups Monday to Friday together when requesting details of opening hours and does not enable separate hours to be specified for Friday. As the authorised hours on Friday differ from those applying Monday to Thursday, it is not possible to accurately record the permitted hours within the standard fields provided. The 'Unknown' option has therefore been selected on the application form, with the precise authorised and actual advertised operating hours clearly set out within this Planning Statement. The current

application does not seek any extension to the hours of operation previously approved by the Local Planning Authority

5.19 Outside of these advertised opening hours, the premises may occasionally open for pre-booked private functions and events. Every private party booking is required to include a food order, reflecting the integral role of food within this aspect of the business. The above trading hours otherwise reflect the day-to-day operation of the premises and are typical of an established food and drink venue located within Caversham Local Centre.

5.20 As discussed above, planning permission was granted by Reading Borough Council on 4th June 2025 under application reference PL/25/0345, varying the hours of operation previously attached to planning permission PL/16/0183. That permission authorises the premises to operate until midnight on Fridays and Saturdays and until 11:00pm on all other days, subject to planning conditions.

5.21 Although the premises is authorised to operate until midnight on Fridays and Saturdays, the extended hours are used on a discretionary basis and do not represent the routine trading pattern of the business. Midnight closing is not advertised as part of the premises' standard opening hours and, in practice, the additional hour is principally used to provide operational flexibility where existing table bookings or private functions extend later into the evening, avoiding the need to abruptly conclude customer visits. The applicant advises that operation until midnight is infrequent and occurs primarily during particularly busy periods, such as Christmas. The extended hours therefore do not reflect a transition towards routine late-night, pub-style or vertical drinking, but instead provide limited flexibility in the operation of an established table-serviced food and drink venue.

Events

5.22 In addition to its day-to-day operation, the premises hosts a range of organised private and community events throughout the year. These include birthday celebrations, anniversaries, corporate functions, networking events, wine tasting evenings, themed dining experiences and other pre-booked private hire occasions. The business requires every private party booking to include a food order, a requirement which is communicated through the business's website and forms part of its established operating model. This further demonstrates that the provision of food is a fundamental component of the premises' operation, including during private events, rather than an incidental addition to a predominantly drinking-led use.

5.23 Such events are managed by the applicant and take place within the existing premises using the established seating layout and staffing arrangements. They form part of the normal operation of the business and provide an additional facility for local residents, businesses and community groups without requiring any physical alterations to the premises or any intensification beyond the existing operation.

Management

5.24 The premises is operated by experienced management and trained staff who are committed to providing a safe, welcoming and well-managed environment for customers and neighbouring occupiers alike. Customer activity is managed throughout trading hours, with staff remaining on site until all customers have vacated the premises.

5.25 The premises operates entirely within the existing building and does not benefit from any external customer seating or designated outdoor drinking areas. As such, customer activity is largely contained within the building, thereby minimising the potential for noise and disturbance to neighbouring occupiers.

5.26 As discussed, so far as the applicant is aware, the operation of the premises has not given rise to complaints relating to noise, odour, anti-social behaviour or other amenity impacts. The applicant is committed to continuing to operate the business responsibly and in a manner which respects both neighbouring occupiers and the wider community.

6.0 Description of the Proposed Development

6.1 This application seeks the change of use of ground floor from restaurant (Class E) to mixed food & drink establishment and drinking establishment (Sui Generis).

6.2 As explained in Section 2 of this Planning Statement, the application is submitted on a without prejudice basis and should not be interpreted as an acceptance by the applicant that a material change of use has occurred or that planning permission is required. Rather, the application has been submitted in response to the Local Planning Authority's view regarding the planning status of the existing operation and to enable that position to be considered through the planning application process.

6.3 The application does not propose any operational development or physical alterations to the building. There are no proposed extensions, alterations to the external appearance of the premises, changes to the existing access arrangements or alterations to customer accommodation. The application relates solely to the planning status of the existing use.

6.4 The existing operation of the business will remain unchanged. Customers will continue to be served within the existing premises in accordance with the established business model described in Section 5 of this statement. The application therefore seeks only to regularise the planning position of an existing and established food and drink venue.

7.0 Planning Policy Context

7.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In considering the current application, the principal policy considerations comprise the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

7.2 The following sections identify the relevant national and local planning policies applicable to the proposed development and assess the extent to which the existing operation accords with the aims and objectives of those policies. Particular consideration is given to the principle of the development, the vitality and viability of Caversham Local Centre, the impact on the character of the area, and the effect on the amenities of neighbouring occupiers.

National Planning Policy Framework

7.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. At its heart is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, recognising that the planning system should support economic growth, promote the vitality and viability of town centres, and create healthy, vibrant and safe communities.

7.4 The NPPF encourages planning decisions that make effective use of previously developed land and existing buildings, support a prosperous economy, and maintain the vitality and viability of town centres through the provision of an appropriate mix of commercial, leisure and hospitality uses.

7.5 The policies and objectives of the NPPF have been taken into account in the preparation of this Planning Statement and are considered in further detail within the planning assessment below.

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

7.6 The statutory Development Plan for the application site comprises the Reading Borough Local Plan, adopted in November 2019. The Local Plan establishes the strategic planning framework for the Borough and contains the policies against which planning applications are determined.

7.7 Having regard to the nature of the existing operation and the retrospective development proposed, the following policies are considered to be of particular relevance to the determination of this application:

- Policy CC1 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development,
- Policy CC7 – Design and the Public Realm,
- Policy CC8 – Safeguarding Amenity,

- Policy RL6 – Protection of Leisure Facilities and Public Houses,
- Policy TR3 – Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters.

7.8 These policies seek, amongst other things, to support sustainable development, promote the vitality and viability of established centres, safeguard the amenities of neighbouring occupiers, and ensure that development is appropriately located and accessible.

7.9 The following Planning Assessment considers the proposal against the above policies and demonstrates that the continued operation of the premises is consistent with the objectives of the Development Plan when read as a whole.

7.10 Whilst Policy EN17 (Noise Generating Equipment) has been referenced by the Local Planning Authority during the course of the planning process, it is not considered to be directly relevant to the determination of this application. The proposal does not seek permission for the installation, alteration or replacement of any plant, extraction, ventilation or other noise-generating equipment. Furthermore, no such works have taken place or are proposed as part of the retrospective development.

7.11 The application relates solely to the planning status of the existing use of the premises. Accordingly, any assessment of potential impacts arising from the operation of plant or mechanical equipment falls outside the scope of this application. Matters relating to residential amenity arising from the use itself are instead appropriately assessed against Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity), which is specifically intended to address the effects of development on the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers.

8.0 Planning Assessment

8.1 The following section assesses the retrospective application against the relevant national and local planning policy framework and demonstrates that the continued operation of the premises is acceptable in planning terms.

8.2 Having regard to the nature of the application and the issues identified by the Local Planning Authority, the assessment considers the principle of the development, the contribution of the business to the vitality and viability of Caversham Local Centre, the effect on the character of the area, the impact on the amenities of neighbouring occupiers, highway and accessibility considerations, and the overall planning balance.

8.3 As demonstrated below, the applicant considers that the existing operation represents a well-managed hospitality business that makes a positive contribution to the local centre without giving rise to unacceptable planning harm. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that retrospective planning permission should be granted.

Principle of the Development

8.4 Chapter 7 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) seeks to support the vitality and viability of town centres by encouraging a diverse range of uses that attract visitors and meet the needs of local communities. Paragraphs 90 to 92 recognise that planning decisions should support the role of town centres as the heart of their communities and promote their long-term vitality and viability through the retention and enhancement of appropriate commercial, leisure and community uses.

8.5 The application seeks retrospective planning permission for the continued operation of an existing leisure use within an established commercial location. The proposal does not involve the loss of an identified town centre use, nor does it introduce a use that would undermine the function or character of the surrounding area. Rather, it maintains an active commercial premises which contributes to the range of leisure opportunities available to local residents.

8.6 The proposal therefore accords with the overarching objectives of the NPPF by supporting economic activity, making effective use of an existing building, and retaining a leisure use within an accessible location. Subject to consideration of the detailed impacts discussed below, there is no in-principle objection to the development at the national policy level.

8.7 It is recognised that whether a material change of use has occurred is ultimately a matter of planning judgment having regard to the character of the planning unit as a whole. The applicant maintains that the premises continues to operate as a substantial food and drink establishment and does not accept that the balance of activities has altered to such an extent that a material change of use has necessarily occurred. Nevertheless, and entirely without prejudice to that position, this application seeks planning permission on the basis asserted by the Local Planning Authority.

Protection of Leisure Facilities and Public Houses

8.8 The National Planning Policy Framework seeks to promote the vitality and viability of town centres by supporting an appropriate mix of commercial, leisure and community uses. It recognises that leisure and hospitality uses make an important contribution to the economic, social and cultural function of centres and encourages planning decisions that support sustainable economic growth and prosperous local communities.

8.9 Policy RL6 seeks to protect existing leisure facilities and public houses from unnecessary loss. The policy establishes a strong presumption in favour of retaining such facilities, recognising the important role they play in serving local communities and contributing to the vitality and viability of centres throughout the Borough.

8.10 Whilst Policy RL6 is primarily directed towards proposals involving the loss of leisure facilities or public houses, its underlying objective is clearly to safeguard and support established leisure uses where they continue to serve the community.

8.11 The current application does not propose the loss of a leisure or hospitality use. On the contrary, it seeks retrospective planning permission for the continued operation of an established food and drink business from an existing commercial premises within Caversham Local Centre.

8.12 The business provides employment, supports local suppliers, attracts visitors to the centre and contributes positively to the evening economy. As demonstrated in Section 5 of this statement, the premises operates as a managed hospitality venue with a substantial food offering, table service and organised events which collectively provide an important facility for the local community. The business also contributes to the diversity of Caversham Local Centre by providing an independent hospitality venue, thereby increasing consumer choice and complementing the existing range of commercial uses within Prospect Street and the wider area.

8.13 Accordingly, the proposal is entirely consistent with both the objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework and the aims of Policy RL6. Rather than resulting in the loss of a valued leisure facility, the application would ensure the continued operation of an established local business which contributes positively to the vitality, viability and attractiveness of Caversham Local Centre.

Safeguarding Amenity

8.14 The National Planning Policy Framework seeks to ensure that planning decisions create places with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users. It recognises that planning should support sustainable economic growth whilst ensuring that development does not give rise to unacceptable impacts on the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers.

8.15 Policy CC8 requires development to safeguard the amenities of existing and future occupiers. In the context of this application, the principal considerations are the potential for

noise and disturbance arising from the operation of the premises, together with the effect of the business on the living conditions of nearby residential occupiers. The policy also makes clear that the hours of operation of businesses are capable of being material considerations where relevant.

8.16 The applicant considers that the continued operation of the premises fully accords with the objectives of both the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy CC8. Firstly, the application does not propose any physical alterations to the building or any intensification through additional floorspace. The proposal relates solely to the planning status of the existing use, which has been operating from the premises for a considerable period.

8.17 Secondly, the business is operated as a managed hospitality venue with customer activity taking place almost exclusively within the building. The premises does not benefit from external seating or designated outdoor drinking areas and, as a consequence, external noise associated with customers is inherently limited.

8.18 Thirdly, the applicant is not aware of any complaints having been made regarding noise, odour, anti-social behaviour or any other amenity impacts arising from the operation of the premises. This reflects the responsible manner in which the business has been managed and the absence of any demonstrable harm to neighbouring occupiers.

8.19 It is also material that, under planning permission application number PL/25/0345, the Local Planning Authority concluded that operation of the premises until midnight on Fridays and Saturdays, and until 11:00pm on the remaining days, would be acceptable in amenity terms. That decision represents a clear indication that Reading Borough Council as the planning authority does not consider the operation of the premises, including its hours of trading, to give rise to unacceptable impacts on neighbouring residential amenity.

8.20 Having regard to the above, the applicant considers that the continued operation of the premises does not result in unacceptable impacts upon the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers and therefore fully accords with the objectives of Policy CC8.

8.21 The premises also benefits from a Premises Licence issued under the Licensing Act 2003. The operation of the premises is therefore subject to a separate statutory regulatory regime designed to promote the licensing objectives, including the prevention of public nuisance. There is no evidence that the operation of the premises has resulted in any review of that licence or enforcement action under the Licensing Act.

Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters

8.22 The National Planning Policy Framework promotes sustainable transport and requires planning decisions to ensure that development provides safe and suitable access for all users. It also makes clear that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds where there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or where the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

8.23 Policy TR3 seeks to ensure that development does not have an unacceptable impact on the operation or safety of the transport network. The policy is principally concerned with proposals involving new or altered accesses, highway works, new transport infrastructure or development that would generate additional trips resulting in material impacts on the highway network.

8.24 The application does not propose any physical alterations to the site, the existing access arrangements or the surrounding highway network. There are no changes to the means of access, servicing arrangements or parking provision.

8.25 Furthermore, the application does not involve any increase in floorspace or any operational development that would materially increase the number of vehicle movements associated with the site. The premises has operated in its current form for a considerable period and the application simply seeks retrospective planning permission for the continued operation of the existing business.

8.26 The site occupies a sustainable location within Caversham Local Centre, where customers are able to access the premises on foot, by bicycle and by public transport, in addition to private vehicles. The proposal therefore accords with the sustainable transport objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework.

8.27 In light of the above, the proposal would not give rise to any material impacts on highway safety, the operation of the transport network or the convenience of other highway users. Accordingly, the proposal complies with both the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy TR3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

Design and the Public Realm

8.28 The National Planning Policy Framework places great importance on achieving well-designed places and requires development to be visually attractive, sympathetic to local character and history, and to establish or maintain a strong sense of place.

8.29 Policy CC7 seeks to ensure that development is of a high design quality which maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the surrounding area. The policy is principally concerned with matters such as layout, scale, massing, architectural design, materials, landscaping, accessibility and the quality of the public realm.

8.30 The current application does not propose any operational development or physical alterations to the building. There are no extensions, external alterations, changes to the appearance of the premises or modifications to the surrounding public realm. The proposal relates solely to the retrospective planning status of the existing use of the premises. As such, the scale, appearance, layout and architectural characteristics of the building will remain entirely unchanged.

8.31 Furthermore, the continued operation of the premises as an established hospitality business is entirely compatible with the commercial character of Prospect Street and

Caversham Local Centre. The proposal will therefore preserve the existing character and appearance of the area and will not result in any adverse visual or townscape impacts. Accordingly, the proposal accords with the design objectives of both the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

Planning Balance

8.32 The application seeks retrospective planning permission for the continued operation of an established hospitality business from an existing commercial premises within Caversham Local Centre. Whilst submitted on a without prejudice basis, the proposal enables the planning status of the existing use to be regularised without any physical alterations to the building or changes to the established operation of the business.

8.33 The proposal accords with the overarching objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework by supporting a sustainable local business, contributing to the vitality and viability of Caversham Local Centre and making effective use of an existing commercial building. The business provides employment, supports local suppliers, attracts visitors to the centre and contributes positively to the local economy and evening economy.

8.34 At the local level, the proposal is consistent with the objectives of the Reading Borough Local Plan. It would retain an established hospitality use within the local centre, would not prejudice the character or appearance of the area, would not adversely affect the operation or safety of the highway network and, for the reasons set out above, would not result in unacceptable impacts upon the amenities of neighbouring occupiers.

8.35 It is also material that the Local Planning Authority has recently granted planning permission under reference PL/25/0345 to extend the authorised hours of operation at the premises. That decision demonstrates that, subject to appropriate controls, the Authority has accepted the principle that the operation of the premises does not give rise to unacceptable amenity impacts.

8.36 When considered as a whole, there are no adverse planning impacts that would significantly or demonstrably outweigh the considerable benefits associated with the continued operation of this established local business. The proposal represents sustainable development, supports the vitality and viability of Caversham Local Centre and accords with the relevant provisions of both the National Planning Policy Framework and the Reading Borough Local Plan.

8.37 Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that retrospective planning permission should be granted. In the event that the Local Planning Authority identifies any residual planning concerns, the applicant considers that such matters are capable of being appropriately addressed through the imposition of reasonable planning conditions, rather than by the refusal of planning permission.

9.0 Conclusion

9.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of an application for the change of use of the ground floor of the property from restaurant (Class E) to mixed food & drink establishment and drinking establishment (Sui Generis).

As set out in Section 2 of this Statement, the application has been submitted on a without prejudice basis and should not be taken as an acceptance by the applicant that a material change of use has occurred or that planning permission is required.

9.2 The assessment demonstrates that the continued operation of the premises accords with the overarching objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework by supporting a sustainable local business, contributing to the vitality and viability of Caversham Local Centre and making effective use of an existing commercial premises.

9.3 Furthermore, the proposal complies with the relevant policies of the Reading Borough Local Plan. It would preserve the character and appearance of the area, would not give rise to unacceptable impacts on residential amenity or the operation of the highway network and would retain an established hospitality business that contributes positively to the local economy and the evening economy.

9.4 The application does not involve any operational development or physical alterations to the building. Rather, it seeks to regularise the planning status of an existing business that has become an established part of Caversham's commercial offer. The business provides employment, supports local suppliers, attracts visitors to the local centre and offers a substantial food and drink experience within a managed, table-service environment.

9.5 For the reasons set out within this Planning Statement, it is respectfully submitted that the proposal represents sustainable development and accords with both national and local planning policy. There are no material planning considerations which indicate that planning permission should be withheld. Accordingly, Reading Borough Council is respectfully requested to grant retrospective planning permission.