

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Abbey Ward

App Ref: PL/26/1125 Full planning permission

Address: 5-6 FRIAR STREET, READING, RG1 1DB

Proposal: Change of use of basement and ground floors from bar/nightclub (Sui Generis) to off-licence/retail use (Class E(a)).

Applicant: Regency Vale Ltd

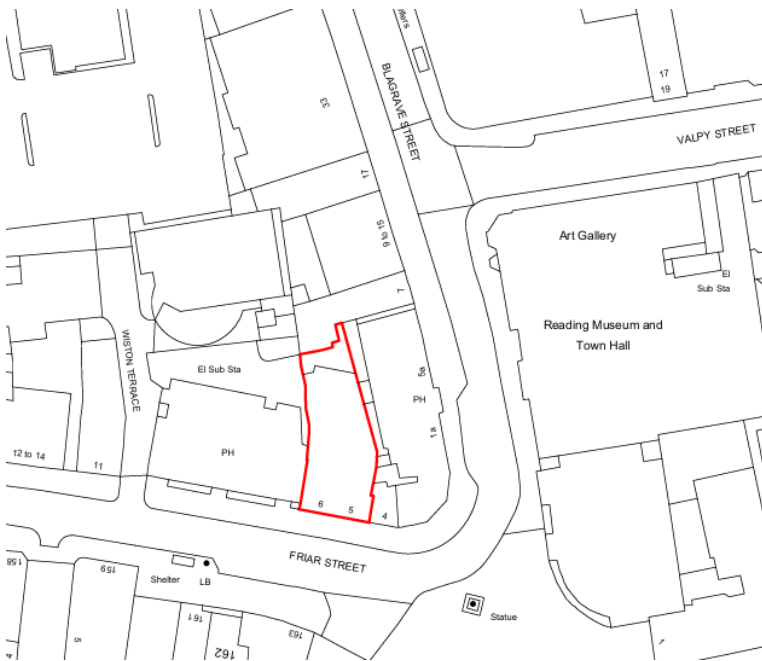
Received date: 21/08/2026. Valid from: 25/08/2026

Target Decision date: 20/10/2026

Case Officer: Jonathan Markwell

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

1.1 The application site is located on the north side of Friar Street, close to the junctions with Blagrove Street (to the east) and Wiston Terrace (to the west). The building comprises a basement, ground, first and second floor building, with the proposed development under consideration relating to the basement and ground floors only. At present, based on the officer site visit on 11/09/2026, it is confirmed that these floors of the building are unoccupied, with the remnants of the former bar/nightclub use still evident. There is a small external area to the rear, but there is no vehicular access into the site.



Site Location Plan (left) and external site photo on 02/09/2026 (right)

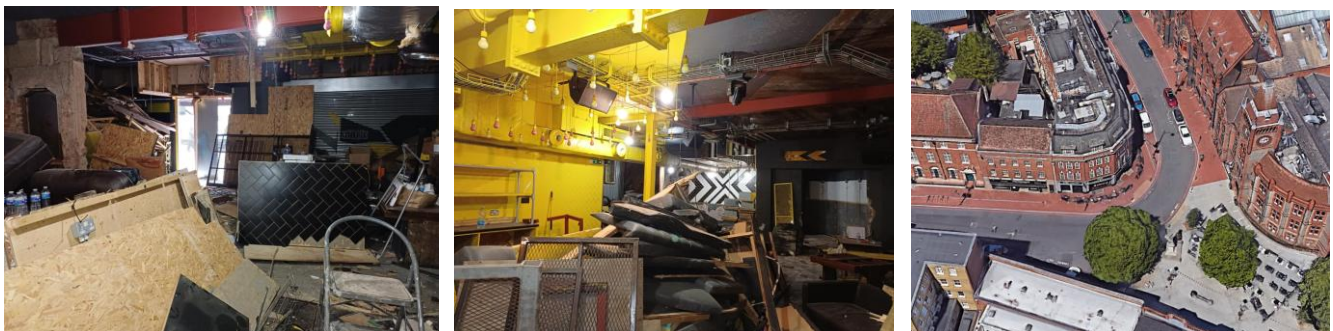
1.2 The site is located within the Reading Central Area, Central Core, Office Core and Primary Shopping Area of the town centre, as defined by Policy CR1 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019. The site is located within a designated primary frontage in Central Reading, as per Policy CR7. The site is in a highly sustainable location, being situated on the corner of the Town Hall Square and in close proximity to Reading rail station. This area is well served by rail and bus links and also contains a large amount of public car parking spaces. Friar Street and Town Hall Square are heavily restricted with regards to access and parking. Friar Street is used by buses and has access restrictions in place during certain times of the day. There is a time restricted access to Friar Street Eastbound between 7am – 11am and 4pm – 7pm.

1.3 The site is also located within the Market Place / London Street Conservation Area. Whilst it is not a listed building, it is identified in the conservation area appraisal as being a Building of Townscape Merit. Accordingly, it is considered to make a positive contribution to the special interest of the conservation area. The application site marks the western boundary of the conservation area at this point. The neighbouring buildings to the east are also identified as being of townscape merit, while further to the east are a series of listed structures and buildings, comprising the Queen Victoria Statue (Grade II), the Town Hall complex of buildings (all Grade II, except the Council Chamber & Offices with Clock Tower which are Grade II*) and St Laurence's Church (Grade I). Within the relevant conservation area appraisal, vacant commercial properties are identified as a feature that have a negative impact on the historic character and appearance of the conservation area. Linked to these matters, the site is also within an area of archaeological potential.



Extract from the Market Place / London Street Conservation Area Appraisal

1.4 Furthermore, the site is within the designated Abbey Quarter area, as per Policy CR15. It is also directly adjacent to the designated area to the north of Friar Street and the east of Station Road, as per Policy CR16. The site is also within an air quality management area.

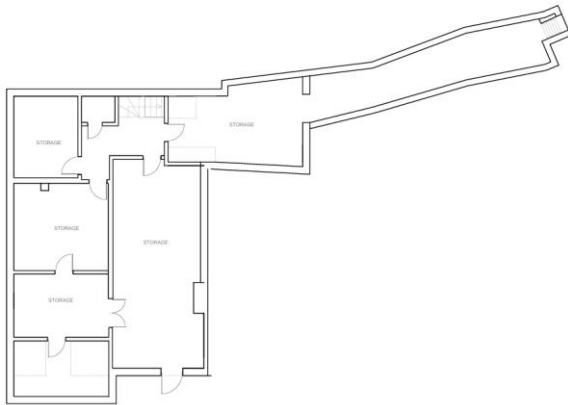


Internal (left & centre) photos on 11/09/26, and external Google Maps aerial view of the site (right)

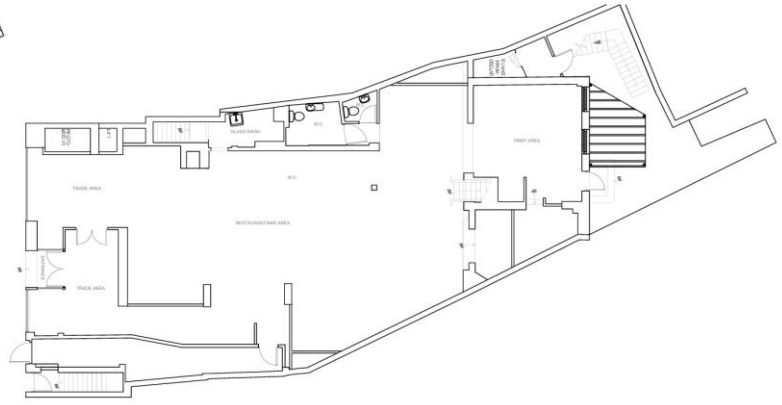
2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

2.1 Full planning permission is sought for the change of use of the basement and ground floor of the building from bar/nightclub (Sui Generis) to off-licence/retail use (Class E(a)). To clarify, whilst

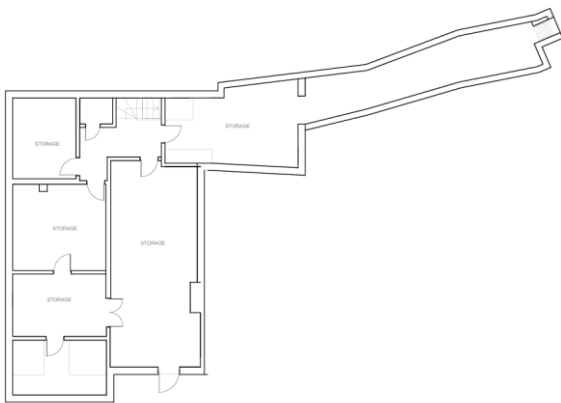
the applicant has stated that the intended use is an off-licence, in practice the proposal is for any Class E(a) use at these floors of the building. Based on the information provided by the applicant, the floorspace at the site is 405sqm and the tradable area would decrease by 1sqm from 183.15sqm to 182.15sqm. The application form states there will be 6 full-time employees and 4 part-time employees. The proposed opening hours are 0600-0000(midnight) and all days (including Sundays and Bank holidays). The floor plans (see below) also indicate a waste and recycling bin storage area, within the building and separately accessed to the store.



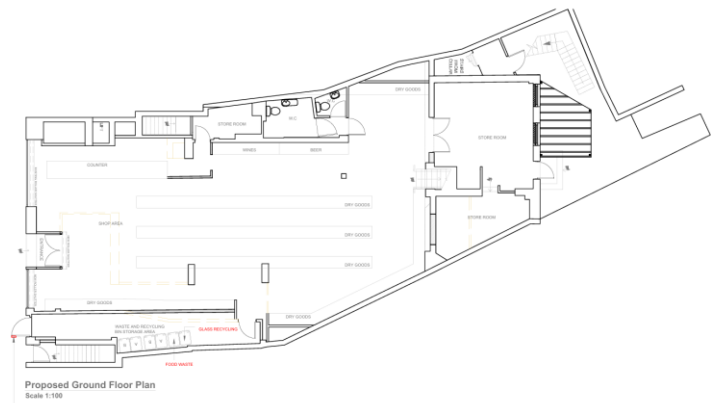
Existing Basement Floor Plan
Scale 1:100



Existing Ground Floor Plan
Scale 1:100



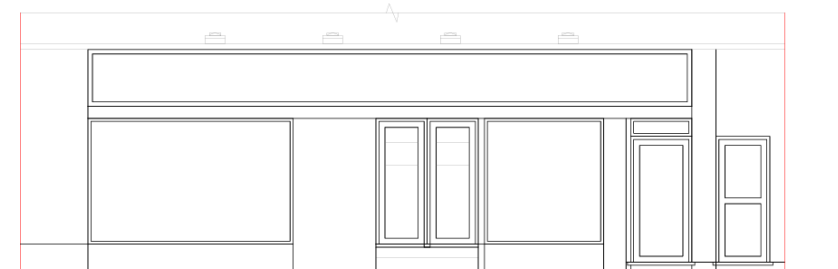
Proposed Basement Plan
Scale 1:100



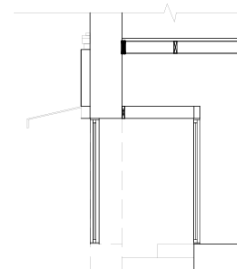
Proposed Ground Floor Plan
Scale 1:100

Provides Digital Lock on the external side of the door to allow service providers access to store

2.2 The submitted plans also demonstrate that no external works to the ground floor shopfront are proposed, aside from a de minimis digital lock. The plans do indicate that internal grille shutters are proposed behind the ground floor shopfront windows and doors. Given these are located internally, they do not require planning permission. The submitted plan also references that the existing front façade detailing is to be re-painted and repaired, as necessary. Such works are unlikely to constitute 'development' and hence are not considered as part of this application.



Existing Front Elevation
Scale 1:100



Existing Side Elevation
Scale 1:100



2.3 Information submitted and considered as part of the determination of this planning application:

- Application Form, generated by Planda, reference: PLP-00006886
As received 25/08/2026
- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) – Form 1: CIL Additional Information, generated by Planda Portal, reference: PLP-00006886
As received 21/08/2026
- 3931/05/JG – Location & Block Plan
As received 21/08/2026
- 3931/01/JG – Existing Ground Floor Plan
- 3931/01B/JG – Existing Basement Floor Plan
- 3931/02/JG – Existing Elevations
- 3931/03b/JG – Proposed Basement Floor Plan
- 3931/04/JG – Proposed Elevations
As received 25/08/2026
- Email from Multi Creation 'PL/26/1125 - 5-6 Friar Street, Reading, RG1 1DB', dated and received on 23/09/2026
- 3931/03/JG Rev A – Proposed Ground Floor Plan
- Design and Access Statement by Multi Creation
As received 06/10/2026

2.4 An accompanied officer site visit to the unit took place on 11/09/2026, to the basement and ground floors of the building and the rear ground floor space.

2.5 In terms of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), the applicant has completed the necessary form as part of the application. It is confirmed that CIL is not applicable in this case and an informative is recommended to confirm this on the decision notice.

3. PLANNING HISTORY

3.1 There have been a number of applications at the site since the late 1980's. These are listed below:

- 3.2 PL/89/0415 - Installation of second cardcash machine through existing glazed panel. Decision Made 03/10/1989.
- 3.3 PL/90/0835 - Fascia and projecting sign. Decision Made 14/08/1990.
- 3.4 PL/95/0567 - New fascia, amenity and plaque signs. Decision Made 14/08/1995.
- 3.5 PL/95/0757 - Change of use and extension from Building Society (A2 use) to Cafe/Bar(A3 use) with managers accommodation on 2nd floor. Alterations to front elevation. Decision Made 12/07/1995.
- 3.6 PL/01/0559 - New shopfront and signage, redecoration of front elevation. Approved 16/10/2001.
- 3.7 PL/01/0729 - Change of name from "The Old Society" to "Bar 4". Erection of new sign work to enhance the building. Withdrawn 01/11/2001.
- 3.8 PL/01/1249 - Externally illuminated fascia signage (amended description). Approved 16/10/2001.
- 3.9 PL/07/0785 - New decking area with pergola and Jumbrella to flat roof. Internal alterations to existing staircase and change front kitchen into bar area. Granted 06/02/2008.
- 3.10 PL/07/0956 - Re-branding of pub with various new illuminated signage. Granted Advertisement Consent 08/10/2007.
- 3.11 PL/20/1041 - Installation of new extract. Granted 29/09/2020.

4. CONSULTATIONS

- 4.1 Public consultation: A site notice was erected at the front of the site on 02/09/2026, expiring on 23/09/2026. A press notice was published on 10/09/2026, expiring on 01/10/2026.

- 4.2 One objection has been received from Councillor Dominguez (Abbey ward), stating:

I appreciate that the proposed retail use may be acceptable in principle, and that Reading's licensing policy, which acknowledges that off-licences can be associated with anti-social behaviour and public nuisance, is a separate matter to be considered. However, I ask the Council to consider whether adding another off-licence would contribute to the diversity, vitality and attractiveness of the town centre, or instead further concentrate similar uses within an area that would benefit from a broader mix of shops, services, food, leisure that actually increase footfall.

The Council's planning policies recognise the importance of maintaining a diverse and vibrant town centre and of considering the range and character of existing uses. Therefore, this application should not be considered in isolation.

- 4.3 The applicant has viewed the objection and responded as follows:

We acknowledge the comments regarding the diversity and vitality of Reading Town Centre. However, the proposed Class E(a) retail use is an appropriate town-centre use which would maintain an active commercial frontage and contribute to the continued occupation and vitality of Friar Street.

It is also important to consider the former lawful use of the premises as a bar/nightclub. Such a late-night entertainment use has the potential to generate noise, late-night congregation, disturbance and associated anti-social behaviour. The proposed retail use represents a move away from this more intensive late-night use.

Furthermore, the proposed change of use does not, in itself, introduce the type of late-night entertainment activity, amplified music or congregation associated with the former nightclub use.

The sale of alcohol is additionally controlled through the separate premises licensing regime under the Licensing Act 2003. Matters such as the hours during which alcohol may be sold, age verification, CCTV, staff training, sale of high-strength alcohol and other measures relating to responsible alcohol sales can therefore be addressed through the licensing process and appropriate licensing conditions.

Accordingly, the possibility that an off-licence may give rise to anti-social behaviour should not automatically be attributed to this particular proposal in the absence of evidence demonstrating that the proposed use at this site would result in an unacceptable planning impact.

The applicant will, of course, be expected to operate the premises responsibly and in accordance with all applicable licensing requirements and conditions.

The presence of other off-licences within the town centre should also not, in itself, make the proposed use unacceptable. The application should be assessed on its individual planning merits, having regard to the actual nature and impacts of the proposed use.

For the reasons set out above, we respectfully consider that the matters raised within the representation do not demonstrate that the proposed change of use would cause unacceptable harm to the vitality, viability, diversity or amenity of Reading Town Centre.

The proposal would:

*replace a former Sui Generis bar/nightclub use with an active Class E(a) retail use;
maintain active commercial occupation of the premises and an active ground-floor frontage on Friar Street;
contribute to pedestrian activity and the continued commercial function of the town centre;
be compatible with the established mixed commercial character of Friar Street; and
remain subject to the separate statutory licensing regime in respect of the sale of alcohol and associated licensing controls.*

We therefore respectfully request that the public representation is considered in the above context and that the application continues to be assessed positively on its individual planning merits and against the relevant development plan policies.

4.4 Officer response: Please see the appraisal section below.

4.5 Consultees:

4.6 The Designing Out Crime Officer at Thames Valley Police advises that there are no objections to the proposed change of use. However, should planning permission be granted, it is recommended that the applicant consults the Secured by Design Non-Residential (commercial) Guidance 2025 to ensure the appropriate level of security is provided. CCTV will be needed within the unit and section 35 of the guidance provides guidance on Video Surveillance Systems. These comments are provided on behalf of Thames Valley Police and relate to designing out crime only.

4.7 RBC Licensing confirm that there are no objections from Licensing Enforcement.

4.8 RBC Transport Development Control advise that the site is located within the Reading Central Area, Central Core, Office Core and Primary Shopping Area of the town centre as defined by Policy CR1 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019. The site is highly sustainable, being situated on the corner of the Town Hall Square and in close proximity to Reading rail

station. This area is well served by rail and bus links and also contains the largest proportion of public car parking spaces.

4.9 Friar Street and Town Hall Square are heavily restricted with regards to access and parking. Friar Street is used by buses and has access restrictions in place during certain times of the day. There is a time restricted access to Friar Street Eastbound between 7am – 11am and 4pm – 7pm. Therefore, all deliveries made to the site would need to adhere to the regulations.

4.10 The proposal is not considered to give rise to any significant highway safety concerns and would have an acceptable impact on parking demand and the operation of the surrounding highway network given the parking restrictions in the area. Accordingly, no highway objection is raised.

4.11 RBC Waste Services advises that it would be the responsibility of the business to arrange their commercial waste disposal. It is a requirement for all businesses to separate their waste within the following waste streams for disposal – general, recycling, food and glass. I can see within the plans only provides for recycling and general waste have been provided. The developer will also need to provide space for the storage and collection of a food waste bin and glass recycling bin.

4.12 I can see within the application that plans have been submitted for the presentation of bin/sacks onto the highway from the premises for the collection of the commercial waste and that they have acknowledged that bins will not be left on the highway for extended periods of time. It would be preferred that bins are stored within the designated bin storage space and collected from here as it is directly accessible from the highway. With a digit lock on the external side of the door, service providers would be able to retrieve the bins themselves, meaning there would be no need to present bins on the highway.

4.13 There is a pulling distance requirement of 10m for 1100L bins and 15m for all 2 wheeled bins. I do believe this would be within the 15m pulling distance and there would only be space within the bin store for 2 wheeled bins. A dropped curb outside of the property would also be required for the collection of bins.

4.14 If a dropped kerb cannot be approved, a bin collection wouldn't be appropriate, and a sack collection would be needed. If this is the case, I would ask that the below statements (*Planning Officer comment: which are extracted from section 13 of the Design and Access Statement submitted*) are included as conditions within the approval of this planning application.

Time-Restricted Compliance: In line with Reading Town Centre public realm policies, bins will never be left out overnight. Bins will be wheeled back inside the front door within 30 minutes of being emptied.

Missed Collections: If a collection is missed, waste will immediately remain inside the internal front-door storage area and will not be left on the public highway.

4.15 Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC) was also formally consulted, but no response has been received.

5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' (Policy S3). The following local and national planning policy and guidance is relevant to this application:

- 5.2 National Policy:
National Planning Policy Framework (August 2026), with a particular focus on:
- Chapter 3. Decision-making policies
 - DM3: Determining development proposals
 - DM4: Emerging development plan policies
 - DM6: Use of planning conditions and obligations
 - DM7: Relationship with other regulatory regimes
 - Chapter 4. Achieving sustainable development
 - S3: Presumption in favour of sustainable development
 - S4: Principle of development within settlements
 - Chapter 8. Ensuring the vitality of town centres
 - TC2: Development in town centres
 - Chapter 14. Achieving well-designed places
 - DP3: Key principles for well-designed places
 - DP4: The design process
 - Chapter 15. Promoting sustainable transport
 - TR3: Locating development in sustainable locations
 - TR4: Street design, access and parking
 - TR6: Assessing transport impacts
 - Chapter 16: Promoting healthy communities
 - HC4: Proposals for new and improved community facilities, public services infrastructure and development providing public health benefits
 - Chapter 20. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment
 - HE4: Securing the conservation of heritage assets
 - HE5: Assessing effects on heritage assets
 - HE6: Proposals affecting designated heritage assets
 - HE7: Decisions on non-designated heritage assets
 - HE9: Conservation areas

National Planning Practice Guidance 2014 onwards

- 5.3 Reading Borough Local Plan (2019):
- CC1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
 - CC3 Adaption to Climate Change
 - CC7 Design and the Public Realm
 - CC8 Safeguarding Amenity
 - EN1 Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
 - EN2 Areas of Archaeological Significance
 - EN3 Enhancement of Conservation Areas
 - EN6 New Development in a Historic Context
 - EN15 Air Quality
 - EN16 Pollution and Water Resources
 - TR3 Access, Traffic and Highway-related matters
 - RL1 Network and Hierarchy of Centres
 - RL2 Scale and Location of Retail, Leisure and Culture Development
 - RL6 Protection of Leisure Facilities and Public Houses
 - OU5 Shopfronts and Cash Machines
 - CR1 Definition of Central Reading
 - CR2 Design in Central Reading
 - CR7 Primary Frontages in Central Reading
 - CR15 The Reading Abbey Quarter
 - CR16 Area to the north of Friar Street and East of Station Road

- 5.4 Supplementary Planning Documents
Design Guide to Shopfronts (2022)
Town Centre Public Realm Strategy (2026)

Other documents
Market Place / London Street Conservation Area Appraisal

- 5.5 Local Plan Update
The current version of the Local Plan (adopted in November 2019) turned five years old on Tuesday 5th November 2024. The Local Plan was reviewed in March 2023 and around half of the policies in the plan are considered still up to date. However, the rest need to be considered for updating to reflect changing circumstances and national policy. A consultation version of the draft updated version of the Local Plan was published on 6th November 2024. Subsequent to this consultation a submission draft was sent to the Secretary of State on 9th May 2025. At the time of writing, the examination-in-public of the partial update to the local plan is in the process of taking place. Stage 1 hearings were held virtually on 11th and 12th November 2025. Stage 2 hearings took place in February 2026.

- 5.6 Although there is a five-year period for carrying out a review of a plan after it is adopted, nothing in the NPPF or elsewhere says that policies automatically become “out of date” when they are five years old. It is a matter of planning judgement rather than legal fact whether a plan or policies within it are out-of-date. This will depend on whether they have been overtaken by things that have happened since the plan was adopted, either on the ground or through changes in national policy, for example.

- 5.7 Officer advice in respect of the Local Plan policies pertinent to this application is that they remain in accordance with national policy and that the objectives of those policies remains very similar in the submission draft updated Local Plan. Therefore, they can continue to be afforded weight in the determination of this planning application and are not considered to be ‘out of date’.

6. APPRAISAL

6.1 Land use

- 6.2 Given the existing bar/nightclub (Sui Generis) use, Policy RL6 is the first land use consideration. The policy generally seeks to protect leisure facilities, with paragraph 4.6.31 of the supporting text to the policy confirming that bars and nightclubs are a leisure facility. This proposal would result in the loss of a leisure facility, with the policy providing three instances where this would be permitted where it can be clearly demonstrated. Of these b) states that *“the function of the facility can be adequately fulfilled by an existing facility... where that facility would be at least as accessible to the same catchment”*. The proposals are considered to comply in this regard, with other establishments on Friar Street (and in close proximity elsewhere within the town centre) providing a series of alternative bar/nightclub uses. These are considered to fulfil a similar role, have sufficient capacity and are at least as accessible by public transport, foot and cycle for future customers as the existing facility to be lost. Accordingly, the loss of the existing use is considered to be justified and established.

- 6.3 Turning to consider the proposed use, it is firstly clarified that although the applicant has indicated the future use to be an off-licence, it is not proposed solely on this basis, with a Class E(a) use proposed. Accordingly, the proposed use could actually be any Class E(a) use, which comprises the *“Display or retail sale of goods, other than hot food”*. It is this basis that the

proposals are considered, rather than solely as an off-licence. It is also noted at this juncture that Class E is formed of 11 parts (E(a) through to E(g)), but only Class E(a) is specifically proposed in this instance. Hence, it is also this basis in which the proposals are considered.

- 6.4 As per the introduction section above, the site is located within a designated primary frontage in Central Reading, as per Policy CR7. In such locations, uses on the ground floor will be within certain use classes. The adopted 2019 policy refers to uses which pre-date the 2020 updates to the use classes. The Class A1 use referenced in the policy corresponds with the current Class E(a) use. Accordingly, the proposed use aligns with Policy CR7, meaning there are no in-principle concerns with the proposals from a land use perspective. Furthermore, the NPPF specifies at Policy TC2b that *“In considering proposals for development in town centres, substantial weight should be given to the benefits of... b. Improving or retaining access to local shops and other facilities which provide day-to day services for the local community”*. A Class E(a) use would align in this regard.
- 6.5 It is acknowledged that a Councillor objects to the proposal (see section 4 above) on the basis of whether *“adding another off-licence would contribute to the diversity, vitality and attractiveness of the town centre, or instead further concentrate similar uses within an area that would benefit from a broader mix of shops, services, food, leisure that actually increase footfall”*. In response, as referenced above, the application is submitted/considered on the basis of any Class E(a) use, not just the anticipated off-licence use referenced by the applicant. Accordingly, it would not be appropriate to resist the proposals on this basis, particularly when the local and national policy referenced above actively promotes such uses. In terms of the specific concern regarding the implied over-concentration of off-licences and this not adding to a diversification of uses within the centre, there are no local or national policies which prescribe a limitation/control over the amount or concentration of off-licences. Accordingly, there is no basis in which to resist the proposals on this specific basis, with such a matter not considered to be sustainable in a planning appeal scenario, were the application to be refused on this basis alone.
- 6.6 In overall land use terms, the proposals are supported and welcomed in-principle.
- 6.7 Amenity
- 6.8 There are a number of amenity-related considerations. It is firstly reiterated that planning permission runs with the land (and not a specific occupier) and hence the proposals are considered from the basis of the unit being occupied by any Class E(a) operator, and not necessarily the indicated off-licence occupier referenced in the submission by the applicant.
- 6.9 First, by virtue of the applicant specifically applying for a Class E(a) use, it is considered necessary and reasonable for a condition to permit only the Class E(a) use applied for being permitted at the site. It is recognised that Class E as a whole includes 11 parts, with some of those uses not being ‘town centre uses’ and hence would not be supported in this location. Other parts of Class E could have very different amenity or transport implications to the Class E (a) use applied for, which have not been considered as part of this application. Accordingly, a condition will only permit Class E (a) use at the basement and ground floor. This does not necessarily preclude the future use for other Class E uses, but means that such impacts can be considered through a planning application at that time.
- 6.10 In terms of hours of opening, the application form states that the proposed hours of opening are 0600–0000 on a daily basis (therefore including Sundays and Bank Holidays). It is recognised that town centres are becoming increasingly mixed use in their form and nature, with an ever increasing residential population. Accordingly, while the Class E(a) use is typically one where opening hours may not be necessary to be secured via condition, given the continued focus at

national and local level to provide residential accommodation in accessible town centre locations such as this, there is a balance to be struck. In this case, the opening hours proposed by the applicant are considered in the context of this precise location (see introduction section above for the site designations) to strike that appropriate balance between not impeding the function of the use, whilst simultaneously protecting current (and likely increased future) residential amenity. Accordingly, a planning condition will secure the hours of opening to only be between 0600-0000 on a daily basis.

- 6.11 Turning to consider noise and disturbance matters, it is recognised that the Class E(a) use could include a number of different uses and not necessarily the off-licence use earmarked by the applicant. Uses within Class E(a) could have potential to include music being played on site that would be of disturbance to nearby premises and occupiers. Hence, a condition which restricts music being played within the building which is also audible within adjoining premises will satisfactorily protect the amenity of adjoining premises and the area generally from noise disturbance.
- 6.12 With regard to dust and fumes, vibration and ventilation matters, there are no proposals for any external flue system as part of this application. The future provision of any external flue extraction system would require separate planning permission, so should a separate occupier operate from the site in the future under this permission and wish to install an external flue extraction system, then a separate application would be required at that time, at which point such matters would separately be assessed. With this in mind, an informative is recommended to be included on the decision notice, stating that should any external flue extraction system be required in association with the permitted use, a separate planning application for the provision of this equipment would be required.
- 6.13 In relation to servicing and delivery matters, the RBC Transport observations (see section 4 above) make clear the restrictions presently in place in the area, which the applicant would need to adhere to. It is not considered necessary to secure a delivery hours condition, as these separate regulations are already in place. Hence, it is instead recommended that an informative advising the applicant what these are should be included.
- 6.14 In terms of waste, following officer feedback (see section 4 above), during the course of the application the applicant has added food and glass bin provision as well as general waste and recycling bins, with section 13 of the Design and Access Statement also being updated to reference food and glass bin provision. At this point the applicant has also shown that a digit lock will be provided on the door, to enable access for effective collection in due course. With a compliance-worded condition for the bins to be provided and then retained in line with the commentary at sections 12 and 13 of the Design and Access Statement, the proposals are considered acceptable in this regard.
- 6.15 With regards to crime, disorder and fear of crime (as per Policy CC7), there are no inherent component parts of the proposals, as shown, which would be considered to give particular rise to such impacts. It is recognised that the proposals show internal grille shutters are proposed behind the ground floor shopfront windows and doors. Given these are located internally, they do not require planning permission. The submission specifies that they will only be used when the shop is closed, thereby meaning there are shown to be 'active window displays' on the proposed elevation plan along the length of the front (Friar Street) elevation at ground floor level. This will help provide a vibrant and attractive appearance in the vicinity of the site, integrating with the public realm and providing active surveillance, in line with Policies CC7 and OU5. This would represent a marked improvement on the currently vacant appearance of the shopfront (an identified negative feature of the conservation area, which the proposal would remedy).

- 6.16 It is considered necessary and reasonable to include a compliance-worded condition to seek to ensure that the 'active window display' is maintained in the future, thereby seeking to ensure the shopfront does not in-time include elements such as window vinyls, external roller shutters, or similar which would obscure visibility between the public realm and the unit during the hours of opening, without these first being assessed accordingly. This is particularly necessary in this case given the location of the site within the conservation area and the application site building being specifically identified as being of townscape merit. The condition would therefore help ensure the building makes a positive contribution to the special interest of the conservation area, whilst also protecting the setting of nearby listed buildings too and the Abbey Quarter policy area too.
- 6.17 In addition, comments have been received from the Designing Out Crime Officer (DOCO) at Thames Valley Police. As well as advising of no objections to the proposed change of use, it is recommended that the applicant consults the Secured by Design Non-Residential (commercial) Guidance 2025 to ensure the appropriate level of security is provided. The DOCO advises that CCTV will be needed within the unit and section 35 of the guidance provides guidance on Video Surveillance Systems. Accordingly, an informative will be included on the future decision notice in this respect.
- 6.18 In terms of accessibility (as referenced in Policy CC7), whilst there are steps at the existing ground floor entrance, this is an existing arrangement and hence it would be unreasonable to insist on this being altered as part of the application. Step-free level access is possible via the secondary entrance, meaning the ground floor of the unit can be accessible and usable for all. It is acknowledged that the basement floor of the unit would not be accessible for all, unless a dedicated lift were to be installed. This is a shortfall of the proposal.
- 6.19 Officers are mindful that emerging Local Plan Policy CC10 (Health Impact Assessment) states that *"Development that would detrimentally affect health will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that negative effects are mitigated"*. Officers are also mindful of Policy HC4 (Proposals for new and improved community facilities, public serves infrastructure and development providing public health benefits) of the NPPF. Whilst it is acknowledged that the existing lawful nightclub use could be considered to provide opportunities for good health / prevent ill-health, the proposed use (depending on the exact nature of the use) could provide opportunities to purchase healthier food (referenced in HC41b). Accordingly, a neutral health impact is considered to arise from the development.
- 6.20 In overall amenity terms, subject to a number of conditions, the proposals are considered to be appropriate.
- 6.21 Transport
- 6.22 As per the RBC Transport Development Control observations above at section 4, there are no specific transport-based concerns with the proposals.
- 6.23 Other matters
- 6.24 The proposals are for change of use only, meaning there are no external design changes proposed. In this regard, it could be that advertisements are subsequently proposed for the intended use. It may be necessary for separate advertisement consent being required for such works. Accordingly, an informative is recommended to be included stating that no advertisement consent is approved as part of this application and the applicant is advised that this permission is granted without prejudice to the possibility of requiring consent under the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended). As referenced

above, some recommended conditions are proposed to protect the character of the building, conservation area and Abbey Gardens area. It is referenced in the amenity section above that internal grille shutters are proposed, which do not require planning permission as they do not constitute development within an unlisted building. Had the applicant proposed external shutters, it is relevant to note that these would have required planning permission, and in line with the adopted policy and SPD, would have been unlikely to be considered suitable in this location.

- 6.25 It is noted from the application form that the proposals would provide 6 full-time and 4 part-time employment opportunities, which is acknowledged as a benefit of the proposals in the context of the existing vacant building. Had the building been occupied for its lawful use, there would have been likely to have been a net loss, with a nightclub likely to employ greater numbers than envisaged by the applicant in this instance.
- 6.26 Whilst Policy CC3 specifies that all development will demonstrate how they have been designed to incorporate measures to adapt to climate change, in the context of this being a change of use of commercial premises, there are acknowledged to be few reasonable opportunities to incorporate such measures.
- 6.27 In terms of biodiversity net gain matters, it is agreed that the proposals would be subject to the de minimis exemption, as being a development below the threshold.
- 6.28 EQUALITY ACT 2010: 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.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 In conclusion, the proposed development has been assessed and is considered to be in accordance with the above relevant policies. Planning permission can be granted, subject to conditions.

8. RECOMMENDATION

Grant planning permission subject to conditions

Recommended Conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall begin no later than three years from the date of this planning permission.

Reason: In pursuance of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004) in order to prevent an accumulation of unimplemented planning permissions.

2. The development hereby permitted shall ONLY be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

- 3931/03b/JG – Proposed Basement Floor Plan
 - 3931/04/JG – Proposed Elevations
- As received 25/08/2026

- 3931/03/JG Rev A – Proposed Ground Floor Plan
As received 06/10/2026

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is carried out and adhered to in accordance with the application form and associated details hereby approved.

3. The premises shall not operate outside the hours of 06:00 hours to 00:00 (midnight) hours on any day.

Reason: In order to protect local residents and the area generally from unreasonable disturbance arising from the use, in accordance with Policies DM3, DM6, S3, S4 and TC2 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2026 and Policies CC7, CC8, CR2, CR6 and EN16 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

4. No music shall be played from within basement and ground floors which is audible within any adjoining building.

Reason: To safeguard the amenities of the adjoining buildings and the area generally from noise disturbance, in accordance with Policies DM3, DM6, S3, S4 and TC2 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2026 and Policies CC8, CR2, CR6 and EN16 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

5. Notwithstanding the provisions of Class 12 of Schedule 3 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007 (as amended), the shopfront hereby approved on plan 3931/04/JG – Proposed Elevations, as received 25/08/2026, shall retain 'active window displays' along the length of the front (Friar Street) elevation at ground floor level, without the installation of window vinyls, roller shutters, or similar which would obscure visibility between the public realm and the unit during the hours of opening.

Reason: In the interests of retaining a vibrant and attractive appearance in the vicinity of the site, integration with the public realm and improving active surveillance, ensuring the development responds positively to the local context and character, including the setting of listed buildings and the Reading Abbey Quarter area, in line with Policies DM3, DM6, S3, S4, TC2, DP3, HE4, HE6 and HE9 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2026 and Policies CC7, CC8, EN1, EN3, EN6, CR2, CR7, CR15, RL1 and OU5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

6. Notwithstanding the provisions of Schedule 2, Part 3 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (or any order revoking or re enacting that Order with or without modification), the ground floor of the building shall be used for Class E (a) only and for no other purpose (including any other purpose in the same Use Class of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2020, or in any provision equivalent to that Class in any statutory instrument revoking or re-enacting that Order with or without modification.

Reason: In line with the nature that the application that has been submitted and assessed, with other Class E uses having potentially different amenity and transport implications than the use applied for, and other alternative uses of the premises which may otherwise be permitted by virtue of the above Orders could be harmful to the vitality and viability of the primary frontage within the regional centre, in accordance with Policies DM3, DM6, S3, S4 and TC2 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2026 and Policies CC8, RL1 and CR7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

7. Prior to first occupation of the development hereby approved, the refuse and recycling storage facility shall be implemented fully in accordance with those details shown on approved plan 3931/03/JG Rev A – Proposed Ground Floor Plan, as received 06/10/2026 and thereafter retained for use by

occupiers of the dwelling/building at all times. Deliveries and servicing of the site shall be carried in accordance with the measures detailed at sections 12 and 13 of the Design and Access Statement by Multi Creation, as received 06/10/2026.

Reason: In the interests of the visual amenity of the area and to ensure that bins can be easily accessed when required, and in the interests of general amenity, to ensure convenience of arrangements for refuse and recycling storage and collection and to ensure that no obstruction is caused on the adjoining highway, in the interest of highway safety, all in accordance with Policies DM3, DM6, S3, S4, TC2, DP3 and TR4 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2026 and Policies CC7, CC8, CR2 and TR3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

Informatives:

1. The Local Planning Authority has worked positively and proactively with the applicant to resolve relevant matters to allow permission to be granted within the prescribed target timescale for the decision to be issued.
2. Your attention is drawn to the terms and conditions of this permission. Any development which is carried out but which differs materially from the approved plans and details, or does not comply with any condition(s) or planning obligation(s) attached to the permission may result in the Council taking action to remedy the breach of planning control. If you are in any doubt please contact the Council.
3. The Council introduced the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) on 1st April 2015. CIL is a way of securing financial contributions towards infrastructure from new development, and partially replaces the Section 106 planning obligation regime. It is a set charge per sq m of floorspace for different uses, and, unlike Section 106, it is non-negotiable. It applies to developments which result in at least one dwelling; where the space has not been in lawful use for 6 months within the last 3 years or 100 sq m of new floorspace. For this approved development the CIL status is NOT APPLICABLE. If chargeable you will be sent a CIL Liability Notice with the calculated amount soon. CIL becomes payable on commencement of the development or by instalments.
4. Should any external flue extraction system be required in association with the permitted use in the future, separate planning permission for the provision of this equipment would be required from the Local Planning Authority prior to any such equipment being installed.
5. The Designing Out Crime Officer (DOCO) at Thames Valley Police recommends that the applicant consults the Secured by Design Non-Residential (commercial) Guidance 2025 to ensure the appropriate level of security is provided. The DOCO advises that CCTV will be needed within the unit and section 35 of the guidance provides guidance on Video Surveillance Systems. You are therefore advised to take this into account and incorporate necessary measures.
6. The Highway Authority advises that Friar Street and Town Hall Square are heavily restricted with regards to access and parking. Friar Street is used by buses and has access restrictions in place during certain times of the day. There is a time restricted access to Friar Street Eastbound between 7am – 11am and 4pm – 7pm. Therefore, all deliveries made to the site would need to adhere to the regulations.
7. No advertisement consent is approved as part of this application and you are advised that this permission is granted without prejudice to the possibility of requiring consent under the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended).



8. A Building Regulations application may be required for the proposed development. Please go to our website for more advice.
<https://www.reading.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/building-control/apply-for-building-control/>
You can also find advice and submit an application using the Planning Portal.