

04 October 2023



Reading
Borough Council
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Title	PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT
Ward	Abbey
Planning Application Reference:	230908/FUL
Site Address:	104-105 Friar Street, Reading, RG1 1EP
Proposed Development	Change of use of 104-105 Friar Street from a vacant Class E unit to an Adult Gaming Centre (AGC) (Sui Generis) (SG)
Applicant	Merkur Slots Ltd (UK)
Report author	David Brett
Deadline:	11/10/2023
Recommendations	As per main report
Conditions	As per main report
Informatives	As per main report

1. Additional Information Submitted

1.1. The following document has been received from the applicant to support this application:

- Planning Statement Addendum – 104-105 Friar Street, Reading

Received on 27/09/2023

1.2. The Planning Statement Addendum sets out the applicant's justification for application considering the reasons for deferral of the item from the September Planning Applications Committee.

1.3. The statement discusses the contribution that the Adult Gaming Centre would have with regards to footfall. The statement asserts that there is no family housing nearby, however, there are now some family sized units that became available in August 2023 as part of the Station Hill development (Ebb & Flow). The applicant has also undertaken a survey of units along Friar Street, Union Street, West Street and Station Road.

1.4. The officer recommendation is still for approval subject to conditions as outlined in the main report.

Planning Statement Addendum – 104-105 Friar Street, Reading – Receive on 27/09/2032

Planning Statement addendum – 104-105 Friar Street, Reading 230908/FUL

- There is no evidence that the three existing AGCs are having a pejorative impact on this part of the PSF. On the contrary, the number of vacancies is low and a Merkur Slots adds to the inward investment. Other businesses can benefit from locating themselves near these hubs of consumer presence.
- The submitted footfall survey shows that there is an increase in the level of consumer activity within the surrounding area and that Merkur Slots AGCs generate similar and often high footfalls than retail and service operators.
- There is no family housing nearby, which was a concern members expressed at the September meeting. Given the central location, accommodation is primary student accommodation or 1-2 bedroom flats.
- Like any other retailer/leisure operator, key factors such as footfall, competitive presence, demand and overall cost of running an outlet help operators decide where to open new premises.
- We've undertaken a survey of all the units along Friar Street up to the Station Road Junction (including Union Street which forms part of the PFS) and West Street and identified the most common uses/operators (there are many more types of operator/uses in this section of the PSF). The table helps to show that four AGCs in this context is not in any way excessive. It also shows that there is a healthy mix of both leisure/late night operators and retailers in this part of the PSF. Whilst there are 14 restaurants/cafes, 4 clubs, 7 convenience shops, etc they all individually have different brands/offers/services that contributes to the vitality and viability of the PFS, and it is no different for the AGC sector.

Restaurants/Cafes	14
Pub/Bars	3
Clubs	4
Mobile phone shops (retail)	8
Convenience shops/news agents	7
Vaping shops (retail)	7
Beauty/Nail Salons	4