

27 March 2024



**Reading**  
Borough Council  
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<b>Title</b>	<b>PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT</b>
<b>Ward</b>	Whitley
<b>Planning Application Reference:</b>	231607
<b>Site Address:</b>	40 Bennet Road
<b>Proposed Development</b>	Application for change of use from B2, to sui generis car servicing and MOT garage and/or B2, with two proposed extensions on the Northern frontage and associated alterations.
<b>Applicant:</b>	Cordwallis Commercials (Reading)
<b>Report author</b>	Nathalie Weekes
<b>Deadline:</b>	16 April 2024
<b>Recommendations</b>	Grant, subject to conditions as follows:
<b>Conditions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Time limit 3 years</li><li>2. Approved Plans</li><li>3. Materials to match existing</li><li>4. Parking to be provided</li><li>5. Cycle parking to be provided</li><li>6. Noise associated plant – levels restricted</li><li>7. Land gas assessment to be undertaken</li><li>8. Sustainability and Energy measure to be provided.</li><li>9. Pre-occupation photovoltaic array details to be submitted and approved.</li><li>10. Compliance condition relating to hours of demolition /construction works (0800-1800hrs Mondays to Fridays and 0800-1300hrs Saturdays, and not at any time on Sundays and Bank or Statutory Holidays)</li><li>11. Pre-occupation Flood Plan to be produced, in accordance with FRA addendum.</li></ol>
<b>Informatives</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Terms</li><li>2. Building Control</li><li>3. No bonfires</li><li>4. Positive and Proactive</li><li>5. Damage to Highway</li><li>6. Works affecting highway</li><li>7. Complaints about construction</li><li>8. Community Infrastructure Levy</li></ol>

## 1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The proposal is recommended for approval subject to the conditions set out above.
- 1.2 This application seeks to regularise the use classes for activity at the site to include a Sui generis car servicing and MOT use. A small extension is also proposed to increase the MOT provision on site. Permission was granted for an existing MOT bay in 2013. MOT servicing is generally recognised to fall under a Sui generis use class. There are no significant detrimental effects of the proposal, and it is considered that it accords with adopted policies and is recommended to you for approval.

## 2. Introduction and site description

- 2.1 The application site lies at the western end of Bennet Road at its junction with the A33 Relief Road. The site area measures 0.74 hectares with the bulk of this area located at the northern end of the site, with a taper to just under 10 metres wide at its southern end. It is located within the core employment area EM2d Bennet Road and in an air quality management area.
- 2.2 The uses in the surrounding area are mixed with a car show room on the north side of Bennet Road, distribution and industrial units to the east and south and the Reading Gate Retail Park with Madejski Stadium beyond to the west.



Location Plan

- 2.3 The application is a 'major' development according to the Reading 'Scheme of Delegation' (a change of use being regularised, over 1,000 sqm.) and, therefore is presented to Planning Applications Committee for a decision.

## 3. The proposal

- 3.1. The proposal is to regularise the activity undertaken on site. The site is used as a depot for heavy goods, public service and commercial vehicles together with workshops or for purposes that fall within Class B2 (General Industry) and associated vehicle parts and sales. MOTs have been provided on site since planning permission was granted for an MOT bay in 2013. A greater emphasis on servicing electric vehicles is proposed and to extend the EV charging facilities on site.

- 3.2. A 478sqm 'L' shaped extension is proposed to enlarge existing storage for parts on site and create a separate working area for servicing and MOTs for smaller vans and electric vehicles, leaving the servicing and MOTs for the larger vehicles in the existing building. The proposed extension will increase the floor area of buildings on site to a total 1588 sqm. Portacabins are currently being used for stock storage on part of the site allocated for the extension and the contents would be moved into a larger storage facility.
- 3.3. Submitted plans and documents:
- 6325.01 Office record drawing
  - 6325.02B Proposed floor plans
  - 6325.03B Proposed elevations
  - RGL-22-3827-01 Topographic site survey plan north
  - RGL-22-3827-02 Topographic site survey plan south
- CIL
- As received 9 November 2023
- Design, access and planning statements, Cordwallis Commercials (Reading), BW Architects Ltd, Updated
- 6325.04A Proposed site location and layout plans
- Addendum to an existing FRA, Innervision Design Ltd, January 2024
- As received 27 February 2024
- 3.4. Community Infrastructure levy (CIL):
- In relation to the community infrastructure levy, the applicant has duly completed a CIL liability form with the submission. The development would be CIL liable as the new build element would be more than 100 sqm. gross internal floor area.

#### **4. Planning history/Building control**

- 4.1 121808 Side extension to existing building for use as MOT bay. Permitted 14/05/2013
- 111292 Change of use to HGV, PSV and commercial vehicles depot and workshops or a use within Class B2 (General Industry) together with external alterations, including new doors and an extension to the existing workshop building. Permitted 29/11/2011 at PAC

#### **5. Consultations**

- 5.1. Non-statutory:
- RBC Natural Environment – No objections
  - RBC Transport – Additional information has been sought. An update will be provided in advance of the Committee meeting.
  - RBC Environmental Protection - No objections, subject to conditions.
  - RBC – Building control – No comment received at the time of writing the report.
  - RBC – Waste operations – No comment received at the time of writing the report.
- Public:
- Letters were sent to 5, 19, 38, 26-32 Bennet Road and 1-3 Acre Road. A site notices was displayed at the site on 6 March 2024 for comments to be received by 27 March 2024.

A recommendation has been made, which is subject to any comments made up until the end of the consultation period on 27 March 2024. No letters of representation have been received at the time of writing this report, but an update will be provided should any be received.

## **6. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE**

6.1 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) which states at Paragraph 11 “Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development”.

6.2 For this Local Planning Authority the development plan is the Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019). The relevant national / local policies / guidance are:

National Planning Policy Framework (2023). The following chapters are the most relevant (others apply to a lesser extent):

2. Achieving Sustainable Development

6. Building a Strong Competitive Economy

8. Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities

9. Promoting Sustainable Transport

11. Making Effective Use of Land

12. Achieving Well-Designed Places

14. Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change

National Planning Policy Guidance (2014 onwards)

Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019). The relevant policies are:

CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction

CC3: Adaptation to Climate Change

CC4: Decentralised Energy

CC5: Waste Minimisation and Storage

CC6: Accessibility and the Intensity of Development

CC7: Design and the Public Realm

CC8: Safeguarding Amenity

EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network

EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodland

EN15: Air Quality

EN16: Pollution and Water Resources

EN17: Noise Generating Equipment

EN18: Flooding and Drainage

EM1: Provision of Employment Development

- EM2: Location of New Employment Development
- EM4: Maintaining a Variety of Premises
- TR1: Achieving the Transport Strategy
- TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
- TR4: Cycle Routes and Facilities
- TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging
- RL1: Network and Hierarchy of Centres
- RL5: Impact of Main Town Centre Uses

Relevant Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) are:

- Employment Skills and Training SPD (2013)
- Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011)
- Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2019)

Other relevant documents:

- Reading Borough Council Tree strategy (2021)

## 7. APPRAISAL

The main matters to be considered are:

- Land use principles
- Transport/ Parking
- Environmental Matters
- Flood Risk & Drainage
- Natural Environment
- Design Considerations and Effect on Character
- Sustainability
- Equalities impact

### Land use principles

- 7.1 Policy CC1 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (RBLP) requires a positive approach to development that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development, which lies at the heart of national policy (NPPF).
- 7.2 Policy EM2 identifies relevant locations for where employment development should be located. The site is located in the A33 corridor, within a Core Strategy major employment area for employment uses including industrial, storage and distribution uses. This is because this area's proximity and ease of access to the motorway and trunk road network reduces the requirement for lorries and goods vehicles to have to travel further into the town centre or through residential areas. The application site has particularly good access to the A33 relief road and the principle of using this site for this type of development is considered to comply with this policy. Its specific location is considered to be acceptable in principle. It

should also be noted that the principle of providing MOTs was accepted through the approval of planning policy 121808 (March 2013). An intensification of use on the site, with an expansion of associated sui generis MOT and car services is considered acceptable. The existing services will continue, with a number of local employment opportunities. It would not diminish the supply and availability of units and the Borough will continue to provide for a range of different types of industrial and commercial premises.

#### Transport/Parking

- 7.3 Policies TR1 (Achieving the Transport Strategy), TR3 (Access, Traffic and Highway related matters), and TR5 (Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging) seek to address access, traffic, highway and parking related matters relating to development.
- 7.4 A Transport Statement (TS) has been submitted, which considers the potential highway implications arising from the proposed development. The current access will be retained and the resultant total combined area available for parking and turning will be reduced from 6313m<sup>2</sup> to 5802m<sup>2</sup>. The Council's Transport team have been consulted and advise that there is no in principle objection to the proposal in Transport terms. However additional information has been requested by the transport team to evidence that any intensification of use of the site does not lead to congestion within site resulting in overspill onto the surrounding highway. There are parking restrictions to prevent overspill parking along Bennet Road.
- 7.5 A cycle store is proposed, additional details are required by pre-occupation condition.
- 7.6 In order to be able to fully assess the Transport implications of the proposal the applicant has agreed to submit further details. Should the Council's Transport team raise substantive objections to the further information or consider it insufficient to overcome Transport concerns you will be further advised by way an update report.

#### Environmental Matters

- 7.7 Noise – Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) and EN16 (Pollution and Water Resources) require development to not cause a significant detrimental impact to the living environment of existing or new residential properties. There are many other industrial buildings in the vicinity and due to the site location, the proposed extension and additional MOT bay is not considered to cause a significant impact on the surrounding area. A condition on the noise levels of mechanical plant is however recommended. There is no existing residential accommodation close to the site.
- 7.8 Contaminated land – Policy EN16 states that “development will only be permitted on land affected by contamination where it is demonstrated that the contamination and land gas can be satisfactorily managed or remediated so that it is suitable for the proposed end use and will not impact on the groundwater environment, human health, buildings and the wider environment, during demolition and construction phases as well as during the future use of the site.”
- 7.9 The Council's Environmental Protection Team have advised that the application site is located within 250 metres of two former landfill sites and development within this zone has the potential to be adversely affected by landfill gas. As the proposal involves extending an existing building rather than a new build the risk is lower. A land gas assessment and remediation if required condition is recommended.

#### Flood Risk & Drainage

- 7.10 Local Plan Policy EN18 (Flooding and Sustainable Drainage Systems) states, “Development will be directed to areas at lowest risk of flooding in the first instance...” and “Wherever possible, development should be designed to reduce flood risk, both on- and off-site. The Environment Agency refers to standing advice.

- 7.11 The site is located within Flood Risk Zone 3. And at high risk from surface water flooding. A sequential test analysis of the site considered that it will not increase the risks to life and property arising from flooding. The site will not be occupied during flood events and flood resilience methods will be implemented on site. Due to the size of extension proposed, is considered acceptable in this instance. A Flood plan condition is recommended to comply with the FRA addendum submitted.

#### Natural Environment

- 7.12 The site's western boundary abuts a small area of Identified Area of Biodiversity Interest (policy EN12) due to part of Foudry Brook (a Green Link). It is not directly affected by the proposed works and the site consists of a tarmacked area surrounded by metal railings. Measures are proposed to protect the biodiversity interest area when construction is taking place. There are no objections to the proposal from the RBC Natural Environment team as there will be no impact on the adjoining biodiversity interest area and the proposal would not negatively impact or alter any habitat. There is no net biodiversity loss on site, in line with policy EN12.

#### Design Considerations and Effect on Character

- 7.13 Policy CC7 (Design and The Public Realm) states that "all development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area".
- 7.14 The use of the site as a depot for heavy goods, public service and commercial vehicles will not be significantly different to the previous use and it will not therefore be detrimental to the existing character and appearance of this core employment area.
- 7.15 The proposal includes relatively minor external changes that do not detract from the commercial building's appearance. Therefore, the design is considered to be appropriate and accord with the character of the wider commercial area, in accordance with Policy CC7.

#### Sustainability

- 7.16 The overarching sustainability policy, Policy CC2 requires proposals for new development to reduce the consumption of resources and materials and includes that "All major non-residential developments [including refurbishment] ..... meet the most up-to-date BREEAM 'Excellent' standards, where possible". The supporting text (para 4.1.4) accepts that "some types of development, such as industrial uses, warehouses and schools might find it more difficult to meet these standards. In these cases, developments must demonstrate that the standard to be achieved is the highest possible for the development, and at a minimum meets the BREEAM 'Very Good' standard." The supporting SPD recognises that "applications for change of use may fall to be considered as refurbishment depending on the level of internal alterations. The appropriate approach to sustainability will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Requirements...are subject to caveats in the relevant policies (CC2 ...) around viability and achievability."
- 7.17 Policy CC3: Adaptation to Climate Change, requires that "all developments demonstrate how they have been designed to incorporate measures to adapt to climate change."
- 7.18 Policy CC4: Decentralised Energy also requires development to demonstrate how consideration has been given to securing energy for the development from decentralised sources. Supporting text in para. 4.1.19 states that although this policy would mainly apply in Central Reading there would be some potential in South Reading.
- 7.19 Policy CC5 requires minimisation of waste during construction and the life of the development.
- 7.20 Sustainability and Energy Statement has been submitted which includes a BREEAM Scoping Note and a Sustainability Checklist (using that from Appendix 1 of the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD). In order to meet RBC policy requirements, the proposal for a non-residential refurbishment scheme would need to demonstrate BREEAM Excellent

or at the least 50% Very Good and 50% Excellent rating. This would be assessed against the BREEAM Refurbishment and Fit Out Standards 2014 (RFO).

- 7.21 Officer accept that a full BREEAM assessment would be difficult to apply to the type of industrial building proposed. The applicant has stated that an energy audit would be undertaken to reference BREEAM assessment goals. A condition to meet significant sustainability uplift pre-occupation is recommended and to provide the submission and approval of further details of proposed PV.

### Equalities Impact

- 7.22 When determining an application for planning permission the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups as identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this 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 proposed development.

## 8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 The proposal would result in the regularising of an additional MOT car servicing use in addition to the B2 use. Although no net biodiversity gain is proposed, the proposed amended use is considered acceptable, it would not harm the character of the surrounding area and is not considered to result in significant harm.
- 8.2 In accordance with the NPPF it would result in sustainable development, utilising previously developed land in a sustainable location.
- 8.3 It is considered that the scheme would address all material matters and that there would be no significant detrimental effects resulting. The application is recommended for approval, subject to the recommended conditions.

### Existing Elevations





