

COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT CULTURE & SPORT
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 05/09/18

ITEM NO. 11

Ward: Battle

App No: 180895/FUL

Address: 10 Portman Road

Proposal: Change of use of ground floor from general industrial (Class B2) to funeral care centre (Class Sui Generis) with associated internal and elevational alterations

Applicant: Mr Chris Beebe, Co-op Funeralcare

Date validated: 13/06/18

Major Application 13 Weeks Target Date: 07/09/18

RECOMMENDATION

GRANT

Conditions to include:

1. Time limit for implementation
2. Use of materials
3. Approved plans
4. Vehicle parking spaces
5. Landscaping details
6. Landscaping implementation
7. Landscaping maintenance

Informatives to include:

1. Terms and conditions
2. Need for building regulations
3. Encroachment
4. Construction and Demolition subject to Environmental Health
5. Highways
6. Positive and proactive

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The site is located in an established area of industrial, office and commercial uses and is within the defined Portman Road Core Employment Area and Flood Zone 2. The closest residential dwellings are located approximately 50m south of the site at Barnwood Close. The site occupies a prominent corner location at the junction of Portman Road and Ashmere Terrace.
- 1.2 The site comprises a three storey detached building, with a single storey warehouse to the rear. The building is currently vacant but the authorised use is a laboratory on the ground floor and office space on the first and second floors of the building. The building benefits from a vehicle access ramp, beyond the north-eastward elevation, to serve rooftop parking for up to 30 vehicles. The main entrance to the building is to the north-westward elevation, via Ashmere Terrace. Vehicular access to the warehouse is

achieved by a roller shutter door to the north-eastward elevation. Existing plant is located above the access ramp to the north-eastward elevation of the building. External areas forward of the north-eastward and south-eastward elevations are laid to gravel. At the time of the officer's site visit, these areas were being used for the display and advertisement of Berkshire Van Hire vehicles.



Site Location Plan

2. PROPOSALS

- 2.1 Full planning permission is sought for the change of use of the ground floor from a general industrial use (Class B2) to a funeral care centre (Class Sui Generis), with associated internal and elevational alterations. The floor area changing use would be 1,281 square metres. The proposed use would include a coffin storage area, a workshop and an embalming area. The coordination and management of funeral care operations would also take place.
- 2.2 Various internal and external alterations are proposed to facilitate the change of use. A new vehicular entrance would be located to the north-eastward elevation, some existing fenestration would be removed, and new and existing air conditioning units and other plant would be located within fencing to the north-eastward and south-eastward elevations.
- 2.3 The funeral care centre would have 24 hour access. This is required for the delivery of the deceased in private ambulances, from local hospitals and nursing homes. Two visitor parking spaces, including one accessible space,

would be provided to the building frontage on Ashmere Terrace. Further parking would be available on the roof of the building.

- 2.4 Two visiting rooms and an arrangement room are proposed, to allow for clients to visit the deceased and to arrange funerals. No cremation would take place on-site. The deceased would be taken for burial or cremation elsewhere. The proposed change of use would provide full-time employment for five employees.

3. PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 930259/FUL - Erection of free standing pole mount with 600m antenna attached - Permitted 15/04/93

140656/CLE - Use as offices and workshops for research and development - Withdrawn 29/05/14

141102/CLE - Business offices. The three storey element is internally individual offices with part open plan and the single storey element is open plan office space - Withdrawn 01/09/14

4. CONSULTATIONS

- 4.1 Reading Borough Council Environmental Protection raised no objection as the proposed change of use would be unlikely to have any noise or odour impacts.
- 4.2 Reading Borough Council Transport Development Control raised no objection to the proposal, subject to a condition and an informative. It was advised that a high proportion of the traffic in the area is commercial, ranging from light vans to articulated lorries. It was noted that the proposed use would be serviced by lorries delivering coffins on a weekly basis, and by small transit vans and private ambulances on a daily basis. 24 hour access would be required for the delivery of the deceased. It was advised that the existing parking provision is higher than the Council's adopted standard for a B2 use in this location. The proposal would include the provision of two additional visitor parking spaces, including one accessible bay, utilising the existing dropped kerb onto Ashmere Terrace. It was advised that while the proposal would increase the level of parking on-site, it would provide a small amount of surface level parking for visitors to the site. In the circumstance, the proposed change of use would be unlikely to have a significant impact on the trips and parking demand generated by the premises. Accordingly, Transport raised no objection to the proposal, subject to a condition to ensure that vehicle parking spaces are provided in accordance with the approved plans.
- 4.3 Reading Borough Council Natural Environment advised that the site once had broad areas of landscaping to the site frontage, though this was dug up when Berkshire Van Hire used the site 'temporarily'. Natural Environment advised that given the sensitive and intensely personal nature of the proposed use, in what is an otherwise industrial area, the previous areas of soft landscaping should be restored. This should include new tree and shrub planting around the perimeter, particularly along the frontage with Portman Road, to improve the amenity of the site. Conditions were suggested requiring the submission of landscaping details.

- 4.4 Neighbouring owners and occupiers at 8 and 12 Portman Road, 7 and 9a-d Loverock Road and 26-32 Barnwood Close were consulted by letter. A site notice was displayed. No letters of representation have been received.

5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy Framework, among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'.

- 5.2 The application has been assessed against the following policies:

5.3 National Planning Policy Framework

5.4 Reading Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2008)

Policy CS7: Design and the Public Realm

Policy CS10: Location of Employment Development

Policy CS11: Use of Employment Land for Alternative Uses

Policy CS12: Maintaining a Variety of Premises

Policy CS20: Implementation of The Reading Transport Strategy

Policy CS24: Car/Cycle Parking

Policy CS35: Flooding

Policy CS38: Trees, Hedges and Woodlands

5.5 Reading Borough Local Development Framework Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012)

Policy SD1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

Policy DM4: Safeguarding Amenity

Policy DM12: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters

Policy DM17: Green Network

Policy DM18: Tree Planting

Policy SA12: Core Employment Areas

5.6 Reading Borough Proposals Map

6. APPRAISAL

(i) Principle of change of use

- 6.1 The application site is located within Core Employment Area SA12h: Portman Road. Policy SA12 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document defines the boundaries of Core Employment Areas to allow policies CS10, CS11 and CS12 of the Core Strategy to be applied. These areas will be the main location for industrial and warehouse uses and there is a general presumption against the loss of employment land in these areas.
- 6.2 The proposed use is consistent with the range of uses within the Core Employment Area. Additionally, the proposal allows a previously vacant unit to be placed in an active use. On this basis it is considered that the proposal would not result in a loss of employment land and is therefore in accordance with Policy CS11 of the Core Strategy.

(ii) Design and impact on the character of the area

6.3 The proposed elevational alterations are relatively minor and are not considered to detract from the appearance of the building. The proposed plant units would be positioned close to existing plant units, fenced off and largely hidden from public view. The proposal is therefore in accordance with Policy CS7 of the Core Strategy.

(iii) Impact on neighbours

6.4 The application site is located within an area of established industrial and commercial activity. The closest residential dwellings are located approximately 50m south of the site at Barnwood Close. Existing plant units are located to the north-eastward elevation. These, and additional and additional plant units would be located within secure fencing to the north-eastward and south-eastward elevations. In accordance with the consultation response received from Environmental Protection, it is not considered that the proposed change of use would result in increased harm to the residential amenity of these dwellings.

6.5 Though the building would be able to be accessed 24 hour a day, due to the nature of the use, it is expected that deliveries arriving during early hours would remain discreet, without generating significant noise issues. Any residual noise problems that might occur could be reasonably controlled under separate Environmental Health legislation. The proposal is therefore in accordance with Policy DM4 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document.

(iv) Traffic and highway safety

6.6 The site is located within an established area of industrial and commercial activity. As such, a high proportion of the traffic using the surrounding road network are commercial vehicles. The site would be visited on a weekly basis by lorries delivering coffins, and on a daily basis by small transit vans and private ambulances delivering the deceased. The site would also be visited by members of the public, to make funeral arrangements. Dedicated visitor parking spaces have been allocated to the site frontage, with additional parking located on the roof of the building. In accordance with the consultation response received from Transport, the proposal is in accordance with Policies CS20 and CS24 of the Core Strategy and Policy DM12 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document.

(v) Flooding

6.7 The site is located within Flood Zone 2. A Flood Risk Assessment has been supplied as part of the application. The assessment concludes that the risk of flooding is low, and that the proposed use of the building falls within a less vulnerable category. The NPPF states that less vulnerable uses are appropriate for Flood Zone 2. Officers are satisfied that the proposal is therefore in accordance with Policy CS35 of the Core Strategy.

(vi) Trees and landscaping

- 6.8 The Proposals Map identifies Portman Road as a Green Link. Green Links are identified locations to provide desired connectivity for wildlife between ecologically important areas. Additionally, Policy CS7 of the Core Strategy states that all development should maintain and enhance the character and appearance of the area. Visually attractive development can be achieved through the inclusion of appropriate materials and landscaping.
- 6.9 The site previously benefitted from broad areas of landscaping to the site frontage on Portman Road. This has been removed in recent years, replaced with gravel, facilitating the display of Berkshire Van Hire vehicles. It is considered prudent that this soft landscaping be reinstated, and secured under the provisions of this application. As per the Natural Environment consultation response, new tree and shrub planting around the perimeter of the site to Portman Road would be appropriate.
- 6.10 The agent has supplied an indicative plan, indicating the area to be landscaped. This is considered to be acceptable for the purpose of determining this application, with precise details to be secured by condition. Subject to condition, the proposal is therefore in accordance with Policy CS38 of the Core Strategy and Policy DM17 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document.

(vii) Equality

- 6.11 In determining this application the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics including age and disability. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to the particular planning application. 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 The proposed change of use, with associated internal and elevational alterations, is considered to be acceptable in the context of national and local planning policy, as set out in this report. The application is recommended for approval on this basis.

8. PLANS

Planning Statement (received 31/05/18)

Drawing No: FC-H-03-100 - Site Location (received 31/05/18)

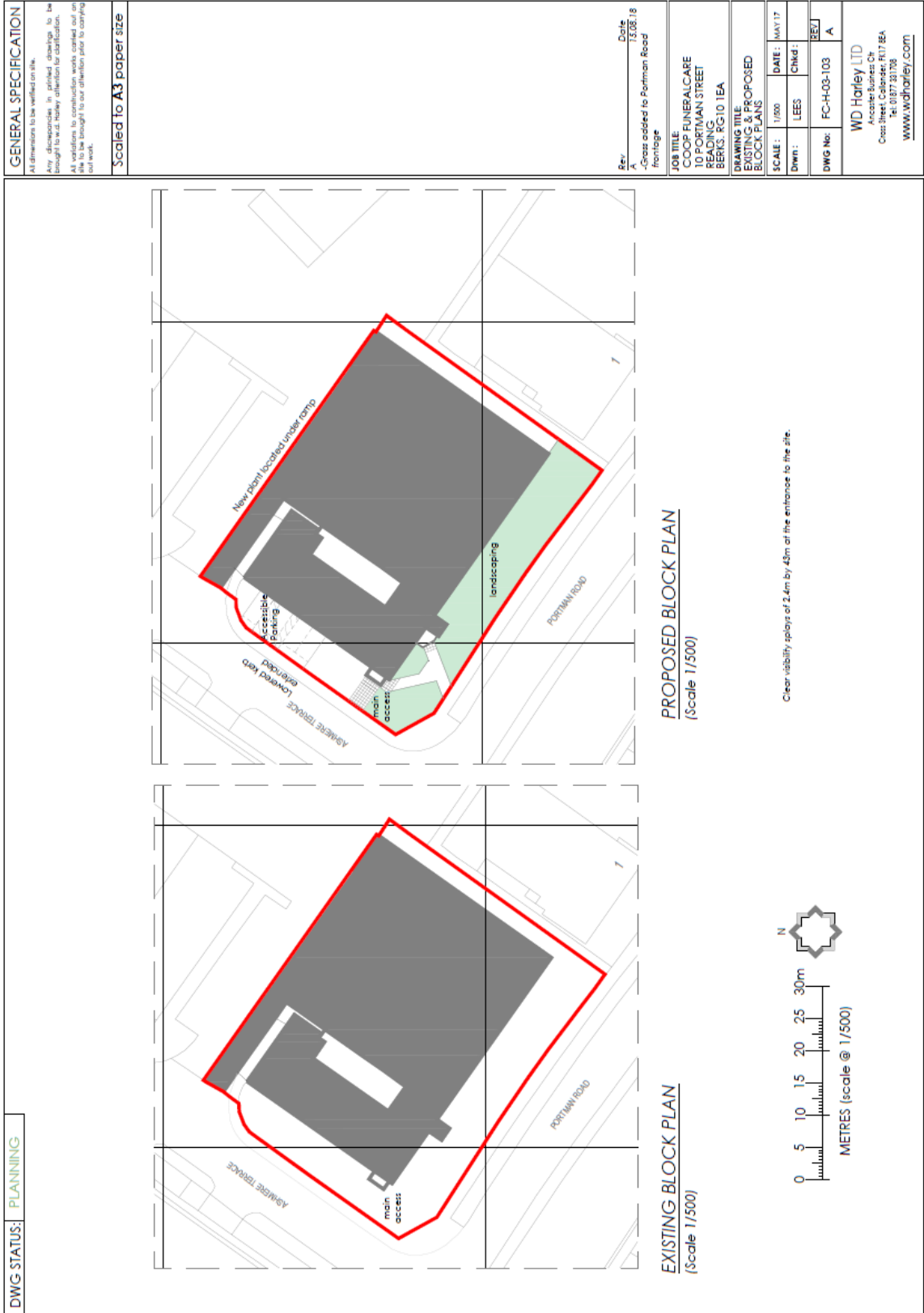
Drawing No: FC-H-03-103 Rev. A - Existing and Proposed Block Plan (received 15/08/18)

Drawing No: FC-H-03-001 - Existing Site Plan, Ground Floor Plan and Elevations (received 31/05/18)

Drawing No: FC-H-03-002 Rev. C - Proposed Ground Floor Plan and Elevations (received 15/08/18)

Flood Risk Assessment, Ref: G23492, dated May 2018, by Thomasons

Case Officer: Tom Hughes



Existing and Proposed Block Plans

