

PLANNING STATEMENT

Proposed Change of Use from Tanning Salon to Class E (e) Medical and Health Centre Plus Extension to Front Elevation of Building.

At

Unit 5, Reading East Retail Centre, Shepherds Hill,
Reading Berkshire, RG6 1FE

September 2025

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Client: Derma Reading Limited
Project: Unit 5, Reading East Retail Centre, Shepherds Hill, Reading RG6 1FE
Date: September 2025

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of Derma Reading Limited (referred to as 'the Applicants') and is submitted in support of a full planning application for a change of use from Tanning Salon to Class E (e) Medical and Health Centre along with an extension to front elevation of building.
- 1.2 The Applicant is the current leaseholder of the adjoining building (Unit 4) on the Reading East Retail Centre. The proposal seeks to planning permission for the applicant to amalgamate the two units for their existing dermatology practice.
- 1.3 Derma Reading is a dermatology clinic providing health and medical advice and procedures for skin, nail and hair treatment. The practice provides innovative treatments and has highly respected experienced dermatological consultants and fully trained nurses. Referral for consultation can be made direct by members of the public or through referral from another medical expert (such as a GP or another doctor). The practice provides dermatology advice for both adults and children
- 1.4 The site lies within the administrative boundary of Wokingham Borough Council. The retail centre is located within the Shepherds Hill Early Local Centre as set out in the local plan. The site area (the red lined area four Unit 5) is approximately 227 sq metres and includes an area (approximately 24 square metres for an extension to the front of the proposed premises.
- 1.5 A project team appointed by the Applicant has prepared the planning application documents that explain and assess the development. The planning submission comprises a range of documents that together provide a comprehensive application which assesses all relevant elements of the proposal.
- 1.6 In addition to this Planning Statement, the following drawings are submitted for approval:
 - Planning Applications Forms
 - Ownership Certificate Form (Certificate C)
 - Location Plan 1594.A.01;
 - Existing Plans 1594.A.02;
 - Proposed Plans 1594.A.03
 - Ground Floor Plans Existing 1594.A.04;
 - Ground Floor Plans Proposed 1594.A.05;
 - Existing and Proposed Roof Plan 1594.A.06;
 - Existing and Proposed Plans and Elevations 1594.A.07; and

- Planning Statement

1.7 As stated above, adjoining the application site is the end retail unit (Unit 4) that is currently occupied by the Applicant. To east of the application site are the remaining units on the terrace, which include a bakery, Anytime Fitness gym and Carphone Warehouse. There is also a Johnson Dry Cleaners housed in a detached building within the car park to the east of the main retail centre.

1.6 This report continues in Section 2 by providing a summary of the site's location and its context, with a brief summary of the planning history for the site within Section 3. Full details of the proposal are set out in Section 4, including a detailed description of the layout and designs offered upon the site. A detailed summary of the planning policy position at national and local level is contained within Section 5. Section 6 sets out the justification for the proposal in the context of national requirements, local need, and the policy position with the conclusions finally drawn in Section 7.

1.7 A separate Design and Access statement accompanies this application.

SECTION 2: SITE DESCRIPTION:

- 2.1 The planning application relates to Unit 5 which is a mid-terrace retail/commercial unit within the Reading East Retail Centre.
- 2.2 The site is located between a major road in the Borough, the A4 (Shepherds Hill), and the Great Western rail line situated in a railway cutting to the north of the site. The application site is part of a group of retail commercial units on the north side of Shepherds Hill. To the west of the retail centre there are semi-detached residential properties with residential properties also on the south side of Shepherds Hill
- 2.3 The unit was originally granted planning permission in July 2006 (LPA Ref: F/2006/7497). This formed part of a wider scheme for the erection retail units for alternative uses which included A1, A3 and D1 uses.
- 2.4 As mentioned, there are residential properties to the west of the centre's car park that are separated by several mature trees. To east of the application site are the remaining units on the terrace, which currently include an Anytime Fitness gym (D2 use), a bakery and Carphone Warehouse. A second car park is located at the eastern end of the terrace.
- 2.5 To the south of the site on the opposite side of Shepherds Hill, is a BP PFS (petrol filling station) which includes an M&S Simply Food and Wild Bean Café, as well as a number of residential properties. A pedestrian crossing is located immediate outside the site provides pedestrian connectivity. There are number of other retail and commercial uses in the surrounding area, including an M&S Foodhall, Majestic Wine, Bathstore, The Shepherds House PH, Kwik Fit. There are also a restaurant, barbers and takeaway in the near vicinity.

SECTION 3 PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 The relevant planning history is as follows:
 - 190352 - Unit 5 Change of use of A1 to Sui Generis (tanning salon) Approved
 - 161875 - Full application for proposed change of use from Class A1 (shops) to Class D2(assembly and leisure) for Units 1 and 6 to open an Anytime Fitness gym operating on 24 hours a day, 7 days a week basis – Approved

- F/2006/7497 - Proposed erection of 3 units for the following alternative uses Unit 4- A1 or A3, Unit 5 - A1 and Unit 6 - A1 or D1 with servicing and car parking - Approved
- F/2006/6776 - Proposed erection of one A1 unit and one D1 unit with on-site servicing and car parking. Amendment to consent F/2005/5720 - Approved
- F/2005/5720 - Proposed erection of an A1 retail unit and a D1 community facility with on-site servicing and car parking - Approved

SECTION 4 PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The proposal can be split into two main elements:
- 4.2 The first element is a change of use of the existing building from a tanning salon to Class E (e) medical centre for Derma Reading.
- 4.3 The proposed drawings depict a scheme for amalgamation of the two premises to be used as medical and health practice allowing for an expansion of an existing business.
- 4.4 The second part of the proposal is for consent to extend the premises along the front of the property. The drawings depict an extension of on the front property to accommodate two additional consulting rooms.
- 4.5 The proposed front elevation will match the existing building line of Unit 4 and the following materials will be used to match the existing elevations of the retail centre. They are:
 - Red Facing Brickwork (Red Stock) to match existing elevation;
 - Wall cladding - profiled sheet metal (colour to match existing);
 - Roof surfaces - profile sheet metal (to match existing); and
 - Aluminium powder coated window frames.
- 4.6 The proposed extension along the front elevation will be approximately 24 square metres.
- 4.7 The proposals are depicted on eth drawings submitted for approval.
- 4.8 In terms of hours of operations, the Applicant is seeking the following:
 - 07:00- 22:00 Monday to Friday
 - 08:00-17:00 Saturday
 - 11:00-16:00 Sunday

SECTION 5: RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

- 5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) states that the determination of planning applications must be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless '*material considerations*' indicate otherwise.
- 5.2 The site is situated with a local centre as set out in the relevant local plan. The most up to date policy and guidance relating to this proposal is the latest version of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024).
- 5.3 For the purposes of Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Development Plan, against which any application proposal would be determined comprises the following documents:
 - Wokingham Borough Council Core Strategy (adopted Jan 2010)
 - Wokingham Borough Managing Development Delivery Document (Local Plan) (Adopted Feb 2014) (referred to as the 'MDD document' below)
- 5.4 The Council has consulted on the emerging Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update 2023-2040 (LPU) under Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Plans) (England) Regulations 2012. The plan has not been submitted for examination and, therefore, there is uncertainty as to the extent of unresolved objections and its consistency with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). Consequently, we consider the LPU carries limited weight.
- 5.5 Relevant policies of the Core Strategy document are as follows:
 - CP1 – Sustainable Development
 - CP3 – General Principles for Development
 - CP6 – Managing Travel Demand
 - CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals
- 5.6 Relevant policies in the MDD document are:
 - CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
 - CC02 – Development Limit
 - CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping

CC06 - Noise

CC07 - Parking

TB17 - Local Centres and Neighbourhood and Village Shops

TB20 - Service Arrangements and Deliveries for Employment and Retail Use

5.7 Also relevant is the National Planning Policy Framework:
Relevant sections are:

- Section 2: Achieving Sustainable Development
- Section 6: Building a Strong, Competitive Economy

6 SECTION PLANNING APPRAISAL

Principle of Development

6.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (updated 2024) is relevant to the consideration of the application. Paragraph 85 of the NPPF states '*...planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future.*'

6.2 The site is located within the Shepherds Hill Local Centre as defined in Policy TB17 of the Managing Development Delivery (MDD) Document. TB17 states that proposals which retain and enhance the provision of day-to-day shopping facilities in Local Centres, neighbourhood and village shops will be supported. Day-to-day shopping facilities, as indicated in the explanatory text for TB17, include post offices, newsagents, convenience stores selling food items, pharmacies and petrol stations.

6.3 TB17 continues by stating that *Use Class A1 (Shops) (now Class E (a), whether within Local Centres or in individual neighbourhood or village shops, shall be retained* (emphasis added) *unless it can be demonstrated that:*

- Alternative day-to-day shopping facilities are available within reasonable walking distance from the existing retail use;*
- The existing retail use is no longer viable.*

6.4 Policy CP13 of the Core Strategy adds further clarity in this regard, and states that: '*the roles of all existing and new retail centres will be protected and maintained, in addition to local shopping centres and parades that meet the day to day needs of the local community...*'.

6.5 With regard to TB17 (a), the proposed change of use of the premises, whilst not technically comprising a Class E a (former Class A1) retail unit would still result in an active frontage being retained within the local centre and operate as an important economic service to the local community in perpetuity.

6.6 In addition, the proposals will not result in the loss of a '*day-to-day shopping facility*' as defined within Policy TB17 of the MDD. Policy TB17 specifically states the criteria is to **retain** existing Class E (formerly A1 units). The proposed unit is currently a Tanning Salon with a Sui Generis use and has been used for this purpose for at least 5 years.

6.7 Furthermore, with an M&S Foodhall located within close proximity to the south of the site, also within the designated local centre, there is an alternative provision for essential services to the local community. This facility is within reasonable walking distance of the site and nearby residential properties.

6.8 With regard to alternative day-to-day facilities the applicant has highlighted an A1 store to the south east of the site. In addition, it is noted the existing garage also provides the sale of some day-to-day goods. Both are within 300 metres of the application site and therefore the proposal would meet the first test of the policy.

6.9 Regarding TB17 (b) It is clear in the context of the planning history (set out in Section 3) that other commercial/employment uses in this location have been found favourable by the Local Planning Authority. There is no current retail use (Class A1) taking place within the existing unit as it is a Sui Generis tanning salon. Demand for Class E (former A1) retail premises is very low and limited as companies instead trade with online stores which in turn results in a decreased demand for retail units such as Unit 5. Instead, demand lies with alternative uses such as leisure and recreational for similar units.

6.10 It is therefore considered that the principle of the change of use of the premises would be in accordance with the overarching aims and objectives of the relevant policies from the Development Plan, together with Paragraph 85 of the NPPF and constitute a sustainable, re-use of the existing premises to the benefit of the

local community in terms of providing enhanced medical and health practice on the site.

- 6.11 The existing use of the premises is a Tanning Salon granted planning permission in 2019. At the time it was demonstrated that there was alternative retail premises providing essential day to day services. This remains the case. It has been previously highlighted there is no demand for the provision of day-to-day shops facilities within the retail centre
- 6.12 Furthermore, the proposed change of use will not result in the loss of shopping facilities in the area. The local plan policy specifically states it is seeking to retain day to day facilities.
- 6.13 It is clear in the context of the planning history that other commercial/employment uses in this location have been found favourable by the Council. It is therefore considered that the principle of the change of use of the premises would be in accordance with the overarching aims and objectives of the relevant policies from the Development Plan, together with Paragraph 80 of the NPPF and constitute a sustainable, re-use of the existing premises to the benefit of the local community.
- 6.14 The proposal therefore policy compliant with TB17 and CS13 of the local plan.

Character of the Area

- 6.15 The proposal includes an extension to the front elevation of the building. As stated, the extension is 24 square metres and will be stepped out to match the front building line of the adjoining unit (Unit 4). The extension will not protrude beyond the building line with Unit 4 which is stepped outwards on the western side of the retail centre.
- 6.16 Proposed materials will match the existing building as set out in Section 4. As such we consider there is no harmful impact on the character of the area would occur in design terms. Whilst the use of the building would be changed, the proposed use of the unit as a medical and health centre is not considered to be out of character compared to the other uses nearby which are also of a commercial nature.
- 6.17 As such the proposals comply with CP3 and CP9 of the Core Strategy.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

- 6.17 The existing unit benefits from a shared parking area to the west of the site which was provided as part of the original proposal

when the centre was granted planning permission. Not all staff will be on site at simultaneously at any one time Additionally, no changes to the highway access are proposed

7 Summary and Conclusion

- 7.1 The application seeks planning permission for the change of use of the unit, along with external alterations to provide for a Class E (e) use in the form of a health and medical centre. It will result in an extension to the existing medical and health centre for Derma Reading that will serve residents in the wider Reading area.
- 7.2 It has been demonstrated that there are no policies which would preclude the proposed use in this location. Physical alterations to the unit are minimal and in keeping with the existing character of the site and its surroundings. It has been demonstrated that the site is accessible by a range of transport modes in a sustainable location and that overall trip generation will be similar as the current use.
- 7.3 It would not result in any severe impacts on the local highway network and is acceptable in transport / highways terms. In addition to the provision of a medical facility, the scheme would result in a number of further benefits which weigh in its favour. These include the creation of a range of new job opportunities; and spin-off benefits for the wider Local Centre arising from increased footfall in the locality.
- 7.4 Taking into account the previous use of the site and nature of the proposed development, it is considered acceptable in all other respects, including neighbour amenity. The proposed development therefore benefits from the presumption in favour of sustainable development detailed in the latest updated NPPF (2024).
- 7.5 We trust this planning application will meet with your approval.