

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE

31 MARCH 2021

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

AGENDA ITEM	ACTION	WARDS AFFECTED	PAGE NO
6. 201585/FUL & 201586/ADV - 109A OXFORD ROAD	Decision	ABBEY	5 - 12
7. 200142/FUL - 109B OXFORD ROAD	Decision	ABBEY	13 - 18
8. 200188/FUL - 55 VASTERN ROAD	Decision	ABBEY	19 - 56
9. 201734/FUL - RIVERMEAD LEISURE COMPLEX, RICHFIELD AVENUE	Decision	ABBEY	57 - 64
11. 201735/FUL - PALMER PARK SPORTS STADIUM, PALMER PARK, WOKINGHAM ROAD	Decision	PARK	65 - 76

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UPDATE SHEET AND ORDER OF CONSIDERATION

Planning Applications Committee - 31st March 2021

Items with speaking:

Item No. 6 **Page 27** **Ward** Abbey
Application Number 201585 Full Planning Approval & 201586 Advertisement Consent
Address 109a Oxford Road, Reading, RG1 7UD
Planning Officer presenting Julie Williams ***UPDATE***
Objectors: Richard Bennett - BSANA, Evelyn Williams - CAAC
Written statements from: Evelyn Williams - CAAC
Cllr Speaking: Cllr Rowland
Agent: TBC

Item No. 7 **Page 39** **Ward** Abbey
Application Number 200142
Application type Full Planning Approval
Address 109b Oxford Road, Reading, RG1 7UD
Planning Officer presenting Ethne Humphreys ***UPDATE***
Objectors: Richard Bennett - BSANA, Evelyn Williams - CAAC
Written statements from: Evelyn Williams - CAAC
Cllr Speaking: Cllr Rowland
Additional: Rebecca Moon - Environmental Protection
Agent: Gulraiz Siddique

Item No. 8 **Page 51** **Ward** Abbey
Application Number 200188
Application type Full Planning Approval
Address 55 Vastern Road, Reading, RG1 8BU
Planning Officer presenting Jonathan Markwell ***UPDATE***
Objector: Paul Goddard
Supporter: Tim Moore (statement to be read out), Steve Dore
Written statements from: Paul Goddard, Carol Goddard, Mr Paul Westcott, CADRA, Reading Civic Society, Steve Dore, Tim Moore,
Applicant/Agent: Craig Pettit, Kim Cohen, Caroline McHardy
On hand to answer questions: David Taylor, Scott Witchalls

Item No. 9 **Page 165** **Ward** Abbey
Application Number 201734
Application type Full Planning Approval
Address Rivermead Leisure Complex, Richfield Avenue, Reading, RG1 8EQ
Planning Officer presenting Alison Amoah ***UPDATE***
Objectors: Nick Haskins
Written statements from: Nick Haskins
Applicant/Agent:
 Martin Lindus (Saunders Boston Architects)
 Chris Wood (Saunders Boston Architects)
 Paul Shearman (GLL Partnership Manager)
 Ben Stanesby (RBC Leisure Manager)

Item No. 11 **Page 281** **Ward** Park
Application Number 201735
Application type Full Planning Approval
Address Palmer Park Sports Stadium, Palmer Park, Wokingham Road
Planning Officer presenting Alison Amoah ***UPDATE***
Objectors:
Objector speaking: Chris Darby, Richard Stowell - Palmer Park Bowling Club
Written statements from: Steve Stenning, Chris Darby, Palmer Park Bowling Club
Applicant/Agent:
 Martin Lindus (Saunders Boston Architects)
 Chris Wood (Saunders Boston Architects)
 Paul Shearman (GLL Partnership Manager)
 Ben Stanesby (RBC Leisure Manager)

Items without speaking:

Item No. 10 **Page 223** **Ward** Minster
Application Number 200979
Application type Full Planning Approval
Address 18 Parkside Road, Reading, RG30 2DB
Planning Officer presenting Alison Amoah

Item No. 12 **Page 355** **Ward** Out of Borough Premises
Application Number 210237
Application type Adjacent Authority Consultation
Address North Lake Caversham Lakes, Henley Road, RG4 9RA
Planning Officer presenting Richard Eatough

Item No. 13 **Page 363** **Ward** Out of Borough Premises
Application Number 210489
Application type Adjacent Authority Consultation
Address Pincent's Hill, Tilehurst, Reading
Planning Officer presenting Richard Eatough

Update Report

BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES READING BOROUGH COUNCIL PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 31st March 2021	ITEM NO. 6 Page 27
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Ward: Abbey

App No: 201585: Change of use from an estate agent use class E to a restaurant and hot food takeaway sui generis use class

App No: 201586/ADV: New fascia and projecting sign

RECOMMENDATION:

As on main report - Grant both applications

Amended delivery/waste collection times condition:

- Delivery times/waste collection times limited to 8am - 18:00pm Mon - Sat and 10am - 18:00pm Sun & BH.

1. PUBLIC NOTIFICATIONS

- 1.1 It can be confirmed that letters to neighbours were sent out and a press notice was published in the local paper on 28th January 2021 giving details of both applications and where the plans and documents could be seen on the Council's website. However, at the end of the public consultation section it is stated that site notices were also displayed. It has since been established that while 2 notices had been displayed, one on the inside of the front door and one on the inside of the window facing Zinzan Street, they were both in respect of the advertisement consent application 201586. The person who had displayed the notices had not realised that the second one should have been for the planning application 201585. Officers have not been making routine site visits during the lockdown periods associated with the coronavirus outbreak so this was not identified until the neighbour writing in brought it to our attention.
- 1.2 The regulations for public consultation on applications where the development would affect the character or appearance of a conservation area are set out in The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2004. Paragraph 5A applies and requires the local planning authority to publish details in a local newspaper and on a notice displayed on site for not less than 7 days.
- 1.3 However in May 2020, in recognition of the problems for public consultations posed during the pandemic, the government introduced temporary publicity changes to give flexibility to local planning authorities when publicising planning applications. The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning, Development Management Procedure, Listed Buildings etc.) (England) (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 Part 5, Reg 20 adds in this flexibility. The main change is to enable LPAs who are unable to advertise an application by site display or by publication of a notice in a

newspaper, or make it available for physical inspection, to publicise the application and make it available for inspection by electronic means (*regulations 8, 9, 10 and 11*) (source - Practical Law).

- 1.4 Therefore, while officers accept that the notice for 201585 was not displayed correctly, in the context of the other steps taken to notify neighbours and to publicise the application in the local press and the relaxation on consultation requirements during the pandemic officers are satisfied that sufficient consultation has been carried out. However, if Members decide to accept the officer recommendation to grant planning permission this could be delegated to officers following a notice being displayed on site for 7 days and no new or substantive objections being received in consultation with the Chair of Planning Committee.

2. Amended condition

- 2.1 The waste collection and delivery times condition is amended to introduce a later start time on Sundays and Bank Holidays to protect local residents from disturbance on these normally quieter days.

3. COMMENTS RECEIVED

- 3.1 There have been two objections to the application received following the publication of the main report:
 - i) The Baker Street Area Neighbourhood Association (BSANA) strongly objects to planning application 201585 for yet another fast food outlet on this section of the Oxford Road.

Objections

Oxford Road acts as the primary conduit between Central and West Reading and attracts a heavy footfall both throughout the day and night. For many years Oxford Road has suffered from a considerable amount of anti-social behaviour (ASB) which has required ongoing action by both the police and Reading Borough Council (RBC) to try and contain numerous and persistent problems. This proposal for a fast food outlet that opens until 2am on every night of the year, including on Sundays and Bank Holidays, seems very much targeted at drinkers looking for late night food travelling from the pubs and clubs in Central Reading to their homes in West Reading, the effect of ASB (loud noisy behaviour, fights which can turn dangerous) that are linked to late-night activity by congregating customers will further exacerbate the problems that the residents of BSANA have experienced on Oxford Road. To allow this application would effectively provide an additional stopping point on Oxford Road which both RBC and the police know causes problems. BSANA strongly object to such extended late night fast food operation in our residential neighbourhood.

The application site lies within the Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area. The proposed change of use threatens to be detrimental to the character of the area, given that fast food outlets generally have

garish facades which are quite out of character in a conservation area. BSANA notes that the application proposes no measure (in accordance with Local Plan policy CS33) to protect and enhance the character of the premises and conservation area in which they propose this locate this development. This is in spite of the expected increase in late-night street noise, more ASB, more kitchen waste, more cooking smells and more customer littering of local streets. These detriments will be significantly more than is caused by the present estate agents and their customers. Therefore, we object to the proposed change of use as a detrimental development in our neighbourhood.

This is an area that RBC is actively trying to improve with the help of Historic England and its Heritage Action Zone scheme; this proposal runs counter to the good work that is being done.

Planning history of 109A Oxford Road as adversely affecting the Conservation Area

By decision notice dated 17 December 2014, planning consent to application 140959 was granted for rear extensions and external works. The application drawing of the proposed side elevation (to Zinzan Street) showed a tidy, plain rendered façade with windows. To our dismay, the Zinzan Street side elevation, as actually developed, has included the projection of a large black plastic soil pipe to carry lavatory waste above the Zinzan Street pavement and around the south west corner of the building, onto the rear façade before going to ground.

The Zinzan Street façade has also been disfigured by sink waste pipework and electric cabling, some of the cabling hanging loose and flapping in the wind. Now, in 2021, those unapplied-for and unconsented eyesores - arising from application 140959 - are still ongoing, and are also clearly visible to passers-by along the Oxford Road in what is now part of the High Streets Heritage Action Zone programme that the Council and Historic England are jointly funding.

Another socially irresponsible blight, arising from the rear extensions developed since 2014, has been the poor waste management record at 109 and 109A Oxford Road. The private parking area at the rear of the property, bordering on Zinzan Street, has been more or less constantly blighted by unsightly accumulations of rubbish (as evidenced over the years by residents' continual complaints and on Google Maps street views). We fear that if the present planning application for change of use of the ground floor from Estate Agent to fast food restaurant and takeaway is permitted, then the waste management problem with these premises is liable to get even worse, unless very strict waste management conditions are imposed and are regularly enforced.

The lack of socially responsible waste management at these premises is further evidenced in the fact that waste bins marked for No 109A are continually being left out, and kept out, on the pavement of Zinzan Street

between the Thursday collection days. On Tuesday 16 March, those bins were the only bins left out on the whole of the east side pavement of Zinzan Street, i.e. between Oxford Road and Baker Street. This is, according to residents of Zinzan Street, an issue has been a constant for over a year now.

Much of the length of Zinzan Street has been suffering from food cooking odours from the rear of the Peri Peri restaurant and takeaway at 109B Oxford Road that opened nearly two years ago. We are more than alarmed at the prospect of that nuisance being duplicated if No 109A is now also developed as a fast food restaurant and takeaway with its pervasive cooking smells extracted to the rear of the property so as to waft down Zinzan Street throughout the day and much of the night, in addition to the odours from 109B

Whilst a robust extraction system can eliminate some of these concerns, no system has been proven to be odourless and every system relies on proper maintenance of filters. Residents are entitled to reasonably clean air and not to have to suffer pervasive commercial cooking smells penetrating into their homes.

We therefore hope that the Council will resist the proposed change of use or, if that is not possible, then we ask that very strong planning conditions will be imposed – and also enforced - to meet the social and environmental concerns we have raised, and also to ensure (in accordance with policy CS33 of the Local Plan) that this development delivers appropriate enhancement of the Conservation Area, to mitigate the unconsented side and rear façade blighting resulting from application 140959 and also to enhance the forecourt of 109A.

- ii) The area around the premises concerned suffers badly from anti-social behaviour. The three blocks from Howard Street to Russell Street, with these premises right in the middle at Zinzan Street, are a gathering place for drunks. Special conditions have been applied to the alcohol licenses of premises on both sides of the road on this block to try to combat the ASB.

Takeaway food venues are known to increase ASB and nuisance by way of litter and noise, especially late at night. There is already a hot food takeaway next door to these premises, another across Zinzan Street, and 3 in the block opposite across Oxford Road. Despite the applicant's plans to install bins outside the shop, the surrounding streets will inevitably become a littering ground for even more detritus if this application is allowed.

Takeaways in this area do not serve as an amenity for local residents - when the night-time economy is operational, they are used mainly by people going to and from the town centre, leaving local residents to suffer the impact.

The nature of this stretch of Oxford Road is already under threat and the conversion of yet more retail / office space to restaurant / takeaway should not be permitted.

Please note that I'm aware that this representation is being made some time after the closing date - I walk by the premises in question most days and whilst I've seen a notice referring to another planning application (201586) displayed, I'm certain that the application I'm writing about has not been advertised at the premises. On checking this morning, there are 2 copies of the 201586 notice and nothing else. Accordingly, I'd be grateful if you would take this representation into full account.

4. Officer Comments

- 4.1 Officers note that the objections (also see the written statement from CAAC) refer to the failure of the property owner (not the current applicant) to fully implement all the works as approved by a planning permission in 2014, which was for "Rear extensions and associated external works". They also refer to the problems experienced following the conversion of 109b Oxford Road to a restaurant /takeaway outlet and question if more food outlets are needed in this street.
- 4.2 Officers agree that the scheme proposed in 2014 for improvements to the frontage of the site would have made a positive contribution to the appearance of this site and have made the current applicant aware of that proposed scheme and the Council's wish to see that work carried out. As the 2014 permission was implemented it is still possible for the work on the frontage to be carried out in accordance with the approved plans.
- 4.3 However officers do not consider it reasonable to use the fact that the previous permission was not fully implemented as grounds for refusing this current application. This application should be judged on its merits against the relevant policies in the Local Plan as set out in the report.
- 4.4 Officers also note that it is a material consideration that there has been nuisance caused by the neighbouring property (see the other report for 109b in this agenda) but this has enabled officers to apply more scrutiny to the proposal for this site.
- 4.5 The officer recommendation is to grant planning permission and advertisement consent.

Julie Williams



Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee
30 March 2021

109a OXFORD ROAD – 201585/201586

WRITTEN STATEMENT FOR PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE 31 MARCH 2021

In 2014 an application was approved which would have improved the shopfronts and the street frontage of 109 and 109a Oxford Road as well as the entrance and area to the rear.

This was only partially implemented for 109a a prominent building on the corner with Zinzan Street.

Since then, the New Local Plan has been approved, the Russell Street/Castle Hill/Oxford Road Conservation Area in which this property is located has been declared a conservation area at risk and Reading now has a High Streets Heritage Action Zone project. All the above raise expectations that 'something will be done' on the part of Reading CAAC and residents to improve the appearance of the area, otherwise what is it all about?

This application does not go far enough and if it is approved it falls far short of what Reading Borough Council's policies and projects for the area indicate.

Please reject these applications.

New Local Plan

Shopfronts: Reading's New Local Plan policy OU5 states that new shopfronts in conservation areas ***"will respect or enhance the building or area, and will respect the key features of the special historic interest."*** In this case we welcome the improvements to the shop front. However the proposal does not go far enough and should also improve the adjacent property as anticipated when application 140959 was granted (image below).

Conservation Area Management Plan: Policy EN3 states ***"Where a Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan has been adopted for a particular Conservation Area, this will be a material consideration in determining applications for development."*** A revised CA appraisal was adopted in April 2020. The management plan for this CA mentions "Unsympathetic retail signage, hiding of string courses, windows, window sills; use of garish colours, plastic lettering,

over dominant lighting, internally illuminated signage.” In this case Reading CAAC feels that the fascia board is too high on the frontage and obscures the windowsills and may obscure a string course.

High Streets Heritage Action Zone Project (HSHAZ): The property is within the pilot area for the HSHAZ project but the appearance of what is being recommended for approval falls short of the 2014 scheme below.



Front and side elevation of 109a from consented, and partially implemented, application 140959

It is also questionable whether this section of Oxford Road needs yet another restaurant/takeaway which does not enhance the diversity of the high street offering in this section of the town centre.

Evelyn Williams, chair Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee

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UPDATE REPORT

BY THE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

ITEM NO. 7

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 31st March 2021

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Ward: Abbey

App No.: 200142

Address: 109B Oxford Road, Reading

Proposal: Change of use from sui generis (betting shop) to A3 restaurant with ancillary A5 takeaway and replacement shopfront (Part retrospective)

Applicant: Express Team Ltd

Determination Date: Extended to 9th April 2021

RECOMMENDATION:

Grant

With conditions as set out in the main agenda report to include the following additional condition:

- Kitchen Equipment to be installed strictly to the specifications as approved and thereafter so maintained to manage ventilation and extraction to meet those specifications.

1. Public Notifications

- 1.1 At the end of the public consultation section it is stated that a site notice was displayed. The applicant has been unable to confirm when this was displayed. Officers have not been making routine site visits during the lockdown periods associated with the coronavirus outbreak, so this was not identified until it was recently brought to our attention. However, it can be confirmed that letters to 17 neighbours were sent and a notice published in the press 17th February 2020. This press notice directed the reader to Reading Borough Council's website.
- 1.2 The regulations for public consultation on applications where the development would affect the character or appearance of a conservation area are set out in The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2004. Paragraph 5A applies and requires the local planning authority to publish details in a local newspaper and on a notice displayed on site for not less than 7 days.
- 1.3 However in May 2020, in recognition of the problems for public consultations posed during the pandemic, the government introduced temporary publicity changes to give flexibility to local planning authorities when publicising planning applications. The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning, Development Management Procedure, Listed Buildings etc.) (England) (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 Part 5, Reg 20 adds in this flexibility. The main change is to enable LPAs who are unable to advertise an application by site display or by publication of a notice in a newspaper, or make it available for physical inspection, to publicise the application and make it available for inspection by electronic means (*regulations 8, 9, 10 and 11*) (source - Practical Law).

- 1.4 Therefore, while officers accept that the notice may not have been displayed correctly, in the context of the other steps taken to notify neighbours and to publicise the application in the local press and the relaxation on consultation requirements officers are satisfied that sufficing consultation has been carried out. However, if Members are minded to approve the application the decision to grant planning permission could be delegated to officers following a notice being displayed on site for 7 days and no new substantive objections being received in consultation with the Chair of Planning Applications Committee.

2. Corrections

- 2.1 The description of works as submitted is “Change of use from sui generis (betting shop) to A3 restaurant with ancillary A5 takeaway and replacement shopfront (Part retrospective)”. Under the provision of the new Use Classes introduced in September 2020 the restaurant use now falls within Use Class E (b) and the take-away element now falls within Use Class Sui Generis. As such, the description of works should be amended to read “Change of use from Sui Generis (betting shop) to Class E restaurant with ancillary Sui Generis takeaway and replacement shopfront (Part retrospective)”. As per application 180273 a condition is proposed to be attached requiring that the main use of the premises shall be as a Class E (restaurant) Use with any takeaway use remaining strictly ancillary to the primary use of the premises as a restaurant.

3. Clarifications

- 3.1 This application includes proposals to update the equipment used to treat and reduce fumes and odours from that currently in place. Environmental Protection Officers have considered the information provided and are satisfied that the changes proposed, to include a better specification of equipment, are acceptable and should adequately protect the amenities of neighbouring properties. The main agenda report sets out that further extraction details should be submitted to demonstrate that acceptable levels can be met; however, a further condition is recommended above to require maintenance and management thereafter to continue to perform to required standards.

4. Comments Received

- 4.1 There have been two objections to the application received following the publication of the main report:
 - (i) The Baker Street Area Neighbourhood Association (BSANA) understands that 109B Oxford Road has had previous planning approval for A3 restaurant with ancillary A5 takeaway but that the previous application and decision notice has been withdrawn.

The present application 200142 is understood to be essentially a re-presentation of the previously consented proposals in the circumstances that work proceeded on the

earlier consented development in breach of pre-commencement conditions contained in the earlier consent. Hence this application is in part retrospective.

We infer from the Design and Access statement submitted with this application that the breaches of condition have been so extensive that it was agreed to resubmit the earlier consented proposals in a fresh, partially retrospective application with a view to fresh or varied planning conditions being imposed in respect of any issues that remain unresolved.

We do have some strong concerns with this development as it now appears at present, and we wish to draw attention to the following matters that we hope will be addressed.

We are particularly concerned that the restaurant and takeaway has been opened, and is being operated, without prior completion of the shop front, side front and forecourt enhancement works in accordance with the conditionally consented designs. Also that details of the materials being used have not been previously submitted to, and approved by, the Council in accordance with the then current planning conditions for the development. The materials used appear to be of inferior quality and the architectural detailing appears “incorrect” - it certainly does not match that of the earlier approved design.

We are also concerned about the existing advertising signage on the Zinzan Street frontage of these premises. So far as we are aware, the only signage consented is that in decision notice 181755. The visual impact of the existing signage appears excessive and lacking in the restraint that should prevail in a Conservation Area.

The forecourt of the premises has been tarmacked and not brick-paved as in the earlier approved design and the side boundary wall is an eyesore that has not been re-rendered and painted. There is a most unsightly, and possibly hazardous, cluster of loose electric cabling rising from the ground to the first floor level at the left hand corner of the Oxford Road façade. We ask that this eyesore also be addressed in the determination of this application.

- (ii) Reading Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC) apologise for the late submission of these comments but having commented on 109a Oxford Road (201585/201586) we felt that we should also comment and object to this application.

We note that the application is required because of the failure of the applicant to adhere to approved plans and conditions of approval of the application for change of use from a betting shop to a restaurant/takeaway (180073).

Summary of objection:

We do not believe that this application can be accepted without amendment to the plans because of the central positioning of the front door and the asymmetrical appearance that results.

109b Oxford Road is (with 109a) one of the twin gateways to Zinzan Street. It is similarly within a conservation area and Reading's HSHAZ pilot area so expectations of a very positive improvement to the appearance of the building apply equally.

Subject to this should this application be granted we would like to be assured that the previous failings will be rectified and if not, enforcement action taken in relation to the appearance of the property, the paving and the extractor fan and ventilation.

1. Elevations

1.1 Shopfront onto Oxford Road

1.1.1 Originally approved plans were for an entrance door to the side of the frontage and one large window. The plans submitted with this application have a central door as per the current situation (see below). The impact of this is that it looks unbalanced as the timber panel on the left hand side of the left window now needs to be reproduced on the right hand side of the right window if the front door position is to be retained. The asymmetrical configuration is only in keeping with a door to the side.

1.1.2 The originally approved plans (amended plan version 3.0) and those now submitted do not have signage across the whole width of the frontage. The signage in place does extend across the whole frontage. Therefore, the signage will also need to be amended when the columns are installed.



1.1.3 The 'mock up', 'faux' columns on the frontage are not consistent with the example photograph included of the Timberland shop in Guildford (see below). Whilst the image may have been illustrative only, this together with the side elevation submitted it clearly gave the impression of a much higher quality frontage.



1.2 Side elevation

1.2.1 Plans for side elevation indicate a scroll at the top of the column on the frontage consistent with the Timberland frontage. The elevation submitted with this application is consistent with the original application.

1.2.2 The originally approved plans (amended plan version 3.0) and those now submitted do not have signage across the whole width of the frontage. The signage in place does extend across the whole frontage. Therefore, the signage will also need to be amended when the columns are installed (see below).



3. Conclusion

3.1 Please reject this application for the reasons stated above.

Officer Response: The Council's previous Heritage Consultant raised no objection to the repositioning of the doorway, and it is not considered that this in itself raises such adverse harm to warrant a refusal on this basis. The applicant will be making an application for advertisement consent to amend the signage.

5. Conclusion

5.1 The officer recommendation remains to grant planning permission with the inclusion of a further suggested condition requiring maintenance of the kitchen extraction equipment.

Case Officer: Ethne Humphreys

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UPDATE REPORT

BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES READING BOROUGH COUNCIL PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 31 st March 2021	ITEM NO. 8 Page: 51
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Ward: Abbey

App No.: 200188/FUL

Address: 55 Vastern Road, Reading, RG1 8BU

Proposal: Demolition of existing structures and erection of a series of buildings ranging in height from 1 to 11 storeys, including residential dwellings (C3 use class) and retail floorspace (A3 use class), together with a new north-south pedestrian link, connecting Christchurch Bridge to Vastern Road

Applicant: Berkeley Homes

Deadline: Originally 15/06/2020; Previously extended to 18/01/2021; Now extended until 09/04/2021

Recommendation:

As in main report, barring the following changes (omissions denoted by ~~strikethroughs~~ and additions in **bold and underlined**):

- By virtue of its height, massing and proximity to the river, the development will shade the River Thames and impact on its marginal habitats. There would also not be sufficient space within the riverside buffer for a sustainable long-term relationship between the riverside buildings and the proposed new large canopy trees. The proposed development is therefore contrary to Policy EN11 in particular, and also EN12, CC7 and CR2, EN13, EN14, para 175 NPPF and objectives of the adopted ~~and revised the adopted~~* Tree Strategy and Biodiversity Action Plan

AND that this reason for refusal is delegated to officers to consider further post-committee, subsequent to information presented by the applicant on 29th March 2021 (some of which relates back to the submission of information on 14th January 2021) being assessed by a variety of officers (as per section 5.4 of the update report).

* Inadvertent typographical error

- Lack of a section 106 legal agreement for affordable housing, ESP, open space contribution, **carbon-offsetting contribution**, various transport related works*, ecological mitigation contrary to Policies **CC4**, CC9, EN9, EN11, EN12, H3, **H5**, TR1, TR3, TR5 **and the following adopted Supplementary Planning Documents: Affordable Housing (March 2021); Employment, Skills and Training (2013); Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011); Planning Obligations under Section 106 (2015); Sustainable Design and Construction (2019).**

* Transport related works are detailed in full at paragraph 4.13.103 of the main report

1. Additional public consultation responses from local groups

- 1.1 Further to section 4.25 of the main report, Caversham and District Residents Association (CADRA) have made a further submission (written to the Chair of the Planning Applications Committee), stating they would like

to comment further. First, CADRA acknowledge their original comments are largely reproduced in the main report and related to:

1. The alignment, coherence and legibility of the new pedestrian and cycle route from the Station to the River
 2. Building heights adjacent to the River.
- 1.2 CADRA add that they had previously contacted the Planning Department in November 2019, not only in respect of this site, but also the adjoining Aviva and Hermes sites. CADRA highlighted the need for common urban design principles which should apply to these three connected and related sites which are in multiple ownership. This would include alignment of the route from the station to the river, a careful analysis of the potential for Views through from the station and the coordinated placing of buildings across the three sites, together with an integrated hard and soft landscaping approach to the public realm. This would optimise the outcome for the town. CADRA were concerned about the ad hoc and piecemeal nature of the proposals coming forward at the pre-planning stage.
- 1.3 RBC's Reading Station Area Framework and the Reading Central Area Action Plan also suggest such an approach and allowed for a direct link both visually and in landscape terms through to the river from the station. These frameworks possibly assumed the availability of all of the SSE site. If this is now unrealistic, the Framework needs to be revisited. Otherwise, the SSE, Hermes and Aviva schemes will make no sense and the Planners and subsequently the PAC will find themselves in continuing difficulty. And a major opportunity for the town will be lost.
- 1.4 CADRA suggest that a limited but detailed Urban Design and Public Realm brief should be urgently prepared by the Council to guide the detailed coordination of these sites, including the SSE site, in order to resolve the impasse that has been reached. We appreciate the resource limitations that the Council is under but believe this could be done quickly and effectively.
- 1.5 CADRA appreciates these comments widen out from the SSE site application 200188, but CADRA considers this application to be a critical part of that wider picture and CADRA hope that these comments are therefore both relevant and of use.
- 1.6 Officer response to CADRA's suggestion of an Urban Design and Public Realm Brief needing to be prepared is that development principles for how the area north of the station and through to the Thames have already been adopted and are set out in the current Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 allocation of Policy CR11: Station/River Major Opportunity Area and this follows on from the Reading Station Area Framework. The other policies in the Chapter dealing with Central Reading provide guidance on design, public realm improvements, nurturing leisure, culture and tourism in the town, the night time economy, residential accommodation and where tall buildings may be considered. It is the task for officers when engaging with owners and developers, ideally at pre-app stage, to make sure that they are aware of this guidance and the objectives that the Council are trying to achieve so that when they submit their development proposals they align with these.
- 1.7 However, the relevant sites are in different ownerships and officers have worked hard to bring the parties together to arrive at a position where the

various applications work together. Officers recognise that more still needs to be done but this work has been made more difficult by the developers being at different stages in their projects. The main thing is to make sure that the officers are consistent in their approach.

- 1.8 Reading Civic Society has made the following observations (written to the Chair of the Planning Applications Committee), as follows (reproduced in full):
- 1.9 Summary
1. The developers' community engagement was an exemplar which others should follow.
 2. We welcome development of the site. Whilst individual elements may benefit from refinement we rated the design of the overall proposal very highly.
 3. We believe on balance that it deals with the constraints imposed by the SSE equipment as well as is practical.
 4. The delivery of 209 homes in a central location, 20% being affordable is a significant benefit. That these will on site and "tenure blind" is in line with good practice.
 5. It seems unlikely that the Substation/ SSE equipment will be removed unless RBC is able to exercise due influence. A pragmatic approach must be taken with the vision for the clear line of sight whilst also seeking a good scheme for Reading.
 6. We understand from discussions with Berkeley Homes that the economics of the site are tight and do not give them the ability to significantly reduce the height on the Thames or remove a unit in the centre of the site.
 7. With reluctance we judged that the loss of the Locally Listed Building is acceptable given the wider benefits of the proposed development. We recommended that the key stones from the building be incorporated into the Café building.
 8. If not this then what is the alternative? If the vision continues to be "straight line" then we have the stalemate of an irresistible force meeting an immovable object and the site will continue to be undeveloped.
 9. The lack of a Design Guide covering the 3 neighbouring sites has not been helpful.
- 1.10 Consultation - Members of Reading Civic Society Committee have been regularly engaged by Berkeley Homes, and their Communications consultants, since November 2018 about plans for this site. We have seen, and had the opportunity to participate in, the evolution of the design. We gained some understanding of the challenges faced and the constraints of the site. Other groups we know were similarly engaged in small groups. There were at least 2 well publicised, well-staffed and well attended Public Exhibitions at suitable hours. We know that many of our members took the trouble to take part. Overall it was an exemplar of good community engagement and consultation which other developers should take on board.
- 1.11 Design and proposals for the site - Overall the Committee rated the final design very highly and felt it was one of the best we had seen for some time. We consider this to be a high-quality proposal which delivers significant housing benefits. We felt that the progressive refinements in design had sought to responded to concerns about the impact on the Thames, the concerns of neighbours and the constraints imposed by the SSE equipment remaining.

- 1.12 The Direct Link / Clear line of sight. We were given to understand in our first discussion with Berkeley Homes that they had initially believed the substation could be moved. When this was tested senior SSE management would not consider it because of cost and logistics. The aim of a direct link in the Station Area Framework and RCAAP was understandable, and supported by us. However it did not consider the practicality of the straight line on the plan being drawn directly over a significant piece of infrastructure. Unless RBC is able to convince SSE to the contrary it seems that this ambition needs to be refined and that the judgement of this planning application should be set against what is practical and achievable.
- 1.13 We understand that PO's comment that "this is a one-off opportunity to secure a truly high quality link through the site to be seized". The layout of the site means that this opportunity does not exist in the simple way set out in the Local Plan. We do not agree that the proposed route is not high quality, though discussions should continue to take all ideas and options into consideration.
- 1.14 The pedestrian and cycleway. Pedestrians and cyclists currently face an indirect and weaving route from this side of the Thames to the station. Some might say that adds to the interest. These routes will still exist post development. The proposed route through the site does mix pedestrians and cyclists. The proposed route may not deliver an unimpeded and fast route some cyclists might seek. We recall however the complaints from Cycle groups that the width of Christchurch Bridge was simply inadequate and that it would not work. If some cyclists find it impedes then they will have the option of using existing routes and a balance of flow will be struck. Should at any time the SSE equipment be up for removal then the possibility of the more direct route would still be a possibility.
- 1.15 Removal of units - In the conclusions of the Officer's report it is stated that "Officers believe that a different layout with fewer blocks would allow the north-south route to be provided directly and to the quality that the local plan policy allocation aspires to." Understandably this focuses on the content of the Local Plan. Looked at in isolation the comment is probably correct. Taken to a ridiculous degree if there are no buildings on site an unimpeded route could be established. It was clear in our discussions with Berkeley's that the balance of economics on the site was tight. It would seem inevitable that loss of the units caused by reduced height on the Thames and removal of a block in the centre of the site would challenge the development's viability significantly. "Well they would say that would they not?" True but if the economics are tight then it is important to understand the implications of such proposals e.g. on affordable housing provision.
- 1.16 Locally Listed Building - The possibility of retaining the run of old buildings along Vastern Road, and the LLB, was explored extensively and repeatedly. We accepted that it was not practical to incorporate the old buildings on Vastern Road into a new building. With considerable reluctance we accepted that the overall benefits of the scheme outweighed the loss of the LLB 55 Vastern Road. We suggested that the key stones from the building should be incorporated into the site, ideally into the proposed café building.
- 1.17 A wider strategic view. We have been in discussion with CADRA and have seen, and support, their updated comment (email 26 March) highlighting the

importance of developing a holistic Urban Design guide and Public Realm brief covering; the SSE, Aviva and Hermes sites as this would assist the co-ordination of the planning of public realm and the potential for some coherent vision and be helpful for all 3 site owners. We recall this being raised by the communications team supporting the Berkeley Homes site during discussions in 2019.

2. Further extension of time for the determination of the application

- 2.1 The main report referenced that an extension of time for the determination of the application had previously been agreed up to 18/01/2021. This has subsequently been agreed to be further extended until 09/04/2021.

3. Clarifications within the proposals section (2) of the report

- 3.1 The applicant has raised concerns that the images detailed within section 2 of the main report were a superseded version. The latest masterplan, ref 448.PL.SL.002 Rev E, as received 07/10/2020, is shown below and should be referenced rather than the zoomed in corresponding images in the main report.
- 3.2 It is clarified that “The Generator” part of Block D is six, not seven (as detailed at paragraph 2.5 of the main report) storeys in height. Undercroft parking is also provided at Block D.



4. Planning History

- 4.1 In addition to the history stated at paragraph 3.1 of the main report, the following additional Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) related history is referenced:
- 4.2 Secretary of State reference PCU/EIASC/E0345/3224129 - Request for a Screening Direction Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. Proposal for: Proposed development of up to 210 dwellings with a max height of 11 storeys (up to 36m above ground level) including a new north south pedestrian link, connecting Christchurch Bridge to Vastern Road towards the station as well as drainage infrastructure and landscaping. Conclusion of Screening Direction: In exercise of the powers conferred on him by regulation 7(5) of the 2017 Regulations the Secretary of State hereby directs that the proposed development described in your client's/your request and the documents submitted with it, is not 'EIA development' within the meaning of the 2017 Regulations. Issued 14/05/2019.
- 4.3 In short, whilst the Council issued a positive screening opinion, the applicant then sought a screening direction from the Secretary of State, who determined the emerging proposals were not EIA development (and hence no Environmental Statement was required to be submitted with the application).

5. Clarifications regarding consultation responses

- 5.1.1 Historic Buildings - In respect of paragraph 4.1.26 of the main report, it is clarified that Christchurch Bridge is already in place and the proposal seeks to connect to this.
- 5.2.1 Leisure - it is clarified that the landscaping proposals are shown in detail, rather than the reference to this being 'in outline' at paragraph 4.7.2 of the main report.
- 5.3.1 Transport - The Transport Development Control Manager has responded to various comments made by the applicant in a letter to officers received on 29th March (letter included as Appendix 2), as follows:
 - 5.3.2 The applicant has queried Paragraph 4.13.32 of the main report, stating that they do not believe the proposal requires to facilitate the turning of a delivery in the opposite direction to that identified on the tracking diagrams, already submitted, given that the 'layout provides space for vehicle manoeuvring'. However, it would need to be confirmed by the way of tracking diagrams that a vehicle serving the site would be able to undertake the manoeuvres required, given that there is a high probability that the site would be served in that way. I would reiterate paragraph 4.13.31 of the main report that the applicant has not provided any tracking for a 12m long vehicle, which the applicant has stated would serve the site.
 - 5.3.3 It should be stressed that the turning area is not just for the function of turning but is also utilised to service the site and therefore any vehicles movements must be achievable and also not result in further reversing manoeuvres over the footway / cycleway.

- 5.3.4 The Highway Authority acknowledges that a refuse vehicle would only reverse over the footway / cycleway once a week, but as has been stipulated above this is likely to be increased when general servicing requirements are included, which the applicant has assessed would equate to a total of 4 refuse/HGV movements a week. The applicant has stated that with appropriate signage, reversing alarms and multiple operatives, the risk of harm is mitigated; however, given paragraph 7.10.3 of DfT document Manual for Streets (below) the Highway Authority do not agree that this would be sufficient mitigation given that the reversing would be taking place over a busy footway / cycleway and not within a standard turning head within the carriageway.

7.10.3 Routeing for waste vehicles should be determined at the concept masterplan or scheme design stage (see paragraph 6.8.4). Wherever possible, routing should be configured so that the refuse collection can be made without the need for the vehicle having to reverse, as turning heads may be obstructed by parked vehicles and reversing refuse vehicles create a risk to other street users.

- 5.3.5 Although Paragraph 4.13.38 of the main report refers to cycle route design, this is included to provide context as to how cycle facilities should be designed. It should be stressed that the Highway Authority have considered the design for shared pedestrian and cycle routes at 4.13.41 of the main report, in which Paragraph 6.5.9 of Local Transport Note 1/20 Cycle Infrastructure Design has been referenced and states the following on shared use design:

Research shows that cyclists alter their behaviour according to the density of pedestrians - as pedestrian flows rise, cyclists tend to ride more slowly and where they become very high cyclists typically dismount. It should therefore rarely be necessary to provide physical calming features to slow cyclists down on shared use routes, but further guidance on this, and reducing conflict more generally, is given in Chapter 8, section 8.2.

- 5.3.6 The Highway Authority therefore still deem that a straight and direct shared use path through the site to the bridge should be provided in accordance with Policy and design criteria.
- 5.3.7 The applicant has stated that all design options for the route have been thoroughly explored with justification provided for the proposed route, however the assessments undertaken by the applicant have all included the retention of the residential blocks on the site, which is the reason why the proposed route does not comply with Policy requirements. As is stated at Paragraph 5.4.6 of the Local Plan (Policy CR11g) 'achieving this north-south link is the main priority for the site, and this should be given substantial weight in development management' and therefore the design of the route should not be compromised to facilitate additional units on the site.
- 5.3.8 It is accepted that the towpath does not currently permit cycling, but as is stated within the Paragraph 4.13.50 of the main report, the Council's Local Cycling and Walking Improvement Plan (LCWIP) identifies the Towpath as being a proposed cycle route in the future and work to facilitate this has been commenced by officers. Given this it is imperative that the route to the Towpath from the site can accommodate cycling, to ensure that a comprehensive network of cycle facilities are provided.

- 5.3.9 It is accepted that there are inconsistencies with the car parking numbers and as such I have reviewed the car parking layouts for the site and these include the following:

Block D - 26 parking spaces
Block B/C - 12 parking spaces
External Area - 12 parking spaces

- 5.3.10 As such, the proposed application provides the provision of 50 car parking spaces, which includes 3 disabled spaces. This parking number and layout are deemed acceptable given the parking restrictions that surround the application site, its sustainable location and the inclusion of a condition (in the event of permission being granted) that ensures that no residents parking permits will be issued to future residents.

- 5.3.11 In relation to the provision of dropped kerbs to facilitate access to the disabled parking bays, as identified at Paragraph 4.13.87 of the main report the applicant has suggested that this could be dealt with by way of a condition. The Highway Authority have considered this acceptable.

- 5.3.12 Further to Paragraph 4.13.94 of the main report it is noted that drawing 448.PL.BC.100C was in fact superseded by 448.PL.BC.100D. This latest drawing illustrates the reorganisation of the cycle and bin stores to ensure that they are separated and this is deemed acceptable to the Highway Authority.

- 5.3.13 The applicant has stated that Paragraph 4.13.95 of the main report is incorrect in its reference to Block C providing 22 cycle spaces and it is stated that 6 spaces are proposed as per the table provided at paragraph 4.13.93 of the main report. However, drawing 448.PL.BC.100D does in fact illustrate the provision of 22 spaces. This provision exceeds that required by the Council's Parking Standards and Design SPD and therefore is deemed acceptable. Given that drawing 448.PL.BC.100D now also includes separated access between the cycle and bin stores the Highway Authority are happy that no reductions from this provision is required.

- 5.3.14 Paragraph 4.13.100 identifies that that the distance to the bin store at Building EFG and B (south) is over the recommended 10m travel distance. The applicant has suggested this is incorrect following the submission of Stantec drawing 47500/5500/005A. However, although this may be the case for the bin store labelled Building B (north), which has been provided with a collection point within the recommended distance, this is not the case for the bin stores identified above and I reference the Waste Collection Strategy section of the Applicant's Transport Technical Note TN006 RBC Highway 3rd Response & Vastern Road Crossing dated 24th September 2020 which states:

The current carry distances from the bin stores to the collection points are as follows based on the refuse access strategy shown on 47500/5500/005A.

*Bin Store 1 (Building EFG) - 11m
Bin Store 2 (Building D) - 3m
Bin Store 3 (Building C) - 7m
Bin Store 4 (Building B, north) - 10m*

Bin Store 5 (Building B, south) - 11m
Bin Store 6 (Building A) - 10m

- 5.3.15 As summarised above, the distance to the bin stores at building EFG and B (south) are only 1m over the recommended distances for operatives. Given that this is only a minor and likely un-noticeable distance in reality, we do not believe it is necessary to alter the collection arrangements.
- 5.3.16 It should be noted that officers have checked the distances referenced within the Technical Note for the aforementioned bin stores and the distances specified are correct. It is reiterated, as per Paragraph 4.13.100 of the main report, that the Highway Authority are happy that this is deemed acceptable.
- 5.4.1 Natural Environment, Ecology and Landscape Services Manager responses
- 5.4.2 The applicant has outlined, in a letter received on 29th March 2021 (Appendix 2), various areas of the above consultee responses where inaccuracies or errors are said to have been included (sections 4T - paragraph 4.19; 4U - paragraph 4.20; and 4V - paragraph 4.21 of the main report). In particular, the applicant has stated that their “principal concern regarding the content of the report is that the consultation responses referred to in section 4 predominantly refer to superseded application material and do not take account of revised material which has been submitted to address the comments made. This is misleading and fails to acknowledge the work undertaken to resolve concerns raised during the consideration of the application.”
- 5.4.3 Upon investigation, officers can advise that there has been a misunderstanding of information to be included for assessment in the application between the applicant and officers. The applicant submitted a range of additional information on 14th January 2021, but followed this up with further correspondence on 19th January 2021 clarifying that “the letter we sent last week did not present any new information but was intended to help officers by setting out the latest position on the scheme. The only new information confirmed was our position on the North/South Link which you had asked for us to confirm before progressing the application further.” In the same correspondence from 19th January the applicant asked for the application to be determined in the next 3 days, as already detailed at paragraph 2.13 of the main report. On the basis of this communication officers had assumed that given the applicant had specified that no new information had been submitted (barring a north/south link position) on 14th January, this documentation should therefore not be taken into account. However, the applicant’s letter of 29th March 2021 would now suggest otherwise. The letter from the applicant on 29th March 2021 also included new information, in the form of a Land Registry title plan suggesting that the Council owns land on the southern riverbank of the River Thames, which was previously suggested not to be the case by the Landscape Services Manager (as per paragraph 4.21.3 of the main report). A number of further CGIs of the proposed development were also included, which appear to be similar to those included as part of a separate document that the applicant sent members of the Planning Applications Committee and ward members on Friday 26th March 2021.
- 5.4.4 Accordingly, in these unfortunate circumstances, officers ask for members to delegate authority for this specific matter to be discussed with and

assessed by internal consultees post-committee. Due to the timing of this being raised, it has not been possible for the various matters raised to be assessed by a number of different officers prior to the completion of this update report. If a verbal update is able to be provided to members at the Planning Applications Meeting, it shall be.

5.4.5 In essence, these matters relate substantively to the third recommended reason for refusal (as per the recommendation in the main report, as amended by the omissions detailed at the outset of this update report). It is also relevant that one of the component parts of the 'in the absence of a s106' reason for refusal relates to ecological mitigation, albeit this would be unchanged in any event.

5.4.6 At the time of writing, it is considered unlikely that the information now to be assessed would fully address the third reason for refusal, as there remains a fundamental difference in opinion between the applicant and officers as to the methods to seek to mitigate the impact of the development on marginal habitats. The applicant is not seeking to alter the height, massing or proximity of the buildings to the river.

5.4.7 It is recognised that the specific element of the recommended reason for refusal, relating to there not be sufficient space within the riverside buffer for a sustainable long-term relationship between the riverside buildings and the proposed new large canopy trees, may be addressed pending further comments from the Natural Environment Officer. This forms a component part of the recommended reason for refusal and not the sole element. The Landscape Services Manager and RBC Ecology consultant may have additional thoughts on the off-site mitigation proposed, as per the submission on 14th January 2021.

5.4.8 It is clarified that should officers subsequently consider that this shall not form a reason for refusal of the application, this would not alter the overall conclusion on the application as a whole. In reapplying a critical planning balance in this scenario, the already referenced (in the main report) conflicts with the development plan would still not be outweighed by the benefits of the proposals.

5.4.9 It is also relevant to note that upon receipt of the letter from the applicant on 29th March (Appendix 2), officers contacted the applicant on the same day gauging their view on the item being deferred for consideration at Planning Applications Committee on 29th March (to enable the various matters raised to be considered). The applicant replied on the same day stating they do not agree with this and do not consider a deferral to be necessary.

5.5.1 CCTV - It was inadvertently stated at paragraph 4.23.1 that no response had been received from RBC CCTV team. It is clarified that a response was in-fact received, specifying that the development should have no impact on the existing CCTV system.

6. Loss of office use principle

6.1 Further to paragraph 6.5 of the main report, it is clarified that the loss of the existing office floorspace at the site is accepted as per Policy EM3 and the site allocation policy. The applicant included commentary in relation to the Policy EM3 criteria, required in cases where proposals result in the loss

of employment land. Set within the context of the site allocation (primarily for residential use), the information submitted by the applicant is considered to satisfy the policy requirement.

7. Layout / scale / design / north - south route clarifications

- 7.1 Paragraph 6.14 of the main report inadvertently references that the lowest buildings within Blocks D & E are 52m in height. The reference to 52m is incorrect, as this is a rounded up datum point height. Taking into account the proposed ground datum point of 38.6m, it is clarified that the lowest building height is 12.825m (51.425m - 38.6m), comprising the four-storey element of Block E closest to Lynmouth Court (to the west).
- 7.2 Paragraph 6.16 of the main report specifies concern that the layout of Blocks D & C could make it difficult or the remainder of the allocated site to be developed in an acceptable way. Further to this, it is clarified that whilst there is concern in this regard, this is not to an extent whereby the proposals are being recommended to be refused on this basis. Policy CR11viii) specifically requires developments to show that they are part of a comprehensive approach to its sub-area, which does not prevent neighbouring sites from fulfilling the aspirations of the policy (amongst other matters). In the specific regard of the development not preventing neighbouring sites, mindful that the application site is only part of the CR11g allocation, section 3.9 of the Design and Access Statement indicatively demonstrates how the remaining part of the SSE site could come forward should the opportunity arise in the future. This includes a pedestrian link between the two sites and a combination of interlocking and linear blocks to provide generous on-site open space and north-south linkages. Whilst not ideal in some ways (and this would not occur had the sub-area come forward as a single development) it is considered that the applicant has adequately demonstrated that the proposed development would not prevent the remainder of the sub-area from fulfilling the CR11 aspirations.
- 7.3 In the applicant's letter to officers dated 29th March 2021 (Appendix 2), criticisms are raised that the Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment has not been referenced in the main report. It is clarified that the TVIA has been duly taken into account as part of the assessment of the application, despite explicit reference not being made to it within the main report. A selection of the closest viewpoints are included as Appendix 1 to this update report, with these further assisting the justified concerns regarding the height and proximity of Blocks D & E to the Thames Path and River Thames detailed in the main report.
- 7.4 The applicant has raised criticisms that the main report fails to reference that the emerging Caversham Flood Alleviation proposals have been built-in to the scheme. In response, it is clarified by officers that no such planning application has yet been submitted for this, meaning the extent that can/should be referenced is limited.

8. Locally listed building clarification

- 8.1 Paragraph 6.37 of the main report inadvertently details two paragraphs indented and in italics, indicating it is quoted from the Heritage Statement submitted in support of the proposals. In-fact, only the first paragraph is quoted from the Heritage Statement (section 3.2.3 of the report), with the

second paragraph being officer commentary (and therefore should not have been indented or in italics). For the purposes of clarity, it shall be referenced as paragraph 6.37a of the main report.

9. Additional energy clarification (Further to paragraphs 6.53 - 6.57 of the main report)

- 9.1 The energy review is summarised at section 4M of the report (paragraph 4.12 at pages 84-85 of all papers). Whilst Element Energy specify some concerns regarding the acceptability of the scheme in the context of specific elements of the Sustainability SPD, such detail (choice of ASHP over GSHP for example) is not explicitly specified within Policy CC4. Furthermore, Element Energy acknowledge that purely in respect of Policy CC4 the proposals comply. Accordingly, ultimately officers consider that this should not form a reason for refusal of the application. Had the application been able to be supported by officers, then a s106 legal agreement head of term would have secured a carbon offsetting financial contribution of £228,420 in order for the development to comply in full with the Council's Sustainability and Energy Policies. Given the application is recommended to be refused, this forms a further 'in the absence of s106' based reason for refusal of the application, as further clarified below and in the recommendation above.

10. Additional S106 head of term and related clarifications

- 10.1 In addition to the matters already detailed at paragraph 6.59 of the main report, the following is also included in light of section 9 above:

- Carbon offsetting financial contribution of £228,420 prior to first occupation

- 10.2 This is in line with Policies CC4 and H5, together with adopted Supplementary Planning Documents: Planning Obligations under Section 106 (2015); Sustainable Design and Construction (2019).

- 10.3 It is also clarified that the transport mitigation measures comprise the following, as already referenced at paragraph 4.13.103 of the main report:

- Residential Travel Plan
- On-site car club

- 10.4 In addition, the recommendation at the outset of this update report has also been updated to include reference to relevant adopted Supplementary Planning Documents.

11. Conclusion

- 11.1 The conclusion specified within the main report remains unaltered in overall terms.

Case Officer: Jonathan Markwell

Appendices

Appendix 1

A selection of verified photomontages, from the Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment Addendum, as received 21/05/2020. These show the proposals in relation to the surrounding area and also take account of possible future cumulative schemes, comprising:

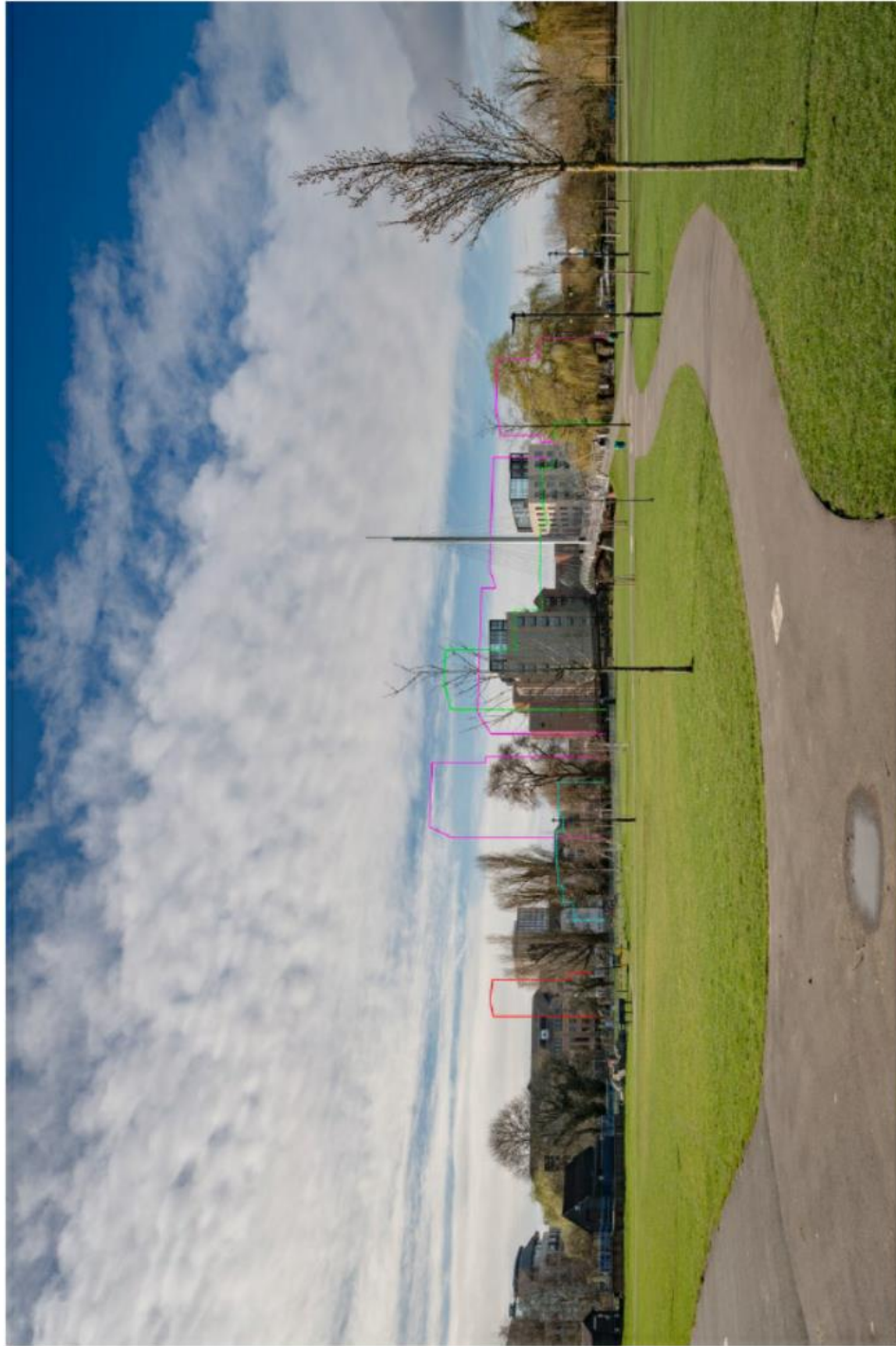
- Former BMW site, King's Meadow/Napier Road (162166): part 12 storey, part 23 storey residential.
- 29-35 Station Road (181930): 22 storey hotel, offices and retail.
- Plot E and Telecom House, Station Hill (151426): mixed uses, up to 85m AOD.
- 80 Caversham Road (182252): mixed uses, up to 123m AOD at the time of the information being submitted.
- Vastern Court Retail Park (200328).

Appendix 2 - Letter from Barton Willmore dated and received 29/03/2021 '200188 Committee Report - Errors and Inaccuracies' - separately attached. Please note that, in addition to various comments above, it is assumed that the applicant's heading 'Environment Agency' on page 3 should have stated 'Natural Environment Officer'.

Appendix 3 - Written statements have been submitted by those members of the public who are registered under 'public speaking' and are included in Appendix 3.

- a) CADRA
- b) Reading Civic Society
- c) Carol Goddard
- d) Paul Goddard
- e) Paul Westcott
- f) Steve Dore
- g) Tim Moore

View P2 Winter - Christchurch Meadows, approach to Christchurch Bridge, looking south-west - proposed



To achieve the optimum viewing distance of between 300-500mm (as per The Landscape Institute's guidelines), we recommend printing this image edge to edge on A2 landscape and viewing it on site from a distance of 368mm. Please refer to section 2.7 on page 4 of Part 8 document for further information.

View P2 Winter - Christchurch Meadows, approach to Christchurch Bridge, looking south-west - proposed

40 degree horizontal field of view - cropped image



We recommend that all pages showing reduced size 'at scale' images are printed as shown in A3 landscape format. The correct 'to scale' viewing distance for all images printed in this A3 page format is 467mm.

View P4 Winter - Vastern Road, looking east - proposed



To achieve the optimum viewing distance of between 300-500mm (as per The Landscape Institute's guidelines), we recommend printing this image edge to edge on A2 landscape and viewing it on site from a distance of 368mm. Please refer to section 2.7 on page 4 of Part 8 document for further information.

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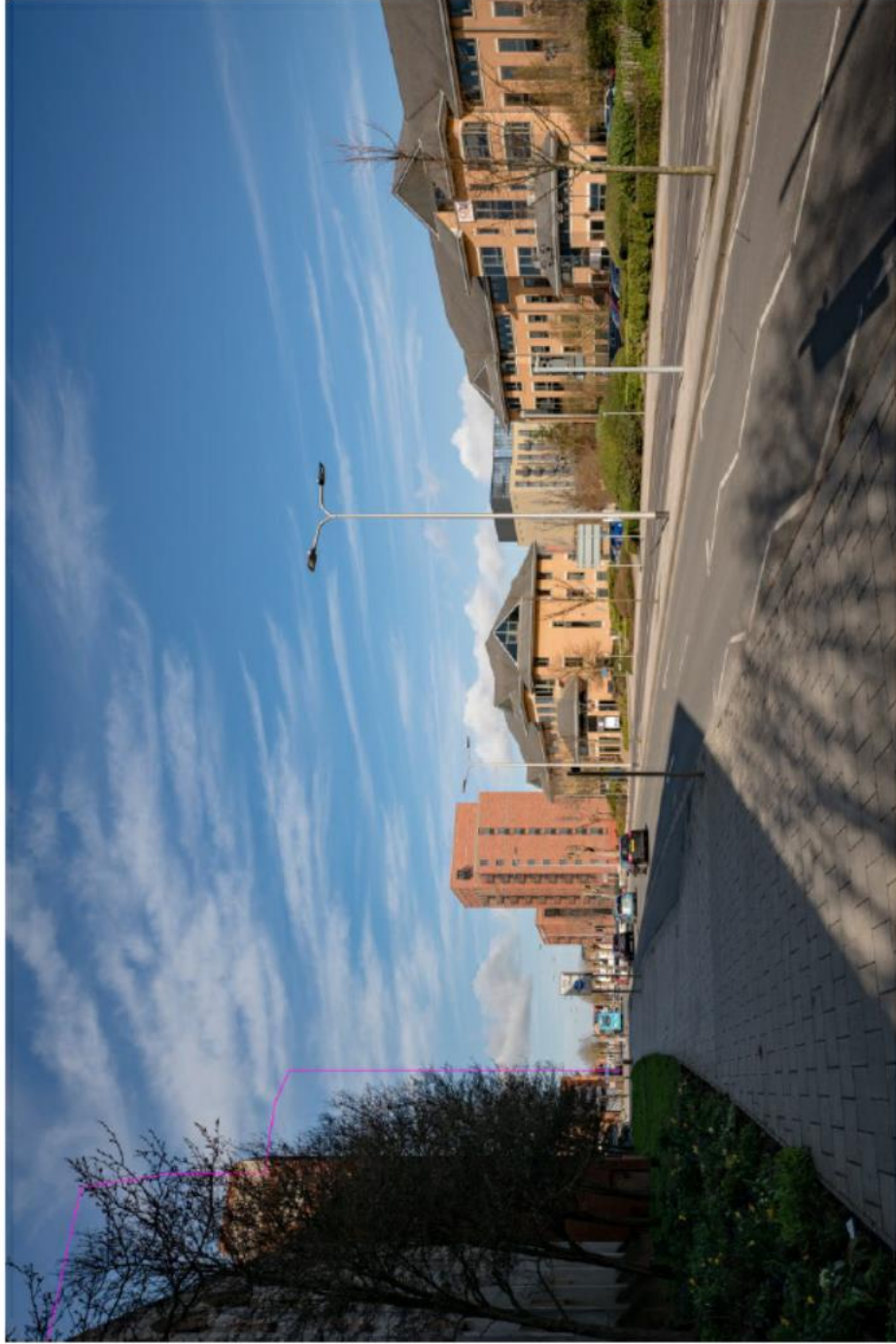
View P4 Winter - Vastern Road, looking east - proposed

40 degree horizontal field of view - cropped image



We recommend that all pages showing reduced size 'at scale' images are printed as shown in A3 landscape format. The correct 'to scale' viewing distance for all images printed in this A3 page format is 467mm.

View P5 Winter - Vastern Road, looking north-west - proposed



To achieve the optimum viewing distance of between 300-500mm (as per The Landscape Institute's guidelines), we recommend printing this image edge to edge on A2 landscape and viewing it on site from a distance of 368mm. Please refer to section 2.7 on page 4 of Part B document for further information.

View P5 Winter - Vastern Road, looking north-west - proposed

40 degree horizontal field of view - cropped image



We recommend that all pages showing reduced size 'at scale' images are printed as shown in A3 landscape format. The correct 'to scale' viewing distance for all images printed in this A3 page format is 467mm.

View P6 Winter - Reading Bridge, looking north-west - proposed



To achieve the optimum viewing distance of between 300-500mm (as per The Landscape Institute's guidelines), we recommend printing this image edge to edge on A2 landscape and viewing it on site from a distance of 368mm. Please refer to section 2.7 on page 4 of Part 8 document for further information.

View P6 Winter - Reading Bridge, looking north-west - proposed

40 degree horizontal field of view - cropped image



We recommend that all pages showing reduced size 'at scale' images are printed as shown in A3 landscape format. The correct 'to scale' viewing distance for all images printed in this A3 page format is 467mm.

Mr. J. Markwell, Esq.,
Reading Borough Council,
Civic Offices,
Bridge Street,
READING.
RG1 2LU

BY EMAIL: jonathan.markwell@reading.gov.uk

28876/A3/EF/KC

29th March, 2021

Dear Mr Markwell,

200188 COMMITTEE REPORT – ERRORS AND INACCURACIES

We write on behalf of our client Berkeley Homes (Oxford & Chiltern) Ltd following the publication of your report to the Planning Applications Committee scheduled to take place on Wednesday 31st March relating to our client's submitted full planning application for land at 53-55 Vastern Road, Reading.

Our client and their consultant team have reviewed your report and noted several factual errors and inaccuracies. We have set out below where errors and inaccuracies have been made in each section of the report and would welcome the publication of an updated report in advance of the Committee to address these.

Our client's principal concern regarding the content of the report is that the consultation responses referred to in section 4 predominantly refer to superseded application material and do not take account of revised material which has been submitted to address the comments made. This is misleading and fails to acknowledge the work undertaken to resolve concerns raised during the consideration of the application.

2. Proposals

Images of a superseded masterplan are included in the report. The latest masterplan which should be referred to is 448.PL.SL.002 E.

Superseded images of the proposals are also included on several occasions.

We enclose a copy of the latest masterplan and images of the proposals for your use in presenting the scheme to Members, and we request that clarification is provided to avoid confusion.

Paragraph 2.5 should be amended to clarify that The Generator Building is 6 storeys in height. Undercroft parking is under Block D (The Turbine Hall).

3. Planning History

No reference is made to the EIA Screening Direction issued by the Secretary of State on 14th May 2019.

4. Consultation Responses

Historic Buildings

Paragraph 4.1.26 states that the proposals also include a feature footbridge over the Thames. This is incorrect. Christchurch Bridge is already in place and the proposals provide a new connection to the bridge.

Leisure

Paragraph 4.7.2 refers to the extent of tree planting and landscaping being 'in outline'; however, it is in fact 'in detail'.

Transport

The report seeks to make the case that the proposed north-south route is of an insufficient width with reference made to examples where a wider path has been provided. However, the examples used are not comparable as they are in circumstances where there are buildings directly abutting both sides of the path, whereas in the proposed development open space is provided alongside the route. The examples provided are also 'shopping streets' with front doors of retail units directly adjacent to them. They are therefore not comparable to the north-south route to be provided as part of the proposed development. The proposed route is more than adequate to accommodate expected flows through the site.

Paragraph 4.13.32 includes a new request that the turning area to the north can accommodate a delivery vehicle turning in the opposite arrangement to the current approach. This is not necessary as the layout provides space for vehicle manoeuvring.

Commentary relating to reversing movements over the pedestrian and cycle link fails to acknowledge that only one vehicle per week is anticipated to need to complete this manoeuvre. A vehicle would only need to reverse over the path once to reach the optimum position to serve the building (rather than 'numerous times' as is suggested to be the case). Moreover, with appropriate signage, reversing alarms and multiple operatives, the risk of harm is mitigated.

Paragraph 4.13.38 refers only to cycle route design and fails to consider that shared pedestrian and cycle routes have to be designed to accommodate all users, not solely commuter cyclists.

Paragraph 4.13.39 notes that options for reducing cycling speeds through the site were presented at the pre-application stage. All design options for the route have been thoroughly explored by the applicant with justification provided for the proposed route.

Commentary regarding connectivity to the towpath at paragraph 4.13.50 does not acknowledge that the route to the towpath does not connect to a current cycle path. The connection to NCN5 to the east along the towpath is not wide enough for a shared footway/cycleway, so there is no rationale or justification in creating a short length of practically unusable cycle route. Moreover, it is not permitted to cycle along the section of the towpath where this connection is made.

There is an inconsistency between the number of proposed car parking spaces referred to. The development will provide 55 car parking spaces, including 3 disabled spaces.

The applicant has offered a condition regarding dropped kerbs. This should be reflected in paragraph 4.13.87.

Paragraph 4.13.94 refers to 448.PL.BC.100C; however, this has been superseded by 448.PL.BC.100D. the revised plan shows the reorganisation of the cycle and bin stores to ensure that they are separated.

Paragraph 4.13.95 is incorrect in its reference to Block C providing 22 cycle spaces. 6 spaces are proposed as per the table provided at paragraph 4.13.93 of your report.

Paragraph 4.13.100 suggests that distance to the bin store B is over the recommended 10m travel distance. This has been updated in Stantec drawing 47500/5500/005A to a distance of 9.5m.

Environment Agency

Paragraph 4.19.15 suggests that an increased buffer to the River Thames is necessary to comply with Environment Agency guidance. The proposals include a 10m buffer between the river edge and edge of the first residential block, as per the Environment Agency's advice and in line with RBC Local Plan Policy CR11g.

Paragraph 4.19.20 emphasises the need to consider tree pit provision and design. Tree routing volume information was submitted in September 2020 to enable consideration of this. No feedback has been provided.

No reference is made to a further submission made by the applicant in January 2021 which included updated information on landscaping detail and tree planting. No feedback on this submission has been provided.

Ecology

A lighting assessment has been submitted for consideration as part of this application. The assessment, including all appendices, was also resent to officers in light of the comments received from Ecology to ensure the assessment was taken into consideration. Paragraph 4.20.6 is therefore incorrect.

Paragraph 4.20.6 also suggests that the site should have been assessed as being within Zone E2. It was agreed that the site is within Zone E3 in an email from Ross Jarvis, Senior Environmental Health Officer, Reading Borough Council, to Shannon Smart of Stantec on 29th November 2019.

Paragraph 4.20.13 should include clarification that the Environment Agency understood that Option 2 may be preferred.

Paragraph 4.20.15 is incorrect. Further information including detailed types of marginal planting proposed on the northern and southern river bank was submitted in January 2021.

Paragraph 4.20.17 sets out that the applicant has conceded that there will be harm to the River Thames. This is incorrect. The applicant has conceded that there will be additional shading to the already partially shaded planted coir rolls under the ramps of Christchurch Bridge, not that there will be harm to the River Thames as a whole. The significance of the planted coir rolls is relatively low and compensation for the additional shading has been proposed, thereby mitigating the impact of development.

Landscape Services

Paragraph 4.21.1 refers to land on the southern riverbank not being owned by the Council. The enclosed Land Registry title plan identifies that the land between the site and the river is owned by the Council.

Paragraph 4.21.4 is incorrect. The proposed coir roll planting will be positioned within the river and will therefore not impact the width of the towpath.

Paragraph 4.21.5 refers to the desire to see specific proposals for planting along the river bank. The applicant has submitted proposals in January 2021 and sought advice from specialist consultant Salix on the implementation of the proposals. The submitted proposals show that the proposed coir roll planting is below pedestrian eye level, including for children, and as such views of the river will be unaffected by the proposed marginal vegetation planting.

Other Consultee Responses

Paragraph 4.23.1 states that no response has been received from RBC CCTV. This is incorrect. A response was received on 24th March 2020 confirming that the development should have no impact on CCTV.

6. Appraisal

Layout/scale/design/north-south route

As a general point, there has been no written indication or design response to indicate that the Council had concerns in townscape or visual terms, and this point was not raised on either 22nd October 2020 or 27th November 2020 when you wrote to the applicant setting out your remaining concerns. The Design Review panel considered the scheme on 20th November 2019, and did not raise any concerns relating to the relationship of the proposed buildings with the Riverside. Indeed, as noted at paragraph 4.2.2 of your report the panel broadly supported the scheme and had no major issues with quantum, height or massing, a fact which does not appear to have been taken into account in the assessment of the proposals in your report.

No reference is made in the report to the submitted Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment (TVIA) or verified photomontages and there is no evidence to suggest that detailed and specialist professional advice has been sought regarding townscape and visual impacts. The TVIA concludes that there would be beneficial effects on townscape character in relation to the townscape adjoining the riverside, neither these conclusions nor their underlying justification appear to have been considered by officers.

Commentary regarding harm to the setting and character of the Thames Path and River Thames makes no reference to the wider context of tall built forms adjacent to the river further south-east and the scale of the emerging town centre, to which this development provides a transition. As the TVIA sets out, the character of this area already includes substantial buildings adjoining the river corridor, notably at crossing points. Such buildings are already part of the character of the river corridor, as is to be expected at the centre of a large, dramatically intensifying urban area.

Regarding the alleged harm to the quality of the public realm, the basis for the suggestion that there would be a deterioration compared to the existing situation is unclear. The development will provide clear benefits to the public realm compared to the existing use of the site/its relationship to the Thames Path.

The report fails to acknowledge that emerging Caversham Flood Alleviation proposals have been built-in to the scheme. The flood wall proposed to be built parallel to the river bank along much of the southern banks of the Thames have been incorporated as part of landscaped ecological buffer on the river frontage, creating a usable area of open space.

Comments regarding a concern that it may be difficult for the remainder of the allocated site to be developed in an acceptable way are not justified. Moreover, no reference is made to illustrative proposals

for the wider allocated site included within the submitted Design and Access Statement which demonstrate that the wider site could be developed to form a high quality addition to the development.

Paragraph 6.14 wrongly refers to the lowest height building in the east of the site being 52m. The tall buildings policy caps building heights at 36m and the scheme is entirely consistent with this policy. Moreover, Block C is the smallest residential block on the scheme (2 storeys in height), responding to the constraints in this part of the site. The tallest building proposed (Block B) is 11 storeys.

Locally listed building

Paragraph 6.37 purports to quote two paragraphs from the submitted Heritage Statement. However, only the first paragraph is quoted text. It appears that the second paragraph is officer commentary, however this is suggested to be part of the quote which is incorrect and potentially misleading.

Paragraph 6.4 ignores the content of Section 4.2 of the submitted Heritage Statement which sets out that the building has been detrimentally altered and has lower significance than other examples.

Landscape/ecology

Revised landscaping proposals submitted in January 2021, including a revised selection of tree species, have not been considered as part of the report. The latest plan (448.LA.102F) includes species with smaller canopies than those initially selected and are therefore suitable for the space.

No townscape and visual justification is provided regarding the need for a relationship with large canopy trees.

We trust that the above clarifies inaccuracies within your report and look forward to seeing an update to Members in advance of Committee.

Should you have any queries or wish to discuss, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



KIM COHEN

Partner

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APPENDIX 3: WRITTEN STATEMENTS

a) CADRA

Dear Chair

CADRA would like to comment further to the PAC on the SSE site application 200188 which is coming before your Committee on 31st March.

Our original comments made in April 2020 on this site are largely reproduced in the Officer's report and related to :

1. The alignment, coherence and legibility of the new pedestrian and cycle route from the Station to the River
2. Building heights adjacent to the River.

However, we had previously contacted the Planning Department in November 2019, not only in respect of this site, but also the adjoining Aviva and Hermes sites. We highlighted the need for common urban design principles which should apply to these three connected and related sites which are in multiple ownership. This would include alignment of the route from the station to the river, a careful analysis of the potential for Views through from the station and the coordinated placing of buildings across the three sites, together with an integrated hard and soft landscaping approach to the public realm. This would optimise the outcome for the town. We were concerned about the ad hoc and piecemeal nature of the proposals coming forward at the pre-planning stage.

RBC's Reading Station Area Framework and the Reading Central Area Action Plan also suggest such an approach and allowed for a direct link both visually and in landscape terms through to the river from the station. These frameworks possibly assumed the availability of all of the SSE site. If this is now unrealistic, the Framework needs to be revisited. Otherwise, the SSE, Hermes and Aviva schemes will make no sense and the Planners and subsequently the PAC will find themselves in continuing difficulty. And a major opportunity for the town will be lost.

We suggest that a limited but detailed Urban Design and Public Realm brief should be urgently prepared by the Council to guide the detailed coordination of these sites, including the SSE site, in order to resolve the impasse that has been reached. We appreciate the resource limitations that the Council is under but believe this could be done quickly and effectively.

CADRA appreciates these comments widen out from the SSE site application 200188 that will come before you, but this application is a critical part of that wider picture and we hope that these comments are therefore both relevant and of use.

Kind regards,

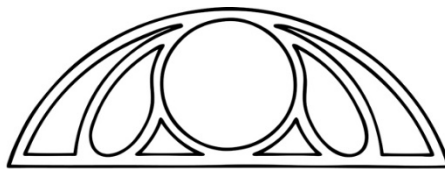
Helen Lambert

Caversham and District Residents Association

www.cadra.org.uk

Please 'like' our Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/cavershamresidents>



READING CIVIC SOCIETY

www.readingcivicsociety.org.uk

Registered Charity 263959

as from: 69 Baker Street, Reading, RG1 7XY
Tel: 0118 9598350 Email: bennettbaker@msn.com

28 March 2021

Planning Application 200188 55 Vastern Road

Dear Chair

My apologies about the lateness of this comment. The Planning Application has indeed been some time in processing and we had rather lost track of the position. In the circumstances the comments below seek to focus on the key points.

Summary

1. The developers' community engagement was an exemplar which others should follow.
2. We welcome development of the site. Whilst individual elements may benefit from refinement we rated the design of the overall proposal very highly.
3. We believe on balance that it deals with the constraints imposed by the SSE equipment as well as is practical.
4. The delivery of 209 homes in a central location, 20% being affordable is a significant benefit. That these will on site and "tenure blind" is in line with good practice.
5. It seems unlikely that the Substation/ SSE equipment will be removed unless RBC is able to exercise due influence. A pragmatic approach must be taken with the vision for the clear line of sight whilst also seeking a good scheme for Reading.
6. We understand from discussions with Berkeley Homes that the economics of the site are tight and do not give them the ability to significantly reduce the height on the Thames or remove a unit in the centre of the site.
7. With reluctance we judged that the loss of the Locally Listed Building is acceptable given the wider benefits of the proposed development. We recommended that the key stones from the building be incorporated into the Café building.
8. If not this then what is the alternative? If the vision continues to be "straight line" then we have the stalemate of an irresistible force meeting an immovable object and the site will continue to be undeveloped.
9. The lack of a Design Guide covering the 3 neighbouring sites has not been helpful.

The Planning Application

Consultation

Members of Reading Civic Society Committee have been regularly engaged by Berkeley Homes, and their Communications consultants, since November 2018 about

plans for this site. We have seen, and had the opportunity to participate in, the evolution of the design. We gained some understanding of the challenges faced and the constraints of the site. Other groups we know were similarly engaged in small groups. There were at least 2 well publicised, well-staffed and well attended Public Exhibitions at suitable hours. We know that many of our members took the trouble to take part. Overall it was an exemplar of good community engagement and consultation which other developers should take on board.

Design and proposals for the site

Overall the Committee rated the final design very highly and felt it was one of the best we had seen for some time. We consider this to be a high-quality proposal which delivers significant housing benefits.

We felt that the progressive refinements in design had sought to responded to concerns about the impact on the Thames, the concerns of neighbours and the constraints imposed by the SSE equipment remaining.

The Direct Link / Clear line of sight.

We were given to understand in our first discussion with Berkeley Homes that they had initially believed the substation could be moved. When this was tested senior SSE management would not consider it because of cost and logistics. .

The aim of a direct link in the Station Area Framework and RCAAP was understandable, and supported by us. However it did not consider the practicality of the straight line on the plan being drawn directly over a significant piece of infrastructure. Unless RBC is able to convince SSE to the contrary it seems that this ambition needs to be refined and that the judgement of this planning application should be set against what is practical and achievable.

We understand that PO's comment that ***"this is a one-off opportunity to secure a truly highquality link through the site to be seized"*** . The layout of the site means that this opportunity does not exist in the simple way set out in the Local Plan. We do not agree that the proposed route is not high quality, though discussions should continue to take all ideas and options into consideration.

The pedestrian and cycleway.

Pedestrians and cyclists currently face an indirect and weaving route from this side of the Thames to the station. Some might say that adds to the interest. These routes will still exist post development. The proposed route through the site does mix pedestrians and cyclists. The proposed route may not deliver an unimpeded and fast route some cyclists might seek. We recall however the complaints from Cycle groups that the width of Christchurch Bridge was simply inadequate and that it would not work. If some cyclists find it impedes then then they will have the option of using existing routes and a balance of flow will be struck.

Should at any time the SSE equipment be up for removal then the possibility of the more direct route would still be a possibility.

Removal of units

In the conclusions of the Officer's report it is stated that "**Officers believe that a different layout with fewer blocks would allow the north-south route to be provided directly and to the quality that the local plan policy allocation aspires to.**" Understandably this focuses on the content of the Local Plan.

Looked at in isolation the comment is probably correct. Taken to a ridiculous degree if there are no buildings on site an unimpeded route could be established.

It was clear in our discussions with Berkeley's that the balance of economics on the site was tight. It would seem inevitable that loss of the units caused by reduced height on the Thames and removal of a block in the centre of the site would challenge the development's viability significantly. "Well they would say that would they not?" True but if the economics are tight then it is important to understand the implications of such proposals e.g. on affordable housing provision.

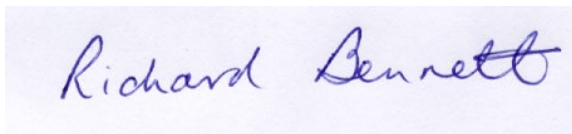
Locally Listed Building

The possibility of retaining the run of old buildings along Vastern Road, and the LLB, was explored extensively and repeatedly. We accepted that it was not practical to incorporate the old buildings on Vastern Road into a new building. With considerable reluctance we accepted that the overall benefits of the scheme outweighed the loss of the LLB 55 Vastern Road. We suggested that the key stones from the building should be incorporated into the site, ideally into the proposed café building.

A wider strategic view.

We have been in discussion with CADRA and have seen, and support, their updated comment (email 26 March) highlighting the importance of developing a holistic Urban Design guide and Public Realm brief covering; the SSE, Aviva and Hermes sites as this would assist the co-ordination of the planning of public realm and the potential for some coherent vision and be helpful for all 3 site owners. We recall this being raised by the communications team supporting the Berkeley Homes site during discussions in 2019.

Yours sincerely



Richard Bennett

Chairman

www.readingcivicsociety.org.uk

Registered Charity 263959

c) Carol Goddard

Ms Frances Martin
Exec. Dir. for Economic Growth &
Neighbourhood Services
Reading Borough Council
Civic Offices
Reading
Berks

12 Thames Side
Reading
Berks
RG1 8DR

25 March 2021

Dear Ms Williams,

Re: Planning Application 200188 - Berkeley Homes old SSE site Vastern Road

I am writing with regard to your letter of 22 March 2022 regarding the above Planning Application.

The original planning application for this site by Berkley Homes showed flats and mews houses. The houses were sited abutting Lynmouth Road. Unfortunately these plans were rescinded and the high rise plans to enable extra flats were devised. This meant that houses in Lynmouth Road would be overlooked and their privacy would be invaded.

The site will retain the SSE transformers. These transformers do emit a humming noise which can be heard by the residents living around the site. The new development will be much nearer the transformers and there has been some publicity regarding the risks of cancer caused by electricity pylons etc.

The plans show the site to be considerably overdeveloped for the area. The homes around Vastern Road are only 2, 3 or 4 storey. The retail developments on the other side of Vastern Road are also only 2 storey. The proposed development will look incongruous with the surrounding area. I can see no benefit to the local area.

A small development of houses or low level flats would be far more desirable for the SSE Site and more commensurate with the houses currently along Vastern Road and Lynmouth Road.

This area of Reading was originally deemed a flood plain. Planning Applications were refused because of the risk of flooding to homes in this area. This flood plain extended to the railway bridge on the Caversham Road.

The Environment Agency are concerned enough to be looking into the flood risk in this area. Vastern Road has a tributary running beneath the road which enters the Thames by Caversham Lock. The foundations used on the site will increase the risk of flooding in this area. Proposed further developments on the old Royal Mail building, the Station complex, the Aldi/Range site and the Drew's building will also

seriously increase the risk of flooding. I am sure the Council will not want to increase this risk to homeowners in this area by approving high rise developments.

Any of the flat dwellers with cars will overburden already limited car parking spaces in the locality. There are not enough car spaces for each flat to be allocated with one. Three bedroom flats will be intended for families but where can children play? There is already a considerable lack of medical facilities in this area of Reading. We have a 320+ block of flats erected on the old Coopers BMW site. The new occupants of these flats will require medical facilities and schooling bringing an already overburdened system on its knees. With a further 209+ flats on Vastern Road this will increase the burden even further.

A cafe on the proposed site is also a concern. The one on Vastern Road did not last the course and was sold and is now converted to housing. I am concerned about empty coffee cups littering the river bank and excess noise if it is open into the evening. The proposed walkway between Vastern Road and the Thames Path is also a real concern. I am concerned that this path will be used by drug dealers as a short cut or may be a possible danger for women walking alone at night.

The Footpath along the River Thames is narrow and footfall is quite a problem. Cyclists, runners, parents with pushchairs and walkers currently use the path. I see the proposed cafe as a further problem with additional traffic making the area prone to litter problems. We have so much rubbish ending up in the Thames with plastic bags and general litter causing untold problems to the local bird population.

The proposed siting of trees on the site will also overshadow the adjacent properties blocking out light and causing extra problems with falling leaves. Who will be responsible for their maintenance?

If permission is granted for this development along Vastern Road what is there to stop the offices selling their premises for building and further high rise dwellings being built. The houses would be dwarfed by the high risers on both sides of the road. I also pose the question how many offices will become available should home working become the norm and make the offices ripe for conversion into flats?

In my opinion this is an inconceivably bad Planning Application which will not enhance the area one iota but will cause immeasurable problems if it is permitted.

Yours sincerely.

Carol Goddard

d) Paul Goddard

Dear Sirs

Thank you for this opportunity to speak.

I have attended many presentations about this SSE site & while the plans seem well intentioned over scaling has always been the main issue.

Existing Buildings in the area are no more than 4 floors & in the main are sympathetic to the surrounding Victorian housing. This is not the case in the instance of this development....

The Environment Agency are right in their assertions regarding the overshadowing of the River Thames being a problem & I also think the foundations required for a high rise development so close to the River would be to the detriment of the water table & the River. Not to mention the culvert that runs along Vastern Road to the River Thames at the Lido. However, the removal of the graffiti covered wall alongside the Thames Path by Christchurch Bridge would certainly benefit the community.

The nod to community benefit by having a riverside cafe is ill conceived as other cafes in the area are largely unused & their tenancy is normally short lived. I would sight the cafe/dry cleaners on the north side of Vastern Road which has now been converted to housing & the unit in the rear of Caversham Rowing Club as examples.

I can see the unit being unadopted, & unused.

It is in an important position alongside the River Thames & Christchurch Bridge & it could well become a magnet for anti social behaviour.

It is important to recognise that cycling on the Thames Path footpath is not currently permitted. The access from the SSE site onto the Thames Path footpath should be physically restricted to pedestrian & disabled use & have the appropriate signage.

Also, I am concerned that both the submissions & the Councils comments linking To the future proposals on the Aldi & Royal Mail sites & I think the adverse effect on the community will be considerable. It is definitely not in the public interest to lose the existing retail units as this will necessitate people to drive to do their everyday shopping.

I think a sensible boundary for high rise developments in the area would be the Railway & the Station complex.

On arriving by train you are directed to the town centre or to the River Thames & Caversham it would be a shame to be confronted by high rise buildings of poor character in all directions.

The River Thames is nationally a very important River & Reading is privileged to be situated alongside it. As a community we should make more of it not blight it with overdevelopment.

It is possible that in the future there will be less travelling to offices to work & those offices can quite rightly be converted to housing. That might well reduce the need for high rise developments like this & I am, therefore, strongly opposed to these proposals.

Sincerely
Paul Goddard.

e) Paul Westcott

**Mr P Westcott
16 Lynmouth Road
Reading
RG1 8DD**

Members of the Planning Committee
Reading Borough Council

29th March 2021

Dear Members,

Re: Planning Application Number: 200188 – Proposed redevelopment 55 Vastern Road, Reading
(Former SSE Office)

Further to my letter of objection dated June 2020, I shall be grateful if you might consider the following when discussing the application and arriving at a decision during the Planning Committee meeting on 31st March 2021. The following points are made on behalf a number of residents in Lynmouth Road and Lynmouth Court, Reading.

- We are not opposed to the principle of development on the site and would like to acknowledge the quality of the proposed design in terms of its character and proposed materials. However,
- We find the current scheme to be overly dominant which is mainly due to the height, scale and mass of the proposed buildings.
- The height and proximity of the scheme and the scale of overlooking into existing private rear gardens and rear facing rooms in Lynmouth Road and Lynmouth Court.
- Exposing the rear boundary to the houses in Lynmouth Road to a proposed public access which increases the opportunity for crime.
- It seems to us as if the primary objective has been to set out the proposed scheme to justify the purchase price/profit objective by overloading the proposed development, rather than designing a scheme which will determine a land value.
- Finally, we believe the site is capable of generating a high quality scheme and a balance can be struck in terms of scale of development and enhancing the character of the local area and providing a cohesive access link between Christchurch Bridge and Vastern Road. And we are in the main, willing to support such a scheme if one should be submitted in the future.

Many thanks,

P Westcott.

f) Steve Dore

I am all for these plans as feel the proposal provided will modernise the current site, a site which currently looks abandoned and out of keeping with the modernisation going on in and around that part of town.

More importantly, it will further improve the pedestrian link between Caversham and town centre, improving on the work the Council have already done when they put the new foot bridge in. This will further encourage people to walk into Reading town centre and Caversham rather than driving, a measure which benefits the environment and assists local business, shops etc in increasing footfall.

I note retail floorspace is also being applied for which will mean more jobs - Another huge positive.

I apologise for the late rendering of this email, however I have been away from my desk for the last couple of days so have only just seen the letter.

Kind regards,

Steve

g) Tim Moore

Firstly, thank you to the planning committee for allowing me the opportunity for me to speak at tonight's meeting. My name is Tim Moore and I currently live in Caversham and commute to Reading station. I support these proposals as this new route through the scheme will provide me with a better, direct and more safe route to and from the station. My wife has done the same commute and agrees that this will be a huge improvement providing a safe route especially in the dark winter months. The proposals also include the chance to stop off at the new café, which I see is proposed, overlooking the River Thames, and I'm sure many others feel the same way as I do that this would be a great asset for the local area.

As a relatively young resident who usually wouldn't speak out in this scenario, I felt compelled to do so today as the designs look fantastic, and I don't understand why they are being proposed for refusal. Shouldn't we be supporting this transformation, especially when it generates financial income for the Council and delivers much needed new homes. I also note that despite the site being unviable, Berkeley are proposing 20% affordable housing and the scheme will deliver valuable extra local infrastructure improvements which is great in my view, why are we not applauding this?

I would urge my local Councillors to approve this scheme. Overall the scheme looks fantastic and there seems to be good amount of landscaping proposed, with huge biodiversity benefits for our local ecology and climate. I am very much in favour of the proposals and I do hope all members of the planning committee feel the same way and that the proposals can be supported this evening for this exciting new scheme in Reading

UPDATE REPORT

BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

ITEM NO. 9

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 31st March 2021

Ward: Abbey

App No.: 201734

Address: Rivermead Leisure Complex, Richfield Avenue

Proposal: New replacement leisure centre including a 25m 8 lane competition pool and diving, with associated parking and landscaping, followed by demolition of existing centre.

Applicant: Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL)

Deadline: 12th March 2021

Extended Deadline: 9th April 2021

Planning Guarantee 26 week target: 11th June 2021

RECOMMENDATION:

As on main report, but with the following amendments:

Additional / Amended Conditions (strikethrough and bold):

- 1) TL1 - 3 yrs
- 2) AP1 - Approved Plans
- 3) M2 - Materials to be submitted and approved
- 4) C1 - Hours of Construction
- 5) C2 - Construction Method Statement to be submitted and approved including Phasing Plan.
- 6) C3 - CMS as Specified - The measures within the approved Air Quality Assessment (Syntegra, November 2020) for the control of dust during construction shall be adhered to throughout the whole of the construction period unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
- 7) C4 - No Bonfires
- 8) C04 - Submission and approval of a contamination assessment - for areas under the current leisure centre
- 9) C06 - Assessment of previously unidentified contamination
- 10) Land Gas - Remediation scheme to be submitted, approved and implemented prior to occupation.
- 11) Land Gas - Implementation of the remediation scheme in accordance with the approved timetable of works and a validation report to be submitted and approved prior to occupation.
- 12) No drainage systems for the infiltration of surface water to the ground (EA wording)
- 13) Piling using penetrative methods shall not be carried out other than with the written consent of the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
- 14) N8 - Noise levels of plant/ equipment restricted
- 15) N21 - Hours of operation (external lighting)
- 16) ~~Details of lighting~~ **No development shall commence until a revised External Lighting Impact Statement and lighting schedule that ensure**

minimal light spillage onto the Rivermead Ditch has been submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA. The lighting shall thereafter be installed as per the approved plans.

- 17) In accordance with the FRA and that finished floor levels shall be set no lower than 39.22 metres above Ordnance Datum (AOD)
- 18) SU5 - BREEAM Excellent - Design stage
- 19) SU6 - BREEAM Excellent - Built stage
- 20) SU7 - SUDS plan to be approved
- 21) SU8 - SUDS to be implemented
- 22) S1 - Detail of PV to be approved
- 23) DC1 - Vehicle Parking as specified
- 24) An annotated plan showing the proposed layout and access arrangements of No building hereby permitted shall be occupied until full details of the direction signage and markings within the car park area has been submitted to an approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, and thereafter maintained in good condition.
- 25) DC3 - Vehicle Access as specified prior to occupation
- 26) DC6 - Cycle Parking to be approved
- 27) DC7 - Refuse and Recycling to be approved (to be vermin proof)
- 28) DD6 - Visibility splays to be provided as specified
- 29) DE6- Provision of Electric Vehicle Charging Points
- 30) L2 - Hard and soft landscaping scheme to be submitted and approved
- 31) ~~L3 - Boundary Treatment~~
- 32) ~~L4 - Landscape Management and Maintenance Plan to be submitted and approved~~
- 33) ~~Bat survey before any demolition~~
- 33) L7- Arboricultural Method Statement and tree protection plan to be submitted and approved
- 34) Measures to include ten integral bird nesting and bat roosting features built into the walls of the new building to be submitted and approved in writing provide bat and bird boxes to be implemented prior to occupation
- 35) Vegetation clearance to avoid bird nesting season (March-August)
- 36) Hours of use - 6am to 11pm Mon to Sat, and 6am to 9.30pm on Sundays
- 37) The use of the existing leisure centre to cease prior to the occupation of the replacement leisure centre
- 38) Submission and approval of an Employment, Skills and Training Plan - construction and end user skills
- 39) Security Strategy to be submitted and approved prior to commencement above slab level.
- 40) Construction Environmental Management Plan to be submitted and approved prior to construction.
- 41) Prior to commencement the submission and approval of a Rivermead Ditch enhancement scheme and implementation thereafter.

1. AMENDED INFORMATION

Natural Environment (Trees)

- 1.1 Since the completion of the main committee report further planting and landscaping detail has been discussed with the Natural

Environment Officer. The Natural Environment Officer is generally satisfied subject to the inclusion of conditions for the submission and approval of final details.

- 1.2 **Planning Officer Note:** The Natural Environment Officer has recommended amendments to the conditions as included in the main report as referred to above (L3 and L4 would be addressed through condition L2).

Thames Valley Police - Crime Prevention & Design Advisor (TVP)

- 1.3 TVP provided the following comments: *“For the pools: One crime risk comes from the changing rooms themselves, - everything must be done to prevent individuals from slipping phones underneath cubicle partitions, filming individuals and children either getting dressed or getting undressed (voyeurism)”*. A condition requiring the submission and approval of a Security Strategy was recommended.

- 1.4 **Planning Officer note:** This is included in the amended recommendation above and complies with the requirements under Policy CC8.

Ecology

- 1.5 Ecology provided their comments as follows:

“The application site comprises the Rivermead Sports Centre which it is proposed to demolish and rebuild on the car park to the east.

The ecology report and bat survey reports (both by John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP) conclude that there are a number of minor ecological constraints to the proposals including invasive species and nesting birds, and states that there is a small risk that bats may roost in the building in the future (it should be noted that the preliminary ecological appraisal report does not include all the land within the red line boundary, however I have visited the site and it does not change the overall assessment).

The landscaping plan reads: “Ecologist to confirm possible location of fox / badger set [sic] to position mound North of Demountable Pool” i.e. it appears that there may be a fox earth or a small badger sett in this area that may need to be excluded prior to works that could disturb it commencing. [Planning Officer note: Para. 7.1.10 of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal states “...during the survey there no signs of activity by this species on site, which mostly provides very poor habitat, and therefore it is considered unlikely that badgers are found on site currently”]

These are all minor constraints and if the application is approved a condition should be set to ensure that a Construction Environmental Management Plan for Biodiversity is agreed and implemented.

The landscaping scheme is at present outline, full details should be secured via a planning condition.

The landscaping scheme refers to some minor (and not costly) modifications to the ditch including “Japanese knotweed - Ongoing maintenance / treatment regime to be commissioned”; “Initial Vegetation Maintenance” and “Existing London Planes - Not shown on the RBC Tree Survey”. As per our comments on the pre-applications this would have been a good opportunity to enhance this ditch by desilting, reprofiling the banks etc. This is not proposed and this lost opportunity will need to be weighed up in the planning balance. If permission is granted it is recommended that a condition be set to try to ensure that the ditch is enhanced within the context of the approved scheme.

The lighting plan shows light levels of more than 2.5 lux over much of the ditch. This will deter bats from commuting along the watercourse. The A2 fittings shown do not include a shield to stop backwards light spillage and the lighting assessment does not appear to have taken the ditch into consideration (for example there is a lighting column on the bridge). It is therefore recommended that if the application is approved either a revised lighting schedule is provided (before it is) or a condition is set to ensure that it is provided.

The proposals do not include any bird nesting or bat roosting features integral to the building and it is recommended that if the development is approved a condition is set to ensure that these are provided, and it is recommended that 10 such features would be a reasonable number for a development of this size.

In summary, subject to a revised lighting schedule being provided and the conditions below being set, there would be no ecology related reasons not to approve this application: CEMP; bird and bat boxes; Rivermead Ditch Enhancement scheme; and External Lighting Impact Statement and lighting schedule to ensure minimal light spillage onto the Rivermead Ditch.

- 1.6 **Planning Officer note:** Additional and amended conditions are included above.

Reading UK CIC

- 1.7 Reading UK confirmed that they would require an Employment Skills and Training Plan (ESP) for end user requirements as well as for construction skills.
- 1.8 **Planning Officer note:** The requirement for the submission of an ESP for end user has been included above.

Written Statements

- 1.9 Written statements have been submitted by those members of the public who are registered under 'public speaking' and are included in Appendix 1. below.

Conclusion

- 1.10 Having reviewed the additional information the officer overall recommendation is not altered, save for the amendments to the conditions as above.

Officer: Alison Amoah

APPENDIX 1: WRITTEN STATEMENTS

A) *Nick Haskins, The Warren*

Planning Rivermead Leisure Centre 201734 Date: 31st March 2021 - Planning Meeting Background: Firstly, I am very supportive of the proposal to redevelop the Rivermead Leisure Centre considering the current state of the Leisure Centre. Sport is part of the heritage of this particular area of Reading. It is just some of the details that need to be finalised.

Pop-up pool Planning Conditions These planning conditions should be non controversial as they were approved by the planning committee as conditions for the building of the Pop-Up pool at Rivermead. Residents would expect the following to apply for this construction: (I think that the EA has picked up on the incorrect flood risks in the first submission). Existing planning points from the temporary pool decision notice: I object to the replacement of the leisure centre unless the following decisions are retained: i) *The use of the land is for sport and leisure only* (ie no concerts or films etc) [Planning Permission 162323 note 16] ii) *No construction or demolition shall take place out of the hours of 08:00 to 18:00hrs Mon-Fri and 09:00hrs to 13:00hrs on Saturday with no work taking place at any time on Sundays and Bank or Statutory Holidays.* [Planning Permission 162323 note 7] iii) *That the finished floor level, flood resilience designs and flood warning systems are such that there is no increase in flood risk.* [Planning Permission 162323 note 11] iv) *The the landscaping includes a 10 year maintenance regime.* [Planning Permission 162323 note 13]

Comments: Colour If my reading of the replies to the planning application are correct: The residents opposite the Rivermead have said the building should be green and brown. The Warren Wattsapp Coordinator has said it said it should be green and brown. WADRA has said it should be green and brown. CADRA has said it should be green and brown. The Friends of Caversham Court Gardens, which has won the Green Flag award partly for its views out of Caversham Court, has said it should be green and brown. Palmer Park swimming pool will be green and brown. The existing building is green and brown. Why is it proposed that this building will be blue and white.

You need to understand that the land to the North is higher and so people will look down onto this building. There is no point to the planning process if the committee and RBC planning does not listen to those views of those that have responded to it. *Colour: The colour of the building should be Green and Brown when viewed from the North. A blue and white design might break up the bulk of the building in an urban landscape, however, when viewed from the North this building is in a very rural location along the river within an area of trees.*

[The report seems to fail to take into account that the building will be viewed from above when being looked at from the North in the direction of

the Southern, Eastern and Western elevations. The Warren is several metres higher than the land on the opposite bank. Upper Warren Rd and St Peter's Avenue are significantly higher than the land on the opposite bank. Thus the view onto the building is from above. As such the idea of breaking up the bulk of the buildings with blues and whites (as is used for high rise buildings in an urban setting when viewing buildings from below) is highly unlikely to be effective. Furthermore the previous planning permission for the temporary building insisted that the building should be RAL 2013 / 6007 / 7012 and is predominantly green. This building is being retained. It is highly odd to have two buildings in the same complex which are different colour.]

Knee Rails / Vehicular Access to Thames Prom I am Chair of NRSNF and have written to the police of many occasions regarding vehicles from the Rivermead Car Park driving and sometimes racing on the actual footpath of Thames Prom. I prepared a report highlighting this vehicles to Councillor Page and Councillor Skeats last year. These cars come from the Rivermead Car Park. This is a safety issue. Anyone unsure of the issues at this location should visit the site today. If metal knee rails are not used an alternative must be used to prevent vehicular access to Thames Prom. *Vehicular access to Thames Prom, timber knee rails are not sufficient: Timber knee rails seem inadequate. This should be metal with removable sections.*

Lack of Green Roof The building should have a green roof. There was a recent planning request for a leisure plot on the North side of the river. The applicant was told that the roof should really be a green roof. If that is true on the North Side, it should be True on the South Side. The council cannot expect other residents to use green roofs if it is not doing so itself. The council has declared a climate emergency. If it believes in that decision it should be requesting a Green Roof *Lack of Green Roof: There should be a green roof on the building. It is for use by the community and RBC has declared a climate emergency.*

Tree Survey Thank you for listening. Thank you for changing the Tree Survey. It is disappointing that the tree survey was incorrect. It is huge amount of work to check this on every application. It is also a huge amount of work to water the trees in this location. I am one of those that waters the new trees in this location. It is, therefore, very disappointing when those trees do not appear on surveys. Given that there is a tree strategy and and Climate Emergency applications should be presented with designs going around trees in general, rather than removing them as was the case both here and Palmer Park. [Tree Survey: A number of trees planted over the past 10 years on Thames Prom to the north of the current play area do not appear to have been recorded in the survey. These should be correctly recorded and protected as they provide valuable screening.] [Removal of mature trees: I object to the removal of any mature trees. There are 18 trees that look as if they will be felled, some just for bunds or footpaths. This is just not necessary, reposition the bunds and footpaths. Even with the trees that need to be felled for the car park, I am sure that some could be kept with a bit of redesign. With the temporary pool there were five

screening trees that were planted in the proximity to the Rivermead Centre. These have failed to take on numerous occasions. This is due to the difficult soil conditions and the need to water the trees. These trees have been on the RBC watering rota but it is insufficient and the trees have failed. Compare that to the ten plus trees that were planted nearer to the river which have been watered by volunteers. Those trees are all healthy other than one, which while still living is struggling a little. The difference has been that these trees watered by volunteers are in a location that can be accessed with water. To be clear I have carried over 1000 buckets of rain water to these trees alone. Anyone who is suggesting removing a mature tree should be prepared to do the same and to volunteer to carry 1000 buckets of water to ensure that the replacement trees prosper. If there are not such volunteers then can I please suggest that the mature trees are left alone. RBC has declared a climate emergency and has a plan to plant trees not remove them.]

UPDATE REPORT

BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

ITEM NO. 11

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 31st March 2021

Ward: Park

App No.: 201735

Address: Palmer Park

Proposal: Leisure centre extension to include a 25m 6 lane pool, fitness suite, cafe, activity room, parking spaces and landscaping, and the refurbishment of the existing grandstand to include demolition of the existing entrance lobby, internal works and roof works.

Applicant: Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL)

Deadline: 12th March 2021

Extended Deadline: 9th April 2021

Planning Guarantee 26 week target: 11th June 2021

RECOMMENDATION:

As in the main report, but with the following amendments (in bold and struck through):

Delegate the Head of Planning and Regulatory Services (HPDRS) to **GRANT** Planning Permission subject to the satisfactory completion by 9 April 2021 to a S106 agreement (unilateral undertaking) to secure:

A contribution of £6,000 towards an upgrade to the London Road/ Liverpool Road junction crossing comprising improvements to the technology to improve performance ~~the improvement of crossing facilities on London Road in the vicinity of Palmer Park~~, payment prior to the **occupation** implementation of the development.

If the S106 agreement is not completed by 9 April 2021, delegate to officers to REFUSE planning permission, unless an extension by the HPDRS is agreed.

CONDITIONS TO INCLUDE:

- 1) TL1 - 3 yrs
- 2) AP1 - Approved Plans
- 3) M2 - Materials to be submitted and approved
- 4) C1 - Hours of Construction
- 5) C2 - Construction and Environmental Management Statement to be submitted and approved including Phasing Plan.
- 6) C4 - No Bonfires
- 7) N8 - Noise levels of plant/ equipment restricted
- 8) N21 - Hours of operation (external lighting)
- 9) Hours of use - 07:00-22:30 (M-Thursday); 07:00-21:30 (Friday) and 09:00-18:00 (weekends)
- 10) Submission, approval and implementation of a Piling Method Statement

- ~~11) Contamination Land remediation to be undertaken in accordance with report~~
- 12) CO6 - Unidentified contamination
- 13) SU5- 'Excellent' BREEAM - Design stage
- 14) SU6 - 'Excellent' BREEAM - Built stage
- 15) SU7 - SUDS plan to be approved
- 16) SU8 - SUDS to be implemented
- 17) S1 - Detail of PV to be approved
- 18) DC1 - Vehicle Parking as specified
- 19) DC6 - Cycle Parking to be approved
- 20) DC7 - Refuse and Recycling to be approved (to be vermin proof)
- 21) DD8 - Car Parking Management Plan
- 22) DE6- Provision of Electric Vehicle Charging Points
- ~~23) Delivery of enhanced crossing prior to occupation~~
- 23) L2 - Hard and soft landscaping scheme to be submitted and approved
- ~~24) L4- Landscape Management and Maintenance Plan to be submitted and approved~~
- 24) L7 - Arboricultural Method Statement and tree protection plan to be submitted and approved
- 25) Measures to provide **ten integral bird nesting and bat roosting features built into the walls of the new building**, ~~bat and bird boxes~~ to be submitted and approved prior to commencement (excluding demolition)
- 26) Details of lighting including to protect wildlife
- 27) Bollard Lighting Levels
- 28) No floodlighting
- 29) Vegetation clearance to avoid bird nesting season (March-August)
- ~~30) Bat survey before any demolition~~
- ~~31) No development until a programme of archaeological work has been submitted and approved.~~
- 30) Submission and approval of an Employment, Skills and Training Plan - construction and end user phases.
- 31) **Security Strategy to be submitted and approved prior to commencement above slab level.**

INFORMATIVES TO INCLUDE:

- 1) IF5 - Terms and Conditions
- 2) IF6 - Building Regulations
- 3) IF2 - Pre-Commencement Conditions
- 4) I11 - CIL Not Chargeable
- 5) IF4 - S106
- 6) IF3 - Highways
- 7) I29 - Access Construction
- 8) IF7 - Complaints about Construction
- 9) Thames Water informatives
- 10) IF1 - Positive and Proactive

1. AMENDED INFORMATION

Natural Environment (Trees)

- 1.1 Since the completion of the main committee report further planting and landscaping detail has been discussed with the Natural Environment Officer. It has been confirmed by the Officer that the applicant has demonstrated an appropriate level of landscaping, including tree planting to meet Reading Borough Local Plan Policy and the Council's Tree Strategy aims.

- 1.2 **Planning Officer Note:** the conditions as originally recommended are retained save for removal of the condition requiring the submission of a Landscape Management Plan, as this is suitably addressed as part of the standard landscaping condition (L2).

Thames Valley Police - Crime Prevention & Design Advisor (TVP)

- 1.3 TVP provided the following comments: *"For the pools: One crime risk comes from the changing rooms themselves, - everything must be done to prevent individuals from slipping phones underneath cubicle partitions, filming individuals and children either getting dressed or getting undressed (voyeurism)"*. A condition requiring the submission and approval of a Security Strategy was recommended.

- 1.4 **Planning Officer note:** This is included in the amended recommendation above and complies with the requirements under Policy CC8.

Archaeology

- 1.5 Following the trial trenching which took place in week commencing 15th March 2021 Berkshire Archaeology have provided the following further comments:

"I have been through the report produced by Thames Valley Archaeological Services on the trial trenching exercise carried out recently at Palmer Park. TVAS were in contact with Berkshire Archaeology during the works and have completed the programme of trenching in accordance with the agreed method. No assets of archaeological interest were identified during the evaluation, and the report is all in order.

With regard to future requirements, we would not recommend that any further archaeological intervention would be necessary, in line with policy requirements, and suggest that a condition relating to archaeology is not now needed, should planning consent be granted."

- 1.6 **Planning Officer note:** The original report included a condition (no. 33) for the submission and approval of a programme of archaeological work. This is no longer required, so is deleted from the list of recommended conditions.

Ecology

1.7 Ecology provided their comments as follows:

“The ecological assessment submitted with the application (John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP - Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Ref: R2298/b - August 2019) has been undertaken to an appropriate standard and concludes that the proposals are unlikely to affect protected species, priority habitats and sites of importance for nature conservation. However, the vegetation may be used by nesting birds and a condition should be set to ensure that it is not carried out during the nesting season or if it is then a pre-clearance bird survey undertaken.”

“The proposals include a lighting plan which shows that the tree lines will remain largely unlit and as such the proposals are unlikely to affect commuting and foraging bats.

A Biodiversity Impact Assessment Calculation has been undertaken. This shows that the development is likely to result in a net gain in Habitat Units of 4.11% and Hedgerow Units of 25.21%. This would comply with current planning policy on this matter although the upgrading of the woodland within the calculator from moderate to fairly-good condition as a result of the installation of three bird and bat boxes is a questionable assumption.

The proposals do not include any bird nesting or bat roosting features integral to the building and it is recommended that if the development is approved a condition is set to ensure that these are provided and it is recommended that 10 such features would be a reasonable number for a development of this size

In summary subject to the conditions below the proposals would comply with ecology related planning policy.

Condition: *All trees, hedges and shrubs or similar vegetation where birds may nest which are to be removed as part of the development, are to be cleared outside the bird-nesting season (March - August inclusive) or if clearance during the bird-nesting season cannot reasonably be avoided, a suitably qualified ecologist will check the areas to be removed immediately prior to clearance and advise whether nesting birds are present. If active nests are recorded, no vegetation clearance or other works that may disturb active nests shall proceed until the nest is no longer in use.*

Reason: *To ensure that nesting birds are not adversely affected by the proposed development as per policy EN12.*

Condition: *Prior to commencement of development (other than demolition), details of biodiversity enhancements, to include ten integral bird nesting and bat roosting features built into the walls of the new building shall be submitted and approved in writing by the council. The features shall thereafter be installed in accordance with the plans.*

Reason: To incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments as per paragraph 175 of the NPPF and policy EN12 in the local plan.”

- 1.8 **Planning Officer note:** The recommended conditions as set out in the main report are retained save for an amendment to renumbered condition 25 and deletion of the requirement for a bat survey prior to demolition.

Reading UK CIC

- 1.9 Reading UK confirmed that they would require an Employment Skills and Training Plan (ESP) for end user requirements as well as for construction skills.

- 1.10 **Planning Officer note:** The requirement for the submission of an ESP for end user has been included above.

Views

- 1.11 Further imagery as been provided to show the proposed scheme within a number of views and is included in Appendix 1. below.

Amended Plan

- 1.12 An amended Proposed Section drawing (1789-SBA-PP-ZZ-A-1001 Rev P1, rec 30/3/21) has been submitted, which reflects the proposed changes to the roof of the exiting Stadium building, and is included in Appendix 2. below.

Written Statements

- 1.13 Written statements have been submitted by those members of the public who are registered under ‘public speaking’ and are included in Appendix 3. below.

Conclusion

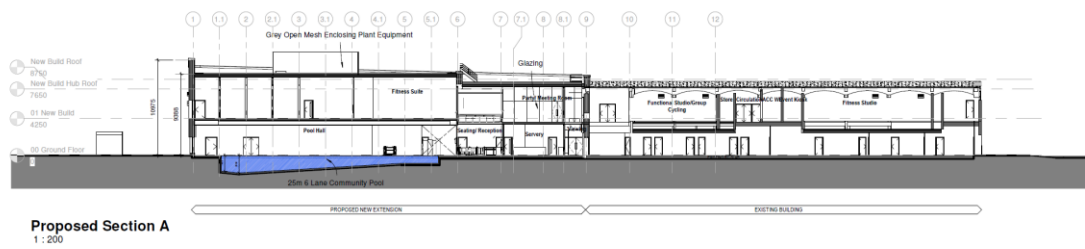
- 1.14 Having reviewed the additional information the officer overall recommendation is not altered, save for the amendments to the S106 heads of terms, and deleted, altered and additional conditions as above.

Officer: Alison Amoah

APPENDIX 1: CGIS SUPERIMPOSED WITHIN VIEWS



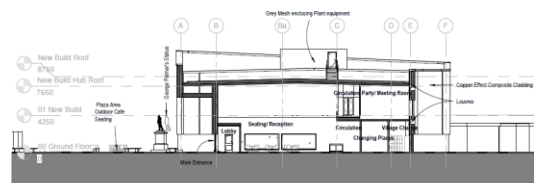
APPENDIX 2: AMENDED PROPOSED SECTIONS



Proposed Section A
1 : 200



Proposed Section B
1 : 200



Proposed Section C
1 : 200

APPENDIX 3: WRITTEN STATEMENTS

A) John Hall - Palmer Park Bowling Club

PALMER PARK BOWLING CLUB
(Est. 1910)

(Season April to October)

Since 1908 the bowls green and Club have been part of Palmer Park and due to the financial restraints suffered by RBC over the years we have proceeded to maintain, extend and improve the buildings and green at no cost to RBC. We have added to the wellbeing of the Park during the last 112 years.

Planning Application 201735 - RBC and Greenwich Leisure Ltd.

The proposed 6 lane pool and facilities will be a good addition/ attraction to the park but will cause major problems for existing park users especially ourselves and even our SURVIVAL!

The main Issues being lack of Parking Spaces and Parking Charges.

The planning application by reducing the number of available parking spaces highlights an already acute problem of lack of spaces experienced on numerous occasions on evenings and weekends during the season. We have in the past lost fixtures due to visiting clubs being frustrated by lack of parking.

There appears to be no guarantee in the application that the proposed overflow parking will be available as soon as the main parking area is full! This makes it difficult for established club to operate.

During local discussions our suggested proposal to allow limited PPBC & visitor parking adjacent to the Lodge to create more parking spaces was rejected.

A key feature of the club's survival is to maintain home and away fixtures with other clubs. During a normal season we could average 4/5 games with visiting teams each week.

Unlike other users of the park who can complete their activities under 3 hours, a game of bowls sometimes can take 4 or 5 hours. Therefore Parking Charges and free periods are extremely important to us. Visiting teams do not expect to pay for parking and are unlikely to start. A problem for us to manage. We acknowledge the coaches and volunteers intention.

The previous proposed 3 hour free period would be extremely helpful and manageable to us.

Clubs Finance - Like most clubs apart from annual subscriptions we rely on match fees, fund raising, raffles, bar takings and visiting clubs for our income. VISITING CLUBS ARE VITAL TO OUR FUNDING to enable us and our members to function and play our part as a leisure facility in PALMER PARK.

We do not want the lack of visiting teams our V.I.Ps to become our R.I.P.

Obviously, it is in PPBC interest to help to manage the parking as our future is at stake!

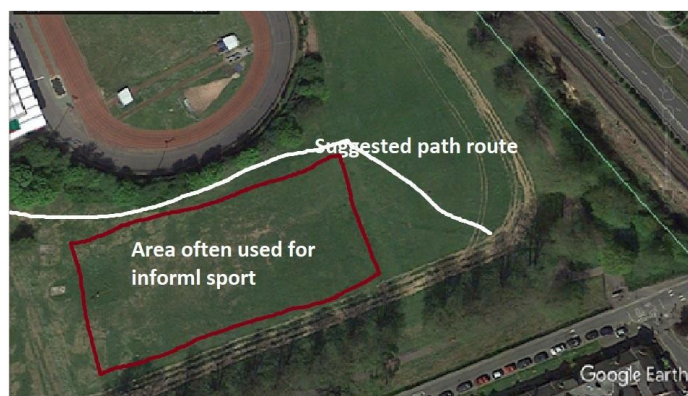
B) Chris Darby - 34 Palmer Park Avenue

Many thanks for your letter in response to my concern. This may be best explained visually and concerns the possible trajectory of a permanent path (marked in white) from the gate at the south-eastern edge (Palmer Park Avenue, bridge end) of the park towards the stadium.



If I have understood the plans correctly (and I may be mistaken), the natural trajectory of such a path would be a straight line towards the car park end of the stadium. My concern is that if this was a permanent path, as distinct from the current natural trajectory of anyone travelling in that direction, it would have a significant impact on the 'Area often used for informal sport' and bounded by a bank on most sides. The area would undoubtedly continue to be used for that purpose but would now have a permanent hazard within it, likely to cause accident or injury.

IF there is to be a permanent path (and I remain unconvinced of the need), I would ask that it skirts the 'Area often used for informal sport' and takes a longer route following the bottom of the banked area nearest the stadium track.



I hope this explanation is clear enough and am willing to speak in support of this. I am providing you with both a docx and pdf version of this document. In any case, I intend to observe and hear the meeting.

C) Mr. S. Stenning - Palmer Park Bowls Club

I am a member of Palmer Park Bowls club writing this letter concerning the parking at palmer park after the new pool is built.

An increase of parking by some 13 spaces is laughable and will cause a massive headache if as on some weekends there are athletics meetings swimming galas and all the other activities happening in the park i.e.: cricket, Bowls, Childrens activities and the numerous amounts of men and children's football teams all turning up at one time.

This does not include the library the church meetings that use the parking facilities at the Palmer park avenue entrance and the play park and cafe which attract a lot of people in the summer.

I can only see this as people trying to park and people losing their patience at trying to attend facilities for themselves and their families.

It is ok saying there is an overflow car park which lets people park on the grass but in adverse weather which we do get, this would be a nightmare on the grass and will definitely force people in to the surrounding streets to park.

Also, the fact that the council have delayed the parking charge option only fills me with suspicion that as soon as this goes ahead the charge will be brought in, it is almost scandalous.

I should imagine that Robert Palmer who designated the park to the people, would be spinning in his grave if he knew there was a money-making scheme being put on the people who he gave the park to.

I am quite sure that the bowls club was one of the first schemes to be up and running when the park was designated to the people and charging for our opposition to park would be an embarrassment and yet another charge for mostly pensioners to pay to be able to exercise and enjoy a pastime that they enjoy in a council park.

Can you guarantee that a charge will not be happening as in all other bowls clubs in Reading there is adequate free parking, in Henley there are tickets handed out as to say you can park in the adjacent car park for bowlers only.

Will there be any schemes for people who use certain facilities two or three times every week??? as not to be charged i.e., permits.

Where will people park when the building work is in progress???

I am in favour of the pool in the area as Arthur hills was closed down and in poor condition many years ago and nothing replaced it and i understand improvements are good and needed but not if it causes problems within the area.

The area called the Heart space in my opinion will become an area that is currently occupied between the bowls area and the Astro turf football courts where youngsters meet and hang around for most of the evening doing things they should not be doing, it will take it away from the benches outside the bowls green which is a good thing and it will hopefully stop us having to breathe in the smell of the substances they are using.

Although that could be a reason why we were promoted last season and played exceptionally well.

My last and final comment is this could have been easily resolved with many more car parking spaces being made available in the palmer park avenue side of the park and towards the back of the parking slots that you are planning.

I do hope you take everything I have said into consideration.

Regards Mr S Stenning,

Ex - Alfred Sutton boys school pupil who used to live in the area and found my way back to the park through bowls, who has fond memories of palmer park as man and boy and long may they continue.

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